IDENTIFYING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PERSISTENCE OF HAWAI’I STUDENTS STUDYING AT MAINLAND COLLEGES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL MULTI-CASE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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This academic journey has been a lengthy and arduous experience. I could not have completed this journey without the support of so many people.

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participants, as well as thousands of other graduates, would not have received an exceptional educational opportunity. Mahalo nui loa Ke Ali`i.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of mainland college students, graduates of a unique Hawai‘i high school, to identify factors that influenced higher education persistence. Students not persisting at college, a problem for students and higher education institutions is defined for this study as a student that did not return to study at the same institution for the following semester.

Using a qualitative multi-case study research approach, eleven students were interviewed to understand the essence of their college experiences. A student involvement theoretical perspective was considered however, other theories were also considered to explain student persistence.

Data was collected through private, in person, and videoconference interviews that employed predetermined and contemporaneously constructed questions. The sharing of student-selected artifacts enhanced the ability of this study to collect data and construct meaning from the student participant’s college experiences. The data was analyzed through the Constant Comparative Data Analysis and the Category Construction Data Analysis methods.

This study identified a total of 109 factors that spoke to the essence of their experiences and influenced College Student Persistence (CSP). There were 63 factors that were positive influences to CSP and 46 factors that were adverse influences to CSP. For organizational purposes, similar factors were grouped together, which resulted in the construction of five groups or categories entitled: Student Self, Other People, Student Involvement, Institutional Support, and Other Adverse.

Of all the factors that were reported by the study participants, six factors were identified as Key Factors that significantly influenced CSP of these eleven student participants: Coping,
Homesickness, Motivation, Support of Classmates, Friends and Family, Involvement with Associations, Classmates, Roommates, and Professors, and College Tuition, Financial Aid and Scholarships. Strategy recommendations to promote persistence for future graduates of this unique Hawai`i high school that desire to study at mainland colleges were based on the results of this study.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In a recent study, the National Student Clearinghouse reported seventy-five percent of full-time students completed college within six years (2012). A Harvard University study *Pathways to Prosperity* claimed the list of reasons students drop out of high school and college was long and included not being prepared for the required academic work, financial pressures, responsibilities to family and jobs, and not being able to see a connection between their program of study and tangible opportunities in the labor market (2011). According to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 77.1% of U.S. freshmen returned to college as sophomores in the fall of 2010 (NCHEMS). NCHEMS also reported 70.8% of freshmen in the state of Hawai`i returned to college as sophomores in the fall of 2010 (NCHEMS).

This qualitative case study examined college student persistence of Hawai`i high school graduates. Research participants were recent graduates of Kapalama Schools¹ (KS) that were mainland² college students. The Kapalama Schools is a unique K-12 private educational institution that was founded in the Hawaiian Islands, pre-statehood, through the Last Will of a native Hawaiian princess.

This chapter provides information needed to contextualize the study. It contains the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and significance of the study. Also included in this chapter are the researcher’s assumptions, research method, research participants, research question and secondary questions, operational definitions, and finally a chapter summary.

¹ The name “Kapalama Schools” is plural because two schools, one for boys and one for girls,
² In this context the word “mainland” is commonly used in Hawai`i in reference to the continental United States.
Statement of Problem

A search of EBSCO Host, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, and Google Scholar resulted in the identification of very few studies that focused on the Kapalama Schools and their graduates. Since the Kapalama Schools is a private institution, there is no responsibility and little interest by the public or government to conduct research of the schools. National databases, such as the National Student Clearinghouse, provide research findings only to the school source that provided data and pay a fee.

Anecdotal information personally gathered between 2012 and 2013 suggested that while initial college attendance among 2011 Kapalama Schools (KS) graduates was high, many withdrew from mainland colleges during or after their freshman year, transferred to Hawai`i colleges or withdrew from college completely.

In a Honolulu Star Advertiser (2012) newspaper article the headmaster of the Kapalama Schools claimed that the college-going rate of Kapalama graduates was high, about 96 percent, and a major goal was to improve the preparation of students to ensure that they did not just attend college, but that they also earn a college degree (Vorsino). In 2013 a Kapalama Schools financial activities report claimed that 59% of their graduates complete college in six years (KS, 2012-2013 Report on fiscal activities).

Knowing the number of KS graduates who complete college and the number who complete college on the mainland is vital information to a college preparatory school such as the Kapalama Schools. To advance this notion, knowing the reasons for college completion would also be important. Understanding the reasons KS graduates were able to complete each college semester, progress to the next semester, and ultimately earn college degrees likely would be practical and useful information for KS administrators, KS parents, current KS students, and KS
graduates currently enrolled at colleges. Conversely, knowing the reasons KS graduates withdraw from mainland colleges should also be considered essential information.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify various factors that influenced college student persistence of the 2012 and 2013 KS graduates who studied at mainland colleges. Also, a more narrow focus involves identifying various environmental and involvement factors that influence college student persistence for this same group. For this study, and at this time, these KS graduates are college sophomores and juniors.

Factors that influenced college persistence could include an inability to acclimate to local weather conditions, adapting or accepting different foods, a close working relationship with professors, classmates, and roommates, and dealing with homesickness. Factors that influenced student persistence could be academic and non-academic related. This study attempted to determine, from oral one-on-one interviews with participants, which factors influenced college student persistence.

As a graduate of the Kapalama Schools, I am grateful to be a beneficiary of the founder’s generosity. I believe through the vision of the founder, a Hawaiian princess, many students such as myself obtained a quality education and consequently received better opportunities in life. Another purpose for conducting this study is to repay a self-imposed, personal debt to the princess. I believe this research study serves, in a small way, to assist Kapalama School’s students and graduates in their pursuit of higher education on the mainland.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study addresses the problem stated earlier, which is to understand the college experiences of KS graduates to potentially increase their college graduation rates.
Understanding the factors that influence student persistence may have significant implications for policy makers, KS educational administrators, KS faculty, and KS parents. Furthermore, optimistically, findings from this study could possibly assist KS students to better understand their role in structuring their own destiny prior to departure to mainland colleges.

This study could potentially result in transformational changes in how KS graduates are prepared during high school for the challenges of college. Changes could involve preparation in both academic and non-academic areas for future college-bound KS graduates.

The importance of increasing college graduation rates for KS graduates cannot be overstated. Research from Pew’s Economic Mobility Project (2013) has shown the power of a college education to both promote upward mobility and prevent downward mobility. The chances of moving from the bottom of the family income ladder all the way to the top are three times greater for someone with a college degree than for someone without one (Pew, 2013). Moreover, when compared with their less-credentialed counterparts, college graduates have been able to count on much higher earnings and lower unemployment rates (Pew, 2013). A college degree continues to be the academic standard accepted in the U.S. and by many countries throughout the world.

**Researcher’s Assumptions**

Every research study is predicated on assumptions about how the world works and the importance of certain constructs within that world (McDade, 1999). It was assumed that not all of the 2012 and 2013 KS graduates that studied at a mainland college completed their freshmen year. It was assumed that an unknown number of KS graduates discontinued studying and returned home to Hawai‘i. The number of KS graduates that returned home and transferred to a Hawai‘i college or withdrew from higher education is, at this time, unknown. Whether the
number of students that withdrew from college study is higher, lower or the same as the national norm is irrelevant. It is assumed that the number of KS graduates that matriculate at colleges on the continental U.S. does not equal 100%. This research study attempts to determine the reasons for persistence and non-persistence of a particular group of high school graduates for the primary purpose of increasing college completion.

It was also assumed that KS graduates that studied at Hawai`i colleges did not have the same experiences as their classmates that studied at mainland colleges. It is assumed that the KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges encountered greater adversity. This is discussed further in the Research Participant section.

**Research Method**

This study’s qualitative design explores the perspectives of nine 2012 and two 2013 KS graduates pertaining to factors that influenced college persistence. The qualitative data collection method involves one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participants involving pre-determined questions and spontaneously crafted follow-up questions. Student participants were the primary data source.

This case study was bounded in time and place, meaning it focused on a specific high school, on two specific graduating classes from this high school, during a specific time period in their college career, and involved only mainland colleges.

**Research Participants**

The primary participants of this study are 2012 and 2013 Kapalama Schools (KS) graduates. These participants studied at a mainland college for at least part of their freshman year. Some are continuing at the same mainland college and were on summer break during the data collection for this study. Other 2012 and 2013 KS graduates that ceased studying at
mainland colleges have, it is assumed, transferred to Hawai‘i colleges. 2012 and 2013 KS graduates that chose to attend colleges in the state of Hawai‘i were not included in this study.

The following paragraphs explain the reasons 1) this secondary college preparatory school (KS) was selected, 2) these particular KS graduating classes were selected, 3) KS graduates that did not study at mainland colleges were not selected, and 4) KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges but returned to Hawai‘i are included in this study.

As mentioned previously, the purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence college student persistence of 2012 and 2013 KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges. The fact that I am a Kapalama Schools alumnus and have a personal connection to KS graduates is the primary reason the Kapalama Schools was selected for study and not another high school. I have a personal interest in identifying ways to increase graduation rates of KS graduates. The uniqueness of the schools unlike other preparatory schools presents different challenges for the schools and its graduates.

Second, the Kapalama School campus is located on the island of Oahu, of which I also reside. This made conducting this research, in terms of face-to-face interviews, convenient since most KS graduates are from Oahu.

The reason 2012 and 2013 KS graduates were selected for this study was because they had the opportunity to complete at least one full year as college freshmen and, either are continuing their mainland college education, have withdrawn either to continue studying in Hawai‘i or withdrew completely from college. Selecting a recent KS graduating class is important because of the need to interview college students that recently experienced the transition from high school to college life. It was important to gather the information from these students while their experiences are still relatively fresh in their minds and not clouded by other
experiences. Also I knew of and could contact two 2013 KS graduates to initiate this research study. The snowball participant selection method was used to identify and select additional research participants.

KS graduates that did not study at mainland colleges were not asked to participate in this research study for several reasons. KS graduates that elected to study in Hawai`i did not experience assimilation to a new culture compared to their counterparts who attended mainland colleges. KS graduates studying at mainland colleges were required to adapt to new cultures that could include languages, foods, social habits, and values. Being a college student on the mainland could involve experiencing major seasonal changes. Any acclimation by KS graduates studying at mainland colleges should not necessarily be considered easy or effortless to persons used to the warmer climate in Hawai`i.

The graduates that attend Hawai`i colleges also had the benefit of existing social support systems of family and friends that their mainland counterparts probably did not enjoy. This should be viewed as a tremendous situational difference and advantage. Lastly, more often than not, staying in Hawai`i to attend college was likely less costly due to paying a resident tuition and living at home as opposed to paying a non-resident tuition and living in a dorm room.

These generalized differences created a difficult and more demanding scenario for the KS graduates studying at mainland colleges. The KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges were selected because it was assumed that they encountered greater adversity and had more to overcome. Adversity could include forms of discrimination such as institutional racism but could include simply being mistreated for being an outsider. Cultural barriers could involve communication difficulties for the KS graduate speaking Hawaiian Pidgin English. Though the mainland and the state of Hawai`i speak the same language, it is spoken and pronounced
differently and involve different definitions and slangs. In Hawai`i it is not unusual for a person
from the mainland to assert that they do not understand locals speaking English.

As mentioned earlier the participants of this research study include 2012 and 2013 KS
graduates that are current and previous mainland college students. It was believed that KS
graduates that continued to study at mainland colleges as sophomores and juniors have a unique
perspective. Their reasons for continuing should be heard and understood. It was also believed
that KS graduates that did not continue studying at mainland colleges, but instead returned to
Hawai`i, also have a unique perspective that should be heard and understood. Understanding the
perspectives of both the persisters (those that continued at the same college) and the non-
persisters (those that did not continue at the same college) could be beneficial information for
future KS graduates attending mainland colleges.

**Research Question and Secondary Questions**

The purpose of this research study was to identify the various factors that influenced
college student persistence of 2012 and 2013 Kapalama Schools graduates who are current or
were previous mainland college students.

The primary research question:

What factors influenced college student persistence of 2012 and 2013 Kapalama Schools
graduates that studied at mainland colleges?

The secondary research questions:

1. Does the environment influence student persistence, and if so in what ways?
2. Does student involvement influence student persistence, and if so in what ways?
Operational Definitions

“KS” refers to the Kapalama Schools, a private K-12 educational institution initially established on the island of Oahu, state of Hawai`i.

"Student involvement" refers to time, energy, and effort a student invests in higher education curriculum, activities, relationships, and experiences.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I introduced and discussed my intention to primarily learn, from 2012 and 2013 graduates of the Kapalama Schools studying at mainland colleges, what factors influenced college student persistence in general, and secondarily what environmental and involvement factors influenced college student persistence. Understanding their lived experiences may shed light on ways to better prepare KS graduates to study at mainland colleges in the future. Understanding their experiences involved interviewing 2012 and 2013 KS graduates.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter was divided into three sections. The first section discusses qualitative research, locating literature, literature review concerns, literature sources, philosophical orientation, and student participant anonymity. The second section provides a background to the founding of the Kapalama Schools, including the founder, the will, the Kapalama Schools today, and Native Hawaiians. The third section discusses theories and previous studies that are relevant to this study, to include the theoretical perspective.

A literature review should provide context for a study (McDade, 1999). It should summarize, synthesize, and critique related literature to gain a deeper understanding of a topic (McDade, 1999). The review of relevant literature is essential to provide a comprehensive and current foundational understanding of a study. A strong understanding of peripheral research germane to this study improved this study’s ability to approach the research problem.

According to Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) researchers cite literature to compare and contrast past studies with the major findings in their studies. In qualitative inquiry, researchers do not make predictions about findings because they are more interested in whether the findings of a study support or modify existing ideas and practices advanced in the literature (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). Literature relevant to college student persistence was located and discussed in this chapter only to identify what had been previously researched and how the research was conducted. For this study, duplicating existing research was avoided. Relevant literature that reports what others have done and learned was shared in this chapter.
Locating Literature

In conducting this research, several databases, including but not limited to EBSCO Host, ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses were explored. A search for college student persistence and student involvement/engagement theories was conducted.

The most current research literature, journals and dissertations, was sought however older research was also included. Research that was conducted utilizing a phenomenological research method was also sought. All research sought was reviewed to determine relevance to this research topic. Obviously not all research studies that were found and reviewed were included and discussed in this chapter.

Literature Review Concerns

Considerable research was previously conducted on educational persistence by theorists such as Alexander Astin (1975, 1999), Vincent Tinto (1975, 1988, 2005), Alan Seidman (2012), and William G. Tierney (1999), Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon (2004), and Greenfield, Keup and Gardner (2013). The search for relevant literature was not limited to college student persistence studies. Related research on student persistence was found under similar topics such as student attrition, student departure, student engagement, student involvement, student retention, student resilience, and student transfer. It was important to be aware of the similarities and differences of other research topics. The research subjects, the theoretical perspectives, and the research methodologies of other research may be similar but it was important to understand how they are different. These differences may yield different findings and implications.

Though college student persistence and related studies have been extensively conducted, I am not aware of any research available to the public that was conducted and focused exclusively on Kapalama Schools graduates that studied at mainland colleges. Besides college
student persistence studies that involved general college populations, this chapter also includes reviews of two studies of Native Hawaiian college students.

**Literature Sources**

The most common primary sources of social and behavioral science information were reports of empirical research published in academic journals. Empirical research reports were sought because they contain original sources of information, detail the methodology used in the research study and provide in-depth descriptions and discussions of the findings (Galvan, 2009). Summaries reported in popular magazines, newspapers, on television and radio are usually secondary sources, which typically provide only global descriptions of results with few details on the methodology used to obtain them.

Galvan (2009) asserts that journals are abounding with original reports of empirical research. He further explains (2009) that the term empirical refers to observation while the term empirical research refers to systematic observation. Galvan clarified that research is systematic when researchers plan in advance whom to observe, what characteristics to observe, how to observe, and so on (2009).

**Philosophical Orientation**

It was helpful and important to understand the nature of knowledge, epistemology, and the nature of reality, ontology, to establish the philosophical orientation or foundation that underlies this research study. “Getting started on a research project begins with examining your own orientation to basic tenets about the nature of reality, the purpose of doing research, and the type of knowledge to be produced through your efforts” (Merriam, 2009). Throughout Chapters 1, 2 and 3, I shared my understanding of my knowledge and reality.
Merriam (2009) identified four philosophical orientations: positivist, critical, interpretive/constructivist, and postmodernism. The purpose of interpretive/constructivist research is to describe, understand and interpret feelings, experiences and events. Because the purpose of conducting this research study was to describe, understand, and interpret the meaning of college students’ experiences, an interpretive/constructivist perspective was chosen. The research participants of this study were college students that were KS graduates that have studied at mainland colleges. This study sought to understand their world as mainland college students.

According to Merriam, “Researchers employing an interpretive/constructivist philosophical perspective do not ‘find’ knowledge, they construct it,” (2009, pp. 8-9). Interpretive or constructivist research assumes (Merriam, 2009, p. 8) that reality is socially constructed, and “there is no single, observable reality.” Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event.

“In interpretive research, education is considered to be a process and school is a lived experience. Understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive, hypothesis- or theory-generating (rather than a deductive or testing) mode of inquiry” (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). This is necessary because “multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals,” (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). Consequently this study involved understanding the experiences of particular college students and it was necessary to interview these students to learn how they understand their experiences.

Creswell (2007, pp. 20-21) explained, “Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop multiple and varied subjective meanings of their experiences, which are complex for the researcher to perceive and understand.” These meanings
are “formed through interactions with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 20-21).

Regarding this particular study, it was imperative that the research participants elucidate their lived experiences to allow the study to build an understanding of their experiences. For the KS graduates that were mainland college students, understanding their college experiences from their own words was the objective. This was accomplished through interviews. “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9).

**Student Participant Anonymity**

The names of the student participants of this research and the names of their colleges are not disclosed. Further, the actual name of their alma mater and the name of the founder of their school are also not disclosed. The student participants were promised, as a condition of their participation, that their names would not be divulged. It was assumed that keeping their identities confidential would likely lead to a less restricted sharing of their college experiences, to include anecdotes that are not complimentary, are very personal and intimate, and lastly, possibly embarrassing. Conducting a qualitative study that involved participants that were unwilling to discuss their true and actual experiences in an interview would be pointless and of little value.

This study substituted the student participants’ names and the names of their alma mater with pseudonyms. The reasons for the anonymous reporting are for the reasons stated and not due to a lack of respect for the school, the founder, past graduates, parents of graduates, or anyone associated with the school in any way. Lastly, no pseudonym was used to replace the name of the founder of the schools because none would be appropriate.
A School for Hawaiian Children

The Kapalama Schools has a very unique background in Hawaiian and American educational history. Understanding how the schools were founded and evolved aided in understanding the current setting and situation.

The Kapalama Schools were founded by a Hawaiian princess. During her life time she witnessed the rapid decrease of the Native Hawaiian population and their political, economic and social struggle in their own lands. Knowing that she was dying of cancer, she prepared a will to establish a school for Native Hawaiian children. All children that received an education from the Kapalama Schools have benefited from the princess’ generosity, a legacy that has endured for 128 years with the establishment of the first of two schools in 1887. The following sections provide the background and setting of the founder and of the schools.

A Hawaiian Princess

Understanding the political, cultural and economic conditions of 19th century Hawai’i elucidated the circumstances regarding an eventual decision to establish the Kapalama Schools. According to the Kapalama Schools website (KS, Founder of KS, 1831-1884, [biography]) the Schools were established in 1887 by the Last Will and Testament of a descendant of Hawaiian royalty. The princess was born on December 19, 1831. She was the daughter of High Chiefs. She was also the great-granddaughter of a warrior chief that in 1810 united the Hawaiian Islands under his rule. The princess was educated by American Protestant missionaries and married a young American businessman.

Though the princess led a life of royalty, her blood relatives ruled the Hawaiian kingdom; she was viewed as always affable, courteous and humble (Krout, 1908). Mary Hannah Krout’s book describes the princess to be a generous and caring person (1908). After marriage, the
princess continued to teach favorite pupils on the piano-forte. She provided clothing for new-
borns, wedding garments for brides, and shrouds for the dead. She tended to the poor during
sorrow and sickness, and once was found at the home of a poor woman, lying near death,
preparing food. The princess was the vice-president of the Stranger’s Friend Society, organized
for the relief of destitute persons or those temporarily in need of assistance who found
themselves adrift in Honolulu. She was a member of a reading group, which met, at her
residence, and she taught Sunday school.

As the last royal descendant the princess inherited thousands of acres of land during the
course of her life. In 1884 the princess succumbed to breast cancer after years of suffering. She
died childless. Her estate was and is still the largest private landowner in the state of Hawai`i,
currently comprising approximately 9% of Hawai`i’s total land area (KS, Founder of KS, 1831-
1884, para. 4).

During the princess’ life time tremendous changes occurred in the Hawaiian Kingdom.
From 1831, the princess’ birth year, the population rapidly declined from 124,000 to only 44,000
in 1883, the year she started preparing her will and a year before her death (KS, Founder of KS,
1831-1884, para. 5). The princess believed education could offer her people hope and a future.
At the end of her life she did not have any children of her own. She chose to care for Hawaiian
children through her decision to establish Kapalama Schools.

**The Princess’ Will**

The princess believed that a lack of education contributed to an enormous decrease in the
Native Hawaiian population during her lifetime. According to her husband, a prominent business
man, she hoped “that there would come a turning point, when, through enlightenment, the
adoption of regular habits and Christian ways of living, the natives would not only hold their
own in numbers, but would increase again like the people of other races” (KS, Founder of KS, 1831-1884, [biography], para. 4).

The Kapalama Schools was founded from the disposition of the princess’ will upon her death. Her will detailed the disposal of personal and real property. Codicil No. 1, section 13, dated October 31, 1883, instructed the estate’s trustees to establish two schools, identified the students to be taught, and clarified the purpose of the education. Codicil No. 2, section 4, dated October 9, 1884, provides additional instructions on the type of school to be established.

**The schools.**

The first paragraph of section 13, Codicil No. 1 provides princess’ instructions for the establishment of two schools (KS, Founder of KS, 1831-1884, Will and Codicils).

I give, devise and bequeath all of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate real and personal, wherever situated unto the trustees below named, their heirs and assigns forever, to hold upon the following trusts, namely: to erect and maintain in the Hawaiian Islands two schools, each for boarding and day scholars, one for boys and one for girls, to be known as, and called the Kapalama Schools.

**The students.**

The third paragraph of section 13, Codicil No. 1 identifies, for the trustees, which students were to be taught at the schools, “I direct my trustees … to devote a portion of each year’s income to the support and education of orphans, and others in indigent circumstances, giving the preference to Hawaiians of pure or part aboriginal blood…” (KS, Founder of KS, 1831-1884, Will and Codicils).
The purpose of the education.

The fourth paragraph of section 13, Codicil No. 1 elucidates for the trustees the purpose of education at the two schools (KS, Founder, 1831-1884, Will and Codicils).

I desire my trustees to provide first and chiefly a good education in the common English branches, and also instruction in morals and in such useful knowledge as may tend to make good and industrious men and women; and I desire instruction in the higher branches to be subsidiary to the foregoing objects.

School type.

The third paragraph of section 4, Codicil No. 2 elucidates for the trustees the type of school to be erected and maintained, “I also direct that my said trustees shall have power to determine to what extent said school shall be industrial, mechanical, or agricultural...” (KS, Founder, 1831-1884, Will and Codicils).

Kapalama Schools Today

Today the Kapalama Schools are a Kindergarten to grade 12, co-educational institution that prepares graduates for college. The revenues generated from estate lands are used to operate the Kapalama Schools according to the princess’ will.

The princess’ will also established trustees to fulfill the instructions detailed in her will. The trustees of Kapalama Schools manage the assets of the princess’ estate, currently valued at an estimated $11 billion (KS, Report on Fiscal Activities, 2013-2014). Since 1887 Kapalama Schools has served thousands of students throughout the state of Hawai`i.

Native Hawaiians

Since all of the students at the Kapalama Schools are Native Hawaiians, information pertaining to Native Hawaiians has been provided to understand the current setting in the state of
Hawai`i and how it relates to the founding of the school and the marginalized people that the school serves.

The 2011 State of Hawai`i Data Book determined the state’s total population to be at 1,360,301. Of that number 135,422 were identified as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. According to a KS Policy Analysis and System Evaluation report, PASE, (Kana`iaupuni, Malone and Ishibashi, 2005) Native Hawaiian families in Hawai`i have the lowest mean family income of all major ethnic groups in the state. Also detailed in the report, Native Hawaiian families tend to be larger than average, meaning that their comparatively low income must support a higher number of individuals. Per capita income confirms that Native Hawaiians are socioeconomically disadvantaged (Kana`iaupuni, Malone and Ishibashi, 2005). The PASE report also claimed that Native Hawaiians lag well behind national income averages. These statistics indicate an ongoing need for initiatives that improve the economic prospects of disadvantaged Native Hawaiians by investing in human capital and expanding economic opportunities. Promising efforts include the promotion of postsecondary education through financial aid and scholarship programs, as well as programs that support Native Hawaiians in career fields in which the population is typically underrepresented, such as science and medicine.

**Purpose of Background Information**

The Kapalama Schools is a unique private educational institution. Understanding the background of this institution is necessary to fully understand KS graduates that are mainland college students and the participants of this study. In the United States, there is no private educational institution similar to the Kapalama Schools. The sole purpose of the estate that supports the Kapalama Schools is to provide financial support to the institution into perpetuity. The mission of the estate, when it was established and to this day, is to reverse an enormous
decline in population through education of Native Hawaiian children. Understanding KS graduates’ views, beliefs and values of the education they received through the efforts of a Hawaiian princess is pivotal in understanding their motivations.

Relevant Theories

This section presents theories relevant to this particular study on college student persistence. This section starts with a discussion about the use of a theoretical perspective. This study then reviews numerous strands of existing literature that have explored different aspects of college student persistence. Considerable discussion has been conducted on student involvement, integration, and engagement theories. Other relevant theories are presented and discussed: motivation, success, identity, financial aid, and social support. Two studies presented in this section are of Native Hawaiians, which is a partial demographic of this study.

Theoretical Perspective

“The theoretical framework is derived from the orientation or stance that you bring to your study, and every study has one” (Merriam, 2009, p. 66). According to Yin (2009) a theoretical proposition shapes the data collection plan and gives priorities to relevant analytic strategies. Merriam stated that “most qualitative research inherently shapes or modifies existing theory in that (1) data are analyzed and interpreted in light of the concepts of a particular theoretical orientation, and (2) a study’s findings are almost always discussed in relation to existing knowledge (some of which is theory) with an eye to demonstrating how the present study has contributed to expanding the knowledge base,” (2009, p 70).

This study was guided and influenced by a student involvement theoretical perspective as researched and reported by Alexander Astin (1999). Astin’s theory that postulates that student involvement plays an important role in student learning and development. Based on the purpose
and the theoretical framework, the research method appropriate for this study was a qualitative case study method.

Many researchers have used Alexander Astin’s student involvement theory as the theoretical perspective for their studies. Astin's study on student involvement was the lens this research study employed.

The use of this perspective was the impetus for a deeper understanding of college student persistence of 2012 and 2013 graduates of the Kapalama Schools that studied on the mainland. This theoretical perspective, however, did not prevent the discovery or inclusion of other important perspectives. This study was not constricted by a student involvement theory.

**Astin’s Student Involvement Theory**

Alexander Astin (1999) claimed that his interest in a theory of student development was partly practical. He hoped "to bring some order into the chaos of the literature" (1999, p. 518). Astin had been engaged in student development research for more than 20 years.

According to Astin (1999, p. 523) “the theory of student involvement has its roots in a longitudinal study of college dropouts (Astin, 1975) that endeavored to identify factors in the college environment that significantly affected the student’s persistence in college.” Astin reported (1999, p. 523) that “virtually every significant effect could be rationalized in terms of the involvement concept… every positive factor was likely to increase student involvement in the undergraduate experience, whereas every adverse factor was likely to reduce involvement.” To put it simply, the factors that contributed to student’s remaining in college suggested involvement, whereas those that contributed to the student’s departure implied a lack of involvement (Astin, 1999).
Astin claimed, “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (1999, p. 518). Astin focuses on the student’s actions. Astin's study identified specific types of involvement that he believed could positively impact student learning and personal development. Astin (1999) referred specifically to residing on campus, joining sororities and fraternities, being involved in ROTC or a research project, and having a job on campus as factors that contributed to persistence. Astin explained that there are many ways college students could be involved. His list of involvement types was not all-inclusive. However, Astin’s list primarily involved actions that a student could perform. The actions and steps educational institutions could effect was considered but was not the primary concern. Astin’s findings from his student involvement study placed the primary responsibility of learning on the students.

The student involvement theory appealed to him for four reasons. First Astin believed that his theory was simple, not requiring a "maze consisting of a dozen boxes interconnected by two-headed arrows" to explain the theory (1999, p. 518). Second, Astin believed that the theory could "explain most of the empirical knowledge about environmental influences on student development" (1999, p. 518). Third, Astin believed that the theory was "capable of embracing principles from widely divergent sources as psychoanalysis and classical learning theory" (1999, p. 518). Lastly Astin believed the student involvement theory could be used to guide researchers in their investigation of student development and also by college administrators and faculty "to help them design more effective learning environments" (1999, p. 518).

Astin believed that a highly involved student, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying. Other examples of high involvement are spending much time on campus, participating in student organizations, and interacting frequently with faculty members and other
students (Astin, 1999). Conversely, Astin argues that an uninvolved student "neglects studies, spends little time on campus, abstains from extracurricular activities, and has infrequent contact with faculty members or other students" (1999, p. 518).

An important point to understand about student involvement, according to Astin (1999), is not what an individual thinks or feels, but instead what an individual does or how an individual behaves that defines involvement.

Astin believed that the student involvement theory has five basic postulates (1999). First, involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects, in general such as a student experience or specific such as studying for a chemistry examination (Astin, 1999). Second, involvement occurs along a continuum; "different students manifest different degrees of involvement in one object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times" (1999, p. 519). Third, involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features (Astin, 1999). A quantitative feature, for example, considers the number of hours a student studied. A qualitative feature, for example, considers whether a student comprehends an assignment or was merely daydreaming. Fourth, "the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program (Astin, 1999, p 519). Lastly, the "effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement" (Astin, 1999, p. 519).

Astin discusses a 1975 study of dropouts that produced findings regarding the "fit" between the student and the college. Astin asserted that "students are more likely to persist at religious colleges if their own religious backgrounds are similar; Blacks are more likely to persist at Black colleges than at White colleges; and students from small towns are more likely to persist
in small than in large colleges" (Astin, 1999, p. 524). This matching of category or class appears to be an obvious social convention that suggests that this is how the world works. This, of course, is a generalization.

Astin explains that the "origin of such effects probably lies in the student's ability to identify with the institution," (1999, p 524). It is easier to become involved when one can identify with the college environment (Astin, 1999). It could be argued that greater student involvement could increase student persistence.

In his study, Astin identified several significant environmental factors (1999) that contributed to student involvement. Residing on campus provided students more time and opportunities to get involved in all aspects of campus life. Students that reside on campus also developed a stronger identification and attachment to undergraduate life. Students that joined sororities and fraternities, and participated in extracurricular activities such as athletics were less likely to drop out.

Participation or involvement in sports had a pronounced, positive effect on persistence (1999). Having a job on campus also facilitated retention, according to Astin (1999).

Astin professed, “One finds not only that the problems being studied are highly diverse but also that investigators who claim to be studying the same problem frequently do not look at the same variables or employ the same methodologies” (1999, p 518).

Various studies were reviewed to gain knowledge and understand the topic of college student persistence. Several other studies were reviewed for general understanding and relevance: Tierney’s (1999) and Deyhle’s (1995) cultural integrity theory, Kuh and Love’s (2000) study on cultural congruence, Museus and Quaye’s (2009) cultural agents theory, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and associates (2010) study on student engagement, Museus and

**Cultural Integrity Theory**

Tierney (1992, 1999) asserted that expecting college students to sever ties with their cultural heritages places a needless burden on minority college students to assimilate to their respective college environments "rather than recognizing an institutional responsibility to facilitate those students' socialization" (Museus and Quaye, 2009, p. 70). Deyhle (1995) and Tierney (1999, p. 84) highlighted the importance of "cultural integrity" which focuses on the affirmation of students' cultural identities and propelled by "programs and teaching strategies that engage students' racial/ethnic backgrounds in a positive manner toward the development of more relevant pedagogies and learning activities."

Racial/ethnic minority college students benefit from being secure in their own cultural heritages, according to empirical evidence (Deyhle, 1995; Helm, Sedlacek, and Frieto, 1998; Museus, 2008; Tierney, 1992).

Museus (2008) "conducted a qualitative examination of the experiences of 24 Asian American and Black undergraduates and found that ethnic student organizations facilitated the adjustment and membership of those students of color in college by functioning as spaces that provide cultural familiarity, vehicles for cultural advocacy and expression, and sources of cultural validation" (p. 71). This example involving Asian American and Black college students informs Native Hawaiian college students of the challenges they face and how maintaining their ethnic identity can be a positive factor in college persistence.

The uniqueness of Hawai`i from mainland cultures has created a need for some Native Hawaiian college students studying on the mainland to create their own social groups or school
organizations. Membership in a club or organization is a way to share a common identity, a common past, and current experiences. Many mainland colleges and universities have Hawai‘i clubs. Several can easily be located on the Internet using different names such as “Hawai‘i club,” “Hui o Hawai‘i,” and “Hawaiian club.” A common theme expressed online by these clubs is to provide a sense of `ohana for many homesick students from the islands.

**Cultural Perspective Theory**

Kuh and Love (2000) proposed, "The level of incongruence between students' precollege cultures and dominant campus culture is inversely related to persistence (Museus and Quaye, 2009). Stated differently, a considerable difference in cultures relates to weak persistence, while a small difference in cultures relates to strong persistence. Kuh and Love (2000) further proposed "students for whom there exists a high level of distance between those cultures must either acclimate to the dominant campus culture or become immersed in one or more enclaves (i.e., subcultures) to successfully find membership in and persist through college" (Museus and Quaye, 2009, p. 71).

This perspective behooves prospective college students, Native Hawaiians and other minorities, to research the cultures of prospective colleges in an attempt to identify the amount of congruence or incongruence between the student's culture and culture of the college being considered. Vast incongruence may well be a telltale sign of unnecessary difficulties ahead. However, prospective college students from Hawai‘i that have little or no experience with mainland cultures, may believe that a certain amount of unfamiliarity is normal, is expected, and may require effort on their part to "fit in."

As pointed out, the challenge can be measured by the variance of cultural incongruence. It can also be measured in the amount of time a student is willing to experience a challenge.
Time could be measured in semesters or years. Hawai`i college students studying at mainland colleges that transfer to a college at home before the end of their first semester possibly could not cope or overcome a challenge or challenges.

**Cultural Agents Theory**

Empirical research conducted on college students has revealed the importance of college students establishing cultural agents (e.g., faculty and peers) on their respective campuses (Museus and Quaye, 2009). There are two different categories of cultural agents, collective and individual. Collective cultural agents refer to groups such as academic programs, informal peer groups, cultural centers, and student organizations. "Evidence supports the significance of... ethnic student organizations and ethnic studies departments in the adjustment and retention of students of color" (Museus, 2008, p. 71-72.). Individual cultural agents refer to individual faculty, administrators, staff, and other students who can function as cultural translators, mediators and models. Research has placed less emphasis on the role of individual cultural agents (Kuh and Love, 2000; Tinto, 1987, 1993). "Cultural translators, mediators, and models are individuals in the campus culture who can help racial/ethnic minority students navigate their home and campus cultures simultaneously" (deAnda, 1984, Museus and Quaye, 2009). Per Museus and Quaye (2009, p. 72), based on their own experiences, translators offer advice about the socialization process; mediators provide information to minority students about successfully navigating mainstream cultural norms and practices; and models expose individuals to specific behaviors they can emulate to promote the minority student's socialization.

Evidence suggests that the relationship between home cultures and campus cultures influence of minority students influences college persistence (Museus and Quaye, 2009). A racial minority student’s home culture may be vastly different from the campus culture but an
adaptable student may overcome the difficulties and persist. Conversely, a racial minority student’s home culture may be similar to his or her campus culture however the student may be unable to adapt and persist.

Native Hawaiian college students can surely benefit from utilizing a cultural agent. Tackling substantial cultural differences without assistance is unnecessary. If the cultural agent concept is not practiced at a college or university, it may be necessary for the Native Hawaiian college student to take the initiative to identify and seek out individuals and collective cultural agents. An ideal scenario would be to identify a cultural agent that is also a Native Hawaiian that has successfully integrated into the institution's culture. The information learned from this cultural agent could be viewed as invaluable.

**Student Engagement Theory**

For several decades substantial research has been conducted on college education achievement, college persistence, and college departure. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and associates (2010) suggests that “What students do during college counts more for what they learn and whether they will persist in college than who they are or even where they go to college” (2010, p. 8). Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and associates (2010) claim that student engagement has two key components that contribute to student success (p. 9):

- The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success. The second is the ways the institution allocates resources and organizes learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities.

Factors that foster student success at higher education institutions are under the control of colleges and universities. Colleges may claim to provide high-quality learning environments for
their students citing honors programs, leadership development programs, and collaboration with faculty members on research projects (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and associates, 2010). However students involved in these programs may not necessarily be meaningfully engaged.

Of the components identified by Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and associates (2010) that contribute to student success, resource allocation and organization of learning opportunities and services are college and university policy decisions which students have no control. Students have considerable control over the amount of time and effort they expend towards their studies. Native Hawaiian college students should appreciate the various efforts their respective colleges and universities have made to improve graduation rates however more importantly students must realize that their earnest efforts are also necessary. There is no substitute for student effort.

**Social Capital and Institutional Agents Theory**

The Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System reports that 59% of White students who begin higher education at a 4-year college complete a bachelor’s degree within six years (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Asian Americans are reported to have high college graduation rate (65%) when aggregated, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2005). Aggregating Asian American statistics on college graduation rates misrepresents the actual situation regarding the various different Asian American subgroups of which there are several.

Disaggregated data suggest that some ethnic subgroups within the Asian American population have lower graduation rates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The rates of earning college degrees among subgroups of Asian Americans are: 57% for Pakistani Americans, 55% for East Indian Americans, 54% for Chinese Americans, 26% for Vietnamese American, 14% for Hmong American, 13% for Cambodian Americans, and 12% for Laotian American (Museus and Jayakumar, 2012).
Evidence indicates that institutional agents connecting with racial minority undergraduates can be a critical factor in those students’ success (Museus and Quaye, 2009; Museus and Neville, 2012). The definition of “institutional agents” used in this context is similar to the definition of “individual cultural agents” used in Museus and Quaye, (2012). Institutional agents are college faculty, administrators, and staff who positively influence students’ success and provide them with access to social capital. Key institutional agents refer to faculty, administrators, and staff that participants identified as having a positive impact on their success. Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (n.d.) in the following way:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (n.p.)

Museus and Neville (2012) claimed that institutional agents connect racial minority students to social capital (i.e., information and support) in the broader social networks at an institution and, in turn, facilitate their success. Institutional agents can provide students with social capital in the form of knowledge (e.g., information about social norms and cultural nuances) and can serve as bridges between them and social networks (Museus and Neville, 2012). Evidence suggests that institutional agents play an important role in shaping the experiences of college students in general, and racial minority undergraduates at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), in particular (Museus and Neville, 2012).

Museus and Neville assert that for institutional agents to provide racial minority college students with access to social capital, trust and closure are required. Coleman (1988, 1990)
asserts that “social capital is embedded within interpersonal relationships, and the creation of social capital is related to the establishment of mutual ‘trust’ among people involved in those relationships” (Museus and Neville, 2012, p. 438). Museus and Neville (2012) contend that the amount of social capital that racial minority students acquire is related to a) the meaningful relationship with institutional agents (which is based on trust), b) the size of the agent’s social network, c) the trust and closure among agents within those networks, and d) the amount of resources possessed by institutional agents.

Empirical evidence suggests “educators who validate the cultural backgrounds of students of color, go above and beyond their normal duties, and exhibit a high degree of concern, support, and advocacy for racial minority undergraduates can have a positive impact on their college experiences and outcomes” (Museus and Neville, 2012).

Museus and Neville (2012) conducted an investigation on institutional agents. The overarching question that guided the inquiry was: What are the characteristics of key institutional agents who provide racial minority students with access to social capital in college? The study employed qualitative techniques through semi-structured interviews with 60 Asian American, Black, and Latino undergraduates. Qualitative techniques allowed for the exploration of a topic or concept through the obtaining and use of detailed information.

The findings revealed that the key institutional agents shared four themes or common characteristics with the students: a) shared common ground, b) provided holistic support for those students, c) humanized the educational experience, and d) provided proactive support for those students. First, students emphasized the significance of key institutional agents whom they shared common ground which allowed them to develop a trusting relationship. Second, the students highlighted the significance of key institutional agents who provided holistic support, in
other words, addressing the entire situation rather than just parts. Third, students shared positive impacts of “key institutional agents who humanized the educational experience, which permitted the development of closure in their relationships with students of color” (Museus and Neville, 2012, p. 443). Lastly, students stressed the significance of key institutional agents who shared proactive philosophies that enabled them to connect racial minority students with important information and support. Museus and Neville (2012) acknowledged that the four common characteristics are not mutually exclusive.

All of the findings pertaining to key institutional agents are important and relevant to Native Hawaiian college students' efforts. Knowing these characteristics and understanding how to capitalize on them could reduce or prevent unnecessary impediments along the higher education path. This type of knowledge could be helpful when assimilation and integration difficulties surface which may not necessarily occur at the start of the school year. Being equipped with this type of knowledge could provide Native Hawaiian college students with tools to adequately deal with difficulties and the confidence to succeed in college.

Museus and Neville (2012) related “with the exception of a few studies… higher education researchers have not utilized social capital as a framework for understanding the impact of institutional agents on the experiences and success of college students of color” (p. 447). The Museus and Neville study (2012) adds to existing empirical literature by providing analysis that utilizes social capital, trust, and closure as conceptual framework to understand the impact that institutional agents can have on Asian American, Black, and Latino college students.

From the four common characteristics of institutional agents’ findings, five conclusions were drawn. The five conclusions basically extend the discussion on the four common
characteristics clarified earlier. First, sharing common experiences and building trust in racial minority students’ relationships with minority and White agents were important to the students.

Second, previous studies supported the importance of institutional agents transcending academic discussions and providing more holistic support to Black undergraduates. The Museus and Neville (2012) inquiry supported the same assertion for Asian American and Latina/o students as well.

Third, not only does holistic support by institutional agents’ increase racial minority college students’ access to social capital, but “holistic support might be critical because it can foster racial minority students’ trust in the agent’s ability and desire to help them to find the necessary information and support to resolve their issues” (Museus and Neville, 2012, p. 448).

Fourth, literature suggests that institutional agents who care about their student’s well-being can positively influence those students’ experiences; however, students that perceive institutional agents as a friend can be a critical factor in educators’ ability to cultivate relationship closure with minority students.

The last conclusion suggests that institutional agents proactively reach out and bring information and support to racial minority students, rather than just serve students once they have sought and found support themselves.

**Museus and Parental Influence**

Museus (2013) conducted a study of parental influence on Southeast Asian American college students. Though the Museus study did not directly address a lack of integration, acculturation, or engagement of students to their respective colleges and universities, the findings increase an understanding of the students’ frame of mind and their motivations. How students approach integration, acculturation and engagement might significantly determine their feelings
and their outlook. Understanding the students' perspective, especially of racial minority students, may ultimately decrease student departure and increase student success.

The belief that Asian Americans are a monolithic group that “achieves unparalleled and universal academic success” has been studied for decades (Museus, 2013, p. 708). However, aggregating and considering all Asian Americans as a single set presents inaccurate depictions and representations. There are Asian Americans that generally excel in higher education and others that do not fare as well.

Views of Southeast Asian Americans (SEAA) at times are contradictory. In the Museus 2013 study, SEAA were identified as Cambodian, Hmong, Vietnam, and Laotian descent. Some are stereotypically viewed as an over-achieving minority model. Others view them as deviant minorities who disproportionately drop out of school, are involved in gangs, and are welfare sponges (Ngo, 2006; Ngo and Lee, 2007). Research suggests that neither view sufficiently explains the complex nature of the Southeast Asian Americans college students (Museus, 2009; Museus and Kiang, 2009; Ngo and Lee, 2007; Suzuki, 2002).

Museus attempted to correct oversimplified and misleading stereotypes of Southeast Asian Americans by producing accurate understandings based on SEAA college students’ experiences. This was essential because many SEAA college students had low college degree attainment rates compared to the national population. Evidence indicates that Vietnamese (26%), Hmong (14%), Cambodian (13%), and Laotian (12%) Americans, over the age of 25, all hold baccalaureate degrees at a rate lower than the overall national average (28%) (Museus, 2013).

There are interesting similarities and differences between SEAA and Native Hawaiian college students. Both are part of a larger racial minority group. Native Hawaiians similarly have a low baccalaureate degree attainment rate, 15%, which is also well below the national average
(Museus and Jayakumar, 2012). SEAA and Native Hawaiian college students have their own culture, in terms of beliefs, values, traditions and customs. Understanding the shared experiences of SEAA college students may inform and prepare Native Hawaiian college students.

Museus desired to increase success among SEAA undergraduates by “generating more intricate and accurate understandings of how parental influences shape the educational trajectories of SEAA college students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities” (2013, pp. 709 - 710). According to Museus, it was important to understand how cultural values (e.g., family, education), and structural forces (e.g., racism and classism) influenced the experiences and outcomes of SEAA college students as well as how these two sets of factors interact to mutually shape these students’ educational trajectories (2013).

Museus utilized qualitative research methods for this investigation to allow for the exploration of the topic and because it was the best approach for answering the “how,” “why,” and “what” questions. Thirty-four SEAA undergraduate students were selected from five public U.S. four-year colleges and universities. Two purposeful sampling techniques were employed to select the participants: the sampling for maximum variation and snowball sampling. Data was collected using two research instruments: a brief questionnaire and in-person, interviews using semi-structured questions. Data analysis was conducted by using qualitative research software and the constant comparative method.

Native Hawaiian and SEAA college students, both considered racial minorities, are often stereotyped and experience various types of discrimination. The findings from the Museus study illuminate the difficulties that SEAA college students experienced. Arguably SEAA college student experiences could also be experienced by Native Hawaiian college students.
It was necessary for Museus to identify the college students that were ethnic Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, and Vietnamese as Americans because their parents or grandparents migrated to the U.S. It was not necessary to identify Native Hawaiians as American because unlike Asians, the entire Native Hawaiian population became American upon Hawai’i becoming a state of the union.

The Museus study identified five main themes from the analysis of the collected data. First, the Museus study recognized that cultural mechanisms, such as cultural values, shape the success of Southeast Asian Americans. Previous studies suggested “cultural values that emphasize the importance of education, family, and making sacrifices for [the] family positively influence the success of SEAA students” (Museus, 2013, p. 729). The Museus study added to existing literature by providing evidence that educational expectations by parents that are understood by their children at a very young age, could be a critical factor in shaping SEAA students’ educational trajectories.

Based on the Museus study, understanding how cultural values impact the success of Southeast Asian Americans can be logically extended to Native Hawaiians due to the latter’s rich and unique culture. Native Hawaiians obviously have their own cultural values that must interact with the cultural values of their chosen educational institutions. Whether the values can co-exist, or one becomes the dominant culture may involve congruence or conflict.

The second Museus finding confirms the importance of positive parental pressure of SEAA students, underscores the students’ acceptance of those pressures, and the development of intrinsic motivation to graduate. According to the student participants, parental pressures may have been a motivating factor at an early age. Parental pressure may also have been critical as the student moved to adulthood and college life. The lack of an intrinsic motivation might have
resulted in demotivation and dropping out of college, however, this aspect was not within the scope of Museus’ study.

Many identify themselves as Native Hawaiian, few are pure, and a large portion of citizens of the state of Hawai`i are of mixed ancestry. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the population of the state of Hawai`i in 2013 was 1,404,054, of which the largest race in Hawai`i was Asian (38.3%). For 2012, the number that reported being two or more races was 23.0% (U.S. Census Bureau). With this understanding, many college students studying at mainland colleges are of mixed races and ethnicities. To complicate this further, as an example, a person that is of Hawaiian and Japanese ancestry may have been raised with strong Japanese cultural ties or vice versa. The number of Asian and Pacific Islander ethnicities and the number of possible ethnic combinations creates an obvious category of a “multiethnic background.” Simply knowing a person’s ethnicities does not identify which culture a person primarily identifies with.

Third, excessive parental pressure on SEAA students could have been detrimental towards college completion, however only two student participants of a total of 34 reported feeling excessive pressure to excel (Museus, 2013). Future research is needed to fully explain this phenomenon. Excessive parental pressure experiences of Native Hawaiian college students could certainly be collected during my interviews with research participants.

The fourth finding in the Museus study “contradicts results of earlier studies suggesting that ascribed gender roles might pose challenges for Vietnamese and Cambodian American women” (Museus, 2013, p. 730). Museus clarifies that gender may play a role in the experiences of Vietnamese and Cambodian American female students but it is possible that these students chose not to share these experiences, or the influences were not significant factors influencing their educational trajectories.
Museus’ study did confirm earlier studies claiming that “lower educational expectations” and greater emphasis on “family obligations,” rather than academic achievement, challenged Hmong American women (2013, p. 731). This finding may possibly emerge in my study. As with many cultures, many Asian and Polynesian cultures assign females particular duties not assigned to male counterparts.

Museus’ last finding elucidates the ways that parents can complicate the college major choices of SEAA college students. Previous studies on major choices among Asian Americans report that Asian American parents guide their children towards the most financially lucrative and stable majors. The Museus study finds that anxieties from parents to choose particular majors pose challenges for SEAA children prior to and during college, such as unhappiness with their majors, struggle with the decision to change majors, and being able to justify their major changes to their parents.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies have been generated for a multitude of circumstances and situations in life. These strategies address stress, defined as the negative emotional/physical state that results from being exposed to a threat (Earnest and Dwyer; 2010, Palmer, 2003). Anticipatory stress is prompted by concerns about future stressors and fear of the unknown (Gold and Friedman, 2000). Young adults may experience anticipatory stress entering the environment of college.

Three general types of coping strategies have been identified through empirically based studies (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004, Weiten, Lloyd, Dunnand Hamer, 2008): Problem-focused, emotion-focused, and meaning-focused. Problem-focused coping strategies involve addressing the cause of the problem directly, usually by devising and implementing a plan. A student that creates a new study system because the previous system proved inadequate is an
example of a problem-focused coping strategy. This particular strategy typically involves learning something new, which also affords a person a productive activity to perform in the process of correcting a problem situation.

Emotion-focused coping strategies address the emotion a person feels about a problem rather than the problem situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Reducing or minimizing the emotional stress of the problem is the objective. Transferring attention away from the problem is sought. This strategy could involve releasing pent-up energy or emotions, distraction from the problem, and dealing with or minimizing hostile feelings. Exercising, meditating and finding comfort from friends and family are three emotion-focused coping strategies.

Lastly, meaning-focused or appraisal-focused coping strategies involve modifying or reappraising the way a person perceives the problem situation which could involve denial of the problem, and altering a person’s goals and values. For example, a person’s mindset could be rearranged to interpret suffering as a growing opportunity or a valuable lesson of life. Also, finding humor in a problem situation may function as a stress reducer.

There was an expectation that the three coping strategies discussed would emerge in this study. The number of times each coping strategy type appears may prove significant.

**Albee’s Individual Level Prevention Equation**

George Albee’s (1982) study on the maximization of individual competence focused on the prevention of mental and emotional disturbances by reducing stress and improving social competence, self-esteem, and support networks. Albee claimed that “it is possible to reduce the incidence of mental and emotional disorder” in the general population (Albee, 1982, p. 1045).

Albee asked (1982, pp. 1045 - 1046), “If our purpose is to reduce the incidence of the different conditions or life-styles we refer to as mental disorder, is there a way to think about
ways of organizing our efforts?” Based on this belief, Albee created the Individual Level Prevention Equation (1982) to organize the concept. Albee identified five factors that influenced mental and emotional disturbances as stress, physical vulnerabilities, coping skills, social support, and self-esteem.

Albee’s 1982 equation included “organic factors” in the numerator (Albee, 1982). Albee’s theory as represented in *Community Psychology, Linking Individuals and Communities* (Dalton, Elias, and Wandersman, 2007) was identical except “organic factors” was replaced with “physical vulnerability.” Neither source defined or elaborated on the two factors.

Albee’s Prevention Equation consists of a theoretical quantity on the left side of the equation that represented “incidence” and a theoretical quantity on the right side, represented in the form of a fraction (Albee, 1982). The numerator contains risk factors and the denominator contains protective factors. According to Albee’s equation, efforts to reduce incidences of behavioral and emotional disorder in individuals involved reducing risk factors and increasing the protective factors. The Individual Level Prevention Equation includes the following factors of the equation:

- **Stress:** Reduce and better manage perceived stress.
- **Physical Vulnerability:** Reduce the adverse impact of a physically/biologically based vulnerability.
- **Coping Skills:** Increase problem-solving/decision-making, social skills.
- **Social Support:** Increased perceived social support.
- **Self-Esteem:** Increase self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Numerator factors of stress and physical/biological vulnerabilities have corresponding equivalents to a college campus setting. The types of stresses found on U.S. college campuses
are countless. To name a few, the transition from high school to college, unfamiliar pedagogy, roommate relations, time management, homesickness, and tuition expenses. A biological vulnerability could include genetic disorder or illness of a college student. A physical vulnerability could include a student’s security and well being while on a college campus.

Denominator factors of the equation, unlike the numerator, “are strengths or resources associated with positive individual outcomes” (Dalton, Elias, and Wandersman, 2007, p. 245). According to Albee, coping skills, the support of friends and family, and self-esteem are factors that can contribute to reducing incidences of behavioral or emotional disorder. Through interviews of college students, my study attempted to determine whether Albee’s theory could increase college student persistence. Albee claimed, “To succeed in preventive efforts is to reduce the incidence of the various forms of emotional disturbance” (1982, p. 1046).

Albee’s research focused on a general population however parallels to higher education and college students can be discerned. This suggests that decreasing stress and vulnerabilities and increasing coping, social support, and self-esteem could possibly prevent mental and emotional disturbance of college students. This could plausibly lead to a positive influence of college student persistence.

Elias (1987) extended Albee’s prevention equation from individuals by addressing environmental factors, e.g. families, schools, organizations, neighborhoods and societies. Elias’ idea complemented Albee’s individual level prevention equation (Dalton, Elias and Wandersman, 2007). The factors of Elias’ environmental level prevention equation represent the properties of settings and not the attributes of individuals (Dalton, Elias and Wandersman, 2007).
Albee modified the prevention equation in 1988. In the modified equation, the numerator had three factors: Organic Factors, Stress, and Exploitation. The denominator also had three factors, the same as previous equation: Coping Skills, Self Esteem and Support Groups.

The factor Physical vulnerabilities in the 1982 prevention equation was replaced in the 1988 version by Organic factors, a broader group and designation. The factor exploitation was added to the numerator. “Persons who are victims of exploitation in any of its myriad forms suffer serious emotional damage” according to Albee (1988, p. 21). He further explained “exploitation involves the use of excessive power by the exploiter to force victims to conform or to behave in ways that are degrading, demeaning, dehumanizing and/or dangerous” (1988, p. 21).

Albee related that the power elite of a society could, for example, exploit the environment for profit, disregard the safety of the community, contaminate the environmental, and cause birth defects (1988, pp. 20 - 21). Albee claimed powerlessness is a major form of stress. Albee believed overall success involved reducing incidences of emotional disturbances through prevention efforts. The preventive factors of Coping skills, Self-esteem and Support groups are vital in overriding risk factors. It was theorized that any improvements of preventive factors by college students can reduce incidences of emotional disturbances. The objective of having a college experience free of emotional disturbance may be unreasonable but less would be better.

**Related Research Studies**

Investigating college student persistence is complex because of a multitude of related or associated areas that exist for study, and several research methods. College student persistence has been studied under many other related topics: student attrition, student departure, student engagement, student involvement, student retention, student resilience, student transfer, college completion, college dropout, educational achievement, and educational attainment, all of which
pertains, to some degree, to the amount of time a student remains in college. Each study is usually conducted with a particular theoretical perspective to assist in understanding the findings of the study.

Astin’s student involvement theory is the theoretical lens that this study employs. The interview questions for the college student participants shall involve this particular orientation. Theories regarding student persistence in higher education have evolved for decades, but most have concentrated on individual or institutional attributes. Every theorist has his or her own recommendations on how to improve student persistence. Five studies on college student persistence were selected for inclusion in this chapter because of relevance to this study.

**Tinto and student success.**

According to Tinto (2005) some higher education institutions hire consultants to address student retention. Some address student retention only by adding a freshman seminar or a mentoring program. Tinto (2005) claimed that institutions should stop tinkering at the margins of institutional life and make enhancing student success the linchpin about which they organize their activities. He suggested that institutions should place emphasis on the conditions in which we place students rather than on the attributes of students themselves (2005). These conditions, he believed, are in the control of the institution.

Tinto put forth the idea that institutions could increase student success through the change of six particular institutional conditions: commitment, expectations, support, feedback, involvement, and learning (2005). Commitment was described as the willingness to invest resources and provide incentives and rewards needed to enhance student success (2005). Without commitment from administrators and faculty, programs for student success may begin but not prosper over the long-term.
High expectation is another condition for student success. Tinto referred to a national study conducted by Kuh (2003) that indicates that first-year students spend less time on their studies out of the classroom than what we deem necessary for successful learning. Tinto contended that students simply do not study enough. Tinto supposed that we do not expect enough of students nor educational settings that require students to study enough (2005). Tinto also believed that expectations could also be expressed in formal and informal advising (2005). He believed that formal advising is being haphazardly conducted. Some students acquire advising while others do not. According to Tinto (2005), the inability to obtain needed advice during the first year or at the point of changing majors can undermine motivation, increase the likelihood of departure, and for those who continue, result in increased time to degree completion (2005).

Tinto claimed (2005) that support, the third condition, promotes student success. Tinto (2005) believed that three types of support promote success: academic, social, and financial. Student academic support could be in the form of developmental education courses, tutoring, study groups, and academic support programs. Social support could be in the form of counseling, mentoring, and ethnic student centers (2005). Support clearly is the responsibility of the higher education institution.

The fourth condition for student success is monitoring and feedback. Tinto believed that students are more likely to succeed in settings that provide faculty, staff, and students frequent feedback about their performance (2005). Tinto referred not only to entry assessment of learning skills and early warning systems that alert institutions to students who need assistance, but also to classroom assessment techniques (2005). When used frequently, such techniques enable
students and faculty alike to adjust their learning and teaching in ways to promote learning. Both students and faculty have the responsibility to provide feedback.

Involvement is the fifth condition for student success. Tinto believed that the more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate (2005). This is especially true for first year college students when membership is questionable but critical to learning and persistence. College administrators can encourage, through advertisements, and simplify the process of joining associations, organizations, athletics and extracurricular activities. Tinto asserted that building educational communities that involve all is an important step that higher education institutions could undertake. This condition plainly supports Astin’s student involvement theory.

The last and most important condition for student success is learning. Tinto (2005) supposed that students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that foster learning. He claimed that students who are actively involved in learning, who spend more time on task, especially with others, are more likely to learn and, in turn, more likely to stay and graduate (2005). This condition corresponds with the expectation condition discussed earlier. Faculty should have high expectations of students and concurrently students should commit, with regard to their part of the arrangement of education, to learn.

As a summary, according to Tinto (2005), unfortunately the educational experience of most first-year students were 1) not involved, 2) the expectations for their learning were not very high, and 3) the time they spent on task was disappointingly low. He believed that learning seemed to be a spectator sport in which faculty talk dominates and where few students actively participate. This typically describes the learning experiences of first-year students as isolated learners whose learning is disconnected from that of others. In other words what is being learned
in one course is unconnected to what is being learned in another. The learning experience makes it difficult to be involved.

Lastly Tinto (2005, p 5) suggested that institutional policy must provide for incentives and rewards for faculty to work together to construct educational settings that promote the active involvement and learning of all students.

The assertions made in this journal article by Tinto, do not appear to be supported by any particular research study. Tinto seems to have simply compiled a list of areas that higher education institutions could address to improve college student success. He believed higher education institutions should determine how they should help students learn and not how to teach students. Tinto was more concerned about the learning environment in which we ask students to learn, and he argued that the educational setting that higher education institutions should address is already under their control (2005).

Interestingly Tinto believed that all six of the conditions to be addressed are the exclusive responsibility of higher education institutions, and not college students. For example, Tinto claimed the condition of commitment referred to the college's willingness to invest adequate resources to enhance student success. He believed this was the most important condition and that students are more likely to succeed when they find themselves in settings that are committed to their success. Tinto did not suggest in any way that commitment could or should also be demonstrated by and be a responsibility of college students.

Tinto also believed that the condition of learning was the responsibility of the higher education institution to build settings (2005). He believed that students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that foster learning (2005).
Through interviews, I attempted to determine whether any of Tinto’s conditions occurred with the KS graduates, and if any did occur, whether the KS graduate believed it influenced college persistence. It was assumed that students that experienced a condition would be positively influenced to persist, while students that did not experience a condition would not have had a positive influence to persist. This may be an oversimplification of the situation, which is more complicated. The intensity of the conditions, the number of conditions involved, coupled with adverse influences all comes together to influence a student’s persistence.

Tinto’s Student Success journal article was included in this literature review because it was a large list of conditions or factors that could improve college retention. I studied student involvement with professors, classmates, roommates, and with associations, athletics and extracurricular activities. These factors were also found in Tinto’s list.

I also read other studies that referenced Tinto's Student Success study. It was important to review Tinto's seminal Student Success study because it was highly referenced and quoted.

**Student departure and integration.**

Tinto's integration theory (1987, 1993) "posits that undergraduates' levels of integration into the academic and social systems of their respective campuses shape those students' commitments to their goals and institutions, which, in turn, determine their likelihood of persistence" (Museus and Quaye, 2009, p. 69). In other words, it could be argued that integration in college could lead to college commitment to the institution, which could lead to college persistence. Successively, college persistence could lead to educational achievement.

Tinto’s research (1988) employed Arnold Van Gennep’s concept of the rites of membership in tribal societies as the basis to study college students. Van Gennep professed in his classic study entitled The Rites of Passage (1960) that life was comprised of a series of passages
leading individuals from membership in one group to another. According to Van Gennep the process of transmission of relationships between succeeding groups was marked by three distinct phases, the rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. Oddly, in his book, Van Gennep related the rites of passage to various life events but not in any way to educational achievement. Tinto’s study suggested that college students must separate from their prior lives as high school students, make the transition to college life by accepting the new norms, and becoming fully incorporated in college life.

Tinto (1988) argued that the first stage of separation entails some form of parting from past habits and patterns. Some degree of transformation is involved which may include rejection of those in the past. For virtually all students, per Tinto, the process of separation from the past is at least somewhat stressful and the pains of parting at least temporarily are disorienting. Staying in college may depend on students’ willingness to leave their former communities.

The second stage of transition, according to Tinto (1988) involves new college students that have not yet acquired the norms and patterns of behavior appropriate in the new community of college. Personal bonds, which underlie community membership, have not yet been firmly established. College students who are unable to adjust may experience stress and confusion, which may lead to student departure. Students that learn how to direct their energies to solve their problems can thrive and progress. Tinto’s research (1988) claimed that it is the individual’s response to those conditions that finally determines staying or leaving college.

A student that passes through the stages of separation and transition becomes integrated or incorporated into the community of the college, the third stage. Tinto (1988) argued that because social interactions are the primary vehicle through which integrative associations arise, individuals have to establish contact with other members of the institution, students and faculty.
alike. Tinto believed that unlike incorporation in traditional societies, individuals in college are not often provided with formal rituals and ceremonies whereby such contacts are ensured. Social contacts occur through formal orientation programs, which do not provide extended contact, and through other kinds of programs such as fraternities/sororities, student dormitory associations, student unions, extracurricular programs and athletics programs. Students are encouraged to determine which program/group is appropriate but are not required to join.

According to Tinto (1988) students may choose not to become incorporated in their college’s community. Rather than adopt values and behavioral styles that are seen as discordant with their own, they may decide to voluntarily withdraw in order to seek membership in other settings. Withdrawal could result in a transfer to another college or a permanent departure from higher education. Other settings could involve joining a branch of the military, and employment.

Though Tinto focuses the responsibility of separating, transitioning and integrating on the student, the college could also establish programs, create collaborative environments, and make changes to existing situations that could ease the process for the students.

Tinto suggests (1988) that college students are provided with limited formal rituals and ceremonies, typically in the form of a formal orientation, which does not provide extended contact needed for the establishment of community membership. Tinto (1988, p. 445) continues by asserting that “institutions can do much to assist new students deal with conditions that are inherent in the first two stages of the college career,” which are separation and transition. Both the educational institution and the student are responsible for student success in terms of student educational retention and educational attainment.

Tinto's study of Van Gannep's Rites of Passage was very different from Tinto's Student Success conditions. Van Gannep's theory is linear and involves three stages or periods of time. A
student starts at the first stage and proceeds to the next stage, ultimately ending after reaching stage three. Van Gannep's theory involves a process, which makes it very different from Tinto's student success theory.

**Morow and Ackermann: The importance of motivation and sense of belonging.**

Morow and Ackermann (2012) employed a quantitative study involving an online survey to predict intents to persist in college and retention of students from their first to second year. There were several findings from this study. This study hypothesized that a sense of belonging would be significantly related to the intent to persist. Faculty support was significantly and positively related to intending to receive a degree from the university (Morow and Ackermann). This study also found that “peer support was a significant predictor of second-year retention” (p. 489). The more peer perceived support a student reported the more likely they were to have returned in the fall of their sophomore year (Morow and Ackermann, 2012).

The Morrow and Ackermann's quantitative study articulated that non-cognitive factors such as faculty support and peer pressure were important to college persistence and student retention. The category of sense of belonging contained four subscales: perceived peer support, perceived classroom comfort, perceived isolation, and perceived faculty support (Morow and Ackermann, 2012). The questions assigned to the subscales were, respectively: I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam, I felt comfortable asking a question in class, I rarely talked to other students in my class, and I felt comfortable talking about a problem with faculty (Morow and Ackermann). These subscales are student involvement factors as identified and discussed by Astin.
Many studies were reviewed for relevance and to determine inclusion into this chapter. All the studies involved, to varying extents, a level of student persistence but each study looked at different data and from different perspectives.

In this study faculty and peer support were positive factors related to intending to complete a four-year college degree and second year retention, respectively. Faculty support can certainly be connected to student involvement with professors. Both faculty and students can initiate and maintain a relationship with each other. This is not an “either/or” situation. Universities can take steps to improve the college environment and students can take responsibility for their learning by engaging in academic discussions with their professors and classmates, and associations and athletics.

This study was selected because it was recently conducted in 2012, and it was necessary to ensure that I was aware of new issues and concerns that may have emerged about the topic since early research produced by Tinto and Astin.

**Oliveira and Native Hawaiian success.**

This dissertation research study (Oliveira, 2005) was a secondary analysis of data previously collected from the Completion, Persistence Transfer and Success of Kamehameha Students (CP-TASKS) project. There were two purposes for the Oliveira study. The first purpose was to determine the factors that have the greatest influence on Bachelor’s degree completion for the CP-TASKS project (Oliveira, 2005). The second purpose was to assist educators and institutions in their efforts to increase college persistence and graduation rates for students of Hawaiian ancestry (Oliveira, 2005).

The study attempted to determine whether parent encouragement, high school experience, college financial aid, and Hawaiian sense of belonging influenced Bachelor’s degree completion.
The participants in this study were Native Hawaiian high school graduates to include Kamehameha Schools graduates, from the years 1993, 1994 and 1995. This study involved a 54-item survey, which was completed by and collected from 515 participants. The research data was collected in 2005. This quantitative research study found that financial aid was the most likely predictor of Bachelor’s degree completion for the study participants. Parent encouragement and specific opportunities in high school (e.g., completing advanced science courses) were also significant predictors. Parent encouragement was defined as a construct that refers to the encouragement given in high school by the student’s mother and/or father to attend college and/or the stress of importance of having a college education (Oliveira, 2005).

This study researched whether specific areas of concern influenced B.S. completion. My study identified three different areas of concern, involvement with professors, involvement with classmates and roommates, and involvement with associations, athletics and extracurricular activities. These areas of concern essentially cover the major types of student involvement.

Oliveira's study focused on parent encouragement, high school experience, college financial aid, and Hawaiian sense of belonging. I chose to include her study because I wanted to fully understand these areas of concern to determine whether any should be included in my study. Understanding the experiences of the research participants in the context of the areas of concern could disclose valuable findings that could improve the way KS and parents prepare graduates to study at mainland colleges.

All the research participants of the Oliveira study were Native Hawaiians. The research participants of my study was a narrower population, 2012 and 2013 graduates of the Kapalama Schools. Though these participants are Native Hawaiians, they had a very different and unique educational experience when compared to most Native Hawaiians that experienced a public
school education. The Kapalama Schools is a private K-12 school and was established to give preference to children of Hawaiian ancestry.

**Matsumoto and Native Hawaiian student persistence.**

This dissertation research study (Matsumoto, 2010) involved a secondary analysis of data gathered through the CP-TASKS project, which examined the educational outcomes of 515 Native Hawaiians that graduated from high school in 1993, 1994, and 1995. The majority of the participants graduated from the Kamehameha Schools. The other participants received postsecondary financial aid from the Ke Ali`i Pauahi Foundation. The research questions focused on the differences between the college graduates and the college non-completers as they related to residency, peer involvement, and commitment to faculty. Astin’s student involvement theory was the theoretical framework for this study.

The Matsumoto study (2010) revealed that Native Hawaiian college completers were significantly more likely than non-completers to have resided on campus, engaged with their peers, and engaged with faculty. Her overall “findings supported Astin’s theory of student involvement, in that living on campus and engaging with faculty and peers are variables his work has identified as mattering for college completion” (Matsumoto, 2010, p. 56).

Matsumoto’s areas of focus were residency, peer involvement, and commitment to faculty. The last two are similar to two of my three areas of focus, involvement with professors, and involvement with classmates and roommates.

Matsumoto’s study utilized data collected by the Completion, Persistence, Transfer and Success of Kamehameha Schools (CP-TASKS) project and was also utilized in the Oliveira 2005 study. Though both the Matsumoto (2010) and the Oliveira (2005) studies researched college completion, they had different purposes. The Oliveira (2005) study’s sought to determine
whether factors such as parent encouragement, high school experience, college financial aid, and Hawaiian sense of belonging influenced Bachelor’s degree completion. My study involved 2012 and 2013 Kapalama Schools graduates. The Matsumoto and Oliveira studies aggregated data from non-Kamehameha Schools graduates with Kamehameha Schools graduates, which could appropriately be considered a study of Native Hawaiian high school graduates.

The Matsumoto study was included in this literature review chapter because it was one of the few studies that involved KS graduates that have sought higher education. As mentioned previously the research populations in the Oliveira and Matsumoto studies are different from my intended study population. My study narrowly studies students that are of Hawaiian ancestry and are from a unique Hawaiian high school. It was important to consider that the participants for the Oliveira study (2005) and the Matsumoto study (2010) were not exclusively Kamehameha Schools graduates but also included Native Hawaiians that graduated from many other high schools in the state of Hawai`i.

Chapter Summary

The first section of this chapter discussed conducting qualitative research. The first section also discussed how literature was located, concerns in reviewing literature, the philosophical orientation of this study and student participant anonymity. The second section provided a background to the founding of the Kapalama Schools, including the founder, the will, the Kapalama Schools today, and Native Hawaiians. The third section of this chapter discussed the theories and previous studies relevant to and that informed this study. The next chapter discusses the research methodology for this study.
Chapter 3

Methodology

"The temptation to form premature theories upon insufficient data," remarked Sherlock Holmes to Inspector MacDonald in The Valley of Fear (Baring-Gould, 1967), "is the bane of our profession." The same could be said of those of us conducting social research in organizations since, following the customary and respected practices of the day, we tend also to theorize well in advance of our facts thus allowing for the possibility that the facts that emerge from our studies are twisted to fit a given theory.

John Van Maanen (1979, p. 539)

In this chapter I explain the research methodology I used and the reasons they were chosen. The following were discussed: the research problem, the research question, areas of focus, the purpose of the study, the research design, the research process, qualitative research, phenomenological research, case study method, research participants, pseudonyms, and informed consent. The next section discussed data collection to include sampling, and interviews. Artifacts played a useful role in this study and are discussed next. The final section relates to data analysis. Also discussed was validity/credibility, reliability, limitations, research bias, avoiding bias, personal positionality, triangulation, researcher’s role, and ending with the pilot study.

A research methodology is a plan for the execution of the research; the key is to provide sufficient detail of that plan (McDade, 1999). An essential aspect of any research study is the collection of evidence to serve as the foundation for answering the research questions and hypotheses. A research method should not be selected based on a researcher’s research method preference. The researcher selects a research method based on the specified purpose for the study (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). In other words the research design is selected after the purpose of the study is determined and not before. The research design provides the overall plan for collecting data, analyzing data, and reporting the results to answer the research question of the study (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010).
**Research Problem**

Research problems are the issues, controversies, or concerns that guide the need for a study (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). A research problem is important if there is a gap or void in the existing literature about the problem that needs to be filled (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) also claimed that a research problem is important to study if there are people whose voices have not been heard, who have been silenced, or who have been rejected in society. In this current study the voices of the Kapalama Schools, KS, graduates that have studied at mainland colleges need to be heard. Limited studies have focused on higher education involving Native Hawaiians and even fewer on KS graduates. It was important to hear the voices of KS graduates that are current and former mainland college students and have their experiences understood. This goal was pursued not to find blame or fault for any possible shortcomings that may be uncovered, but instead to find ways to improve the preparation of KS graduates for higher education on the mainland.

**Research Question**

Defining the research questions is probably the most important step to be taken in a research study. One should be patient and allow sufficient time for this task (Yin, 2009).

The purpose of this research study was to identify the various environmental and involvement factors that influence college student persistence of 2013 Kapalama Schools graduates who are current or were previous mainland college students.

The primary research question:

What factors influenced college student persistence of 2013 Kapalama Schools graduates that studied at mainland colleges?
The secondary research questions:

1. How does the environment influence student persistence?
2. How does involvement influence student persistence?

**Areas of Focus**

This study has three areas of focus:

1. Student involvement with professors.
2. Student involvement with peers and roommates.
3. Student involvement in student associations, athletics and extracurricular activities.

**Purpose of Study**

A purpose for research indicates the researcher’s major intent or aim for conducting the research study (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify various factors that influence persistence of 2012 and 2013 KS graduates who are or were mainland college students.

**Research Design**

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of study (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) also claimed that “a research design is a logical plan for getting from “here” to “there,” where “here” may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and “there” is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions. Between “here” and “there” may be a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of relevant data (Yin, 2009).
Another way of thinking about a research design is as a “blueprint” for your research, dealing with at least four problems: what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the results (Philliber, Schwab, and Samsloss, 1980), (Yin, 2009).

A research design is a set of procedures that researchers use to collect, analyze, and report their data in a research study (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). Qualitative research designs are sets of procedures for collecting, analyzing and reporting text and image data to answer research questions by exploring participants’ views (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010.)

A qualitative phenomenological case study research method was used for this research study. The reasons for this decision are clarified in succeeding sections.

**Research Process**

The following research process by Plano Clark and Creswell (2010) identifies the research process, which was used for this study.

1. Identifying a Research Problem
2. Reviewing the Literature
3. Specifying a Purpose
4. Selecting a Research Design and Collecting Data
5. Analyzing Data and Reporting Results
6. Interpreting the Research
7. Disseminating and Evaluating the Research

**Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998). Since a qualitative study focuses on a process, a meaning,
and an understanding, the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (2009, p. 5) contended that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.” For example, rather than determining how many college freshmen return for their sophomore year, which could be accomplished by a review of returning names, a qualitative study would be more interested in why students did and did not return. The interview questions asked in my study would involve a qualitative research design because the intent of the questions was to understand the students’ college experiences as they relate to persistence.

Research conducted utilizing a qualitative approach usually addresses a research problem that requires a thorough understanding of a phenomenon and an exploration because little is known about the phenomenon (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010).

This research study does not involve measurements. This research study attempts to understand the experiences of college students and college persistence. Little is known about this particular and unique population. This research study gained an in-depth understanding of college students’ experiences. A qualitative research method was employed to obtain rich descriptions of the college experiences of KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges.

**Phenomenological Research**

Phenomenology seeks to uncover the meaning of the phenomenon and its underlying essence by interviewing several individuals who have experienced it (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010). The task of the phenomenologist is to depict the essence or basic structure of experience.
(Merriam, 2009). Merriam discussed six research strategies of qualitative research: basic qualitative research, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, narrative analysis, and critical qualitative research (2009).

The research method informing this research was phenomenology because I examined and described the lived experiences of KS graduates that were mainland college students. Since the study of a phenomenon involves understanding the participants’ perspective, this is also a qualitative type study. To get at the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the interview is the primary method of data collection (Merriam, 2009).

Research participants were interviewed in a private or semi-private setting with pre-constructed and spontaneous constructed questions. Their rich experiences were captured and analyzed. Common themes on involvement and environmental factors that influence college student persistence could emerge from their voices. It was hoped that from these themes that a better understanding of their experiences is acquired.

**Case Study Method**

Yin (2009) explained that “case study is but one of several ways of doing social science research” and that “(e)ach method has peculiar advantages and disadvantages, depending upon three conditions: the type of research question, the control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena.”

Also according to Yin, 2009, knowing when to use the case study method largely depends on your research question(s). He explained that the more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g., “how” or “why” some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method is relevant. In my case I desire to know why some KS graduates
continued higher education while others did not. For example, did KS graduate experience homesickness, while others enjoyed meeting new people and learning about different cultures?

In general, case studies are the preferred method when the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. These questions distinguish case study research from other types of social science research. This research study attempts to identify the environmental and involvement factors that influenced college student persistence. The quality of the data collected was determined by many factors such as, but not limited to, the ability of research participants to remember their experiences, and the willingness of the research participants to share experiences, to include disparaging, or unflattering experiences. Since these experiences occurred previously on the mainland, and I was not present to directly witness these experiences, the only data available to me was from those that were involved in these experiences.

Yin explained that a common concern about case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization, meaning it is difficult to generalize from a single case (2009). Yin goes on to explain, “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.” Expanding on this notion, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a sample, and in conducting a case study, the investigator’s goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization), not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). For this study, it was my assumption that there was a positive correlation between KS graduates that demonstrated college student involvement, and learning and development, which led to college persistence.
Case study designs maximize their quality through four critical conditions that are related to design quality: (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity, and (d) reliability (Yin, 2009).

A case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest was in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998). This study utilized a private semi-structured interview research instrument on 2012 and 2013 KS graduates.

To understand the phenomenon of KS graduates attending college, with some progressing while others withdraw, it was important to fully understand the essence of their college experiences. Understanding their everyday experiences during their college days and hearing their voices could help to understand the factors that influence college student persistence. To this end a qualitative case study was necessary.

The reason a case study method was selected is because a case study involves an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Also, according to Merriam (2009) case study could be a single person who is a case example of some phenomenon, a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy.

A qualitative case study method was selected because this study desired to understand past experiences of KS graduates, a phenomenon that has already occurred. A case study was also necessary for this research because I was interested in understanding whether KS graduates believed that student involvement was important towards their educational goals of continuing college study and eventually obtaining a college degree. It was necessary for this study to collect the actual words from the college students describing experiences from their memories and
through their lenses. Capturing their descriptions of their everyday experiences was crucial in understanding how they felt about their college life.

**Research Participants**

The study participants were 2012 and 2013 graduates of the Kapalama Schools. They are current or former students at various mainland colleges. My study was limited to KS 2012 and 2013 graduates that are or were attending college on the mainland. There are over 400 Kapalama School graduates each school year. I intended to interview ten to twelve KS graduates.

**Pseudonyms**

Traditionally research studies of this nature do not disclose the names of the study participants for several reasons. Understandably study participants are more likely to participate in a study that does not reveal their names. Once study participation was agreed upon, it was imperative that participants are truthful and open during the interview for accurate and thorough data collection. In this case the data included personal experiences and intimate feelings. By not revealing their names hopefully their comfort level would increase and contribute to candid sharing. Also, anonymity likely reduces or eliminates opportunities of retribution by others. To this end, several pseudonyms were used in place of true names in an attempt to decrease multiple-identifiers.

The focus of this study was directed at a specific school on the island of Oahu, state of Hawai’i. The true name of the school was not disclosed. Instead the pseudonym, Kapalama Schools, and the acronym “KS” was used.

A cross-reference document containing all the true names and the assigned pseudonyms was created. While conducting this study and after it was completed, I secured and maintain this document and related materials utilizing current confidentiality protocols.
The name of the schools’ founder was also not used in this dissertation. Lastly the names of the colleges and universities attended by the student participants were also not disclosed in this dissertation.

**Informed Consent**

An agreement to participate in the interviews was obtained from each participant prior to conducting interviews. A cover letter was provided to explain the details of the research study.

**Data Collection**

Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interview questions. Follow-up questions, spontaneously constructed to address unclear aspects of student participants’ anecdotes were also used in the interview. Data collection was enhanced by the use of artifacts. Though interview questions were prepared, they could not be considered all encompassing or comprehensive. Student-selected artifacts had the ability to inform this study of student participant experiences that were not questioned.

**Purposeful Sampling**

Merriam, 2009, identified the more common types of purposeful sampling as typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, and snowball or chain sampling. Since I knew of two 2013 KS graduates that attended a college on the mainland, a “snowball” research participant selection method was employed to find other participants. This study started with a couple of KS graduates and their parents to identify additional classmates from their class who were willing to participate in this study. The KS graduates and their parents were contacted via email and via phone and asked to participate in interviews.

Since I was unable to obtain a sufficient number 2013 KS graduates and parents, it was necessary to enlarge the sample pool to include the 2012 KS graduation class.
Interviews

As mentioned earlier the interviews were in-person, one-on-one in private or semi-private locations. The interviews involved prepared questions and spontaneously constructed follow-up questions. I asked each participant for, and received, approval to audio record the interview.

Upon initially meeting the KS graduate, I discussed a common experience, being KS graduate. Identifying a common ground was an attempt on my part to put the interview participants at ease and hopefully result in open and uninhibited sharing of their college experiences. As KS graduates, though a generation apart, we shared unique experiences such as the application and admission process for acceptance to the schools, having studied in the same classrooms and walked in same halls, and attending many special school events such as the Founder's Day program.

Artifacts

Artifacts were involved in this research study as another data collection instruments, or as a mode of inquiry. Information collected from the research participants contributed to understanding the essence of the college students’ experiences and college student persistence. The use of artifacts facilitated and enhanced, to some degree, the recollection of forgotten, overlooked or even suppressed feelings and experiences about significant and meaningful events in a college student’s life. It is likely that student-selected artifacts contributed to aspects about the student participant that the interview questions did not reveal.

Unobtrusive measures allow investigators to examine aspects of a social phenomenon without interfering with or changing it (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Unobtrusive measures include artifacts, covert observations and nonreactive observations. Unobtrusive measures are particularly valuable due to the methodological weaknesses of self-report measures. Participants
often react to interviews and questionnaires in a suspicious or distrustful manner, thereby skewing the accuracy of their responses. Responses from KS graduates were not viewed as distrustful but since the information was provided months after the actual experience, their recollection may not be accurate.

The research participants were asked to bring an artifact from their college experience. They were not told to bring a specific artifact. I preferred they determined on their own what was important to their college experience, that was portable in terms of size and weight, and that they don't have a problem sharing.

Collecting and analyzing artifacts used by people in a phenomenon could contribute and promote an understanding of their lived experiences. In this instance, asking KS graduates to share personal artifacts that they regard as important assisted in my understanding of their experiences as college students and provide insight into how the environment and their involvement influenced college persistence.

Upon first meeting to interview KS graduates, I shared personal artifacts that I acknowledge were important and resonated with me. One artifact that I brought was my KS class ring. A student participant did share his class ring too. It was something that we had in common. We shared a unique experience. My ring was something that was familiar to them. They joined the community of KS graduates. We have something in common. It appeared that they were comfortable talking with me and freely answered my interview questions.

The artifacts brought and shared by KS graduates in their interviews were analyzed. The use of artifacts enhanced recollection of their experiences and information gathered through the in-person interviews.
**Definitions.**

“Artifacts are things that societies and cultures make for their own use” (Norum, 2008, p. 25). Artifacts have the potential to provide a wide variety of information about a culture and people. It can provide insight into how people lived, what they valued, their ideas and assumptions, and their knowledge and opinions (Norum, 2008). Examples of artifacts include photographs, memorabilia, tools, toys, jewelry, and clothing (Norum, 2008). Through the review of various sources it appears that there are several definitions for artifacts.

Caple (2006) maintained that the word “artifact” was derived from the Latin word “ars” or “artis” meaning skill in joining, and the word “factum” meaning deed, and also “facere” meaning to make or do. Caple claimed that:

Thus an *artifact* can be considered to mean any physical entity that is formed by human beings from a nail to the building it is in. The term “object” is also widely used to refer to any physical entity created by human beings…for the purpose of this book, the term “artifact: and “object” can be used interchangeably. (2006, p. 1)

Another definition, Berger claims (2009, p. 16) artifacts are, “relatively simple objects showing human workmanship.” Berger did acknowledge the conflict of recognizing airplanes and automobiles as artifacts though they are very complex and complicated machines that have many different smaller and less complex artifacts in them. Both Berger and Norum’s definitions involved the object being created by a human. Neither suggested an artifact could be a nature-made object such as a seashell.

A common type of artifact explained by Norum (2008) is written texts such as documents, diaries, journals, memos, meeting minutes, and letters. Artifacts are a frequently overlooked source of data that could serve to enrich a study. Artifacts could provide information
Artifacts are a unique source of information that often presents itself but is not always recognized.

Dichter also acknowledged that artifacts can be overlooked. In the Foreword of Berger’s book "What objects mean" (2009, p. 14), Dichter wrote,

The objects which surround us do not simply have utilitarian aspects; rather, they serve as a kind of mirror which reflects our own image… The things which surround us motivate us to a very large extent in our everyday behavior.

It is important to understand, according to Dichter, that though an artifact is an inanimate object, it is the responsibility of the researcher to critically examine and explore the object to determine its background, its unsaid messages, and in the end its value.

Berger (2009) further claimed that we are given and continually buy things that we hope will make us healthier and more attractive, will show our love to someone, and will enrich our lives and those of our loved ones. The objects we own also reveal a great deal about ourselves, and that studying objects is a useful way to find out about people and gain insights into the soul of man (Berger, 2009). All objects that research participants offered during the interview possessed specific meanings or represented a particular event or experience to the participants. As mentioned previously, it was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the meaning and what it represented was identified and understood.

Material culture.

Material culture, professed Berger (2009), is the world of things that people make and things that we purchase or possess, so it is part of our consumer culture. Material culture is a subject of great interest to archaeologists, anthropologist and many other kinds of social scientists and scholars because these objects provide information about what we are like and how
we live now and how we lived in earlier times. This information can be very personal and potentially can reveal intimate information about a person, event, and/or a time period.

Digital cameras and photographs.

Berger reports (2009) that photographic images are “Implicitly ideological in nature in that they are based on the world-view of the photographer” (p. 175). Photographic images offer a different way of capturing real life from other image systems such as painting. “Photographs,” Berger (2009) claimed, “are always selective interpretations of reality, and what they leave out may be more important than what they capture” (p. 176). By this he referred to what is cropped out and made the center of attention. Photographs are also highly selective because the photographer decides on a precise time to capture the image. A different time could result in a different image, which possibly impacts motion, emotion, and time of day.

Documents.

Documents include official records, public records, personal documents, letters, newspaper accounts, videos, photographs, corporate records, government documents, historical accounts, diaries, autobiographies, and so on (Merriam, 2009). The review of documents is a data collection instrument unlike conducting interviews and observations. Unlike conducting interviews and observations, the review of documents does not intrude upon or alter the setting with an investigator and also does not depend on the whims of human beings for cooperation. “Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (Merriam, 2009, p. 163.)
Significance of artifacts.

Weber (2005) elucidates that objects can denote status, wealth and position, and can be desired and controlled. Objects can also be symbols of power but also get us into trouble. “Shoes can support, seduce, impede, shame, or even lame or injure us” (Weber, 2005, p. 14).

Weber (2005) wrote about the relevance that material objects, such as shoes, could have for self-study in education. In her article Weber explained many important perspectives of shoes are commonly overlooked, and the value of critically analyzing material objects to increase understanding. According to Weber (2005, p. 16), she realized while performing a self-study “how shoes would force me to confront things I was ignoring…”

“I have used shoes as a narrative scaffolding device for describing significant aspects of my teaching identity and pedagogical practice” (Weber, 2005, p. 15). Weber’s self-study involved looking at old photographs of herself as an elementary teacher, and focusing on her footwear. While reviewing the photographs she realized the symbolic value of her footwear choices in the 1970s. She was the only one wearing corduroy pants, comfortable flat leather sandals, and bare feet. Wearing sandals felt natural and she felt like a teacher. The other female teachers in the staff photograph, all were older than her, wore stockings, dresses, and ‘proper’ low-heeled pumps or oxfords. Weber did not realize how much she ‘stood out’ before scrutinizing the photograph. She claimed that she did not consciously wear sandals to context anything, yet the difference in the shoes, she now believes, says a lot about the kind of teacher she was then and perhaps even now.

She used shoes also as a metaphor for theorizing about teaching. She explained that her father loved, designed and sold shoes, and she similarly loved, designed and peddled ideas as a schoolteacher. Weber exclaimed that sometimes while trying to squeeze herself into someone
else’s curriculum, she found herself despairing that nothing in education fits her perfectly, and whether everyone should just go barefoot (Weber, 2005).

**Artifact analysis.**

Several methods can be employed to analyze artifacts. This section explains methods by Berger, (2009); Dichter, (1960); Winick, (1968); Douglas, (1997) and Norum, (2008).

Berger (2009) explained Freud’s topographic hypothesis as having three human psyche levels: conscious, pre-conscious, and unconscious. Berger used an iceberg analogy to provide clarity the three levels. The conscious psyche is aware of our surroundings. It is viewed as the part of the iceberg that is above the water. The pre-conscious psyche is explained as what we poorly understand or recognize, such as an unclear view below the water line of an iceberg. The unconscious psyche is not accessible on our own without help guidance from psychoanalytic trained therapists, and is the part of the iceberg that is below the pre-conscious level that we cannot see.

Through this perspective Berger (2009) suggested that with a person’s conscious psyche, we know and understand what an artifact is and does. At pre-consciousness we may be aware of other aspects of the artifact’s functionality. However with the unconscious psyche there are unrecognized symbolic meanings connected to the artifact. We are not always conscious of the symbolic significance and importance of artifacts that we possess. Using analysis we should consider the meanings of the artifact at the different levels of our psyche Berger (2009).

Ernest Dichter (1960) conducted a study of cigarette lighters. Responses to researchers’ questions about cigarette lighters involved explanations of an ability to light cigarettes. It was viewed as a simple and straightforward function. Upon further probing, however, it was discovered that the respondents’ cigarette lighters were connected to matters involving mastery
and power, specifically the ability to summon fire on command. Finally it was discovered through skilled questioning and persistence that at the deepest level, knowing the lighter will work is connected to attitudes about sexual potency. The flame of the lighter apparently symbolized, at an unconscious level, sexual union being consummated. According to Berger “We can use this theory about the levels of the human psyche to analyze other artifacts, to discover the hidden or unrecognized meaning that artifacts have for us” (Berger, 2009, p. 30).

The psychoanalytical perspective provided a large number of concepts that enable researchers to analyze material culture through the ways artifacts reflect various unconscious needs, and relate to our psychological makeup (Berger, 2009).

Berger suggested (2009) that people are not aware of the symbolic significance of the objects they use, but quite obviously a large number of artifacts have either a masculine penetrating or female incorporative character to them. He claimed that we disguise the sexual nature of objects in our dreams so our dream censor will not wake us.

Semiotics from the Greek term for signs, semeion, is the science of signs. A semiotic approach to material culture regards artifacts as signs whose meaning and significance have, according to Berger (2009), to be determined by the use of semiotic concepts. Berger (2009, p. 39) reports that signs are things that stand for other things, such as the American flag stands for the United States and “for various values, historical events and other matters connected to the country.” Most of objects are naturally viewed only for their functional purpose.

Winick (1968) submitted that the Barbie Doll, as an object, was a symbol of American culture and society. He offered an interpretation of the psychological and cultural significance of Barbie Dolls and other dolls like Barbie. Winick claimed that the invention of the Barbie Doll reflected a basic change in the way young girls were socialized. Instead playing with baby dolls
and practicing to be mothers, little girls learned how to become attractive, practiced having a romantic relationship, and learned to be consumers. He claimed that Barbie Dolls changed the way young girls developed, which profoundly affected relationships between men and women. Winick professed that objects and artifacts can reveal a great deal about many different aspects of societies and can have a profound impact. Winick believed that a deeper understanding of objects was important to understand our culture and ourselves.

According to Berger (2009) a semiotic approach to material culture offers the ability to interpret artifacts and connect them to cultural codes and matters such as the socialization of children. It is important to be aware that artifacts play roles in society and their meanings are not limited to their immediate functions, (Berger, 2009).

Berger recognized (2009) from a sociologist’s perspective that a functional institution helps or contributes to the stability and maintenance of society, while a “dysfunctional” institution helps to breakdown or destabilize a society. An institution that plays no role was viewed as a “non-functional.” The concept of functionalism can also be applied to components of institutions and different entities, including artifacts (Berger, 2009). People determine the function and the usefulness of artifacts. Besides a functional aspect, artifacts can also simultaneously have a dysfunctional aspect. Artifacts also have a manifest function, which is an obvious, stated reason for using it, and a latent function, which are unconscious factors involved in using the artifact.

Berger (2009) used the example of cell phones to explain functionality of an artifact. Though the function of cell phones is to connect a person with others, a dysfunction would be that it could also disturb others. The manifest function of cell phones is to be able to make phone calls from anywhere to anywhere. A latent function of the cell phone is to control others, whether
knowingly or unknowingly. Another latent function is to avoid loneliness. Berger reveals (2009) that there is more to an object or artifact than its primary function, and the most interesting aspects of an artifact could be its “covert and often unrecognized functions” (p. 54).

The uses and gratification theory was developed to understand why people listened to soap operas or watched certain television programs (Berger, 2009). Researchers focused on the uses people made of the media they consumed and the gratifications the various media genres provided. Berger suggested (2009) that this could be applied to artifacts. The original list of uses and gratifications was modified to apply to the consumption and possession of artifacts as understood and fashioned by Berger (2009).

1. To have beautiful things. This is a psychological reward we get from having desired beautiful things to have and wear.

2. To find diversion and distinction. The purchasing of objects enables us to escape from our mundane preoccupations to enhance the quality of our lives.

3. To imitate models that we respect. Many artifacts that we purchase are due to a desire to imitate others. For example, we purchase things that movie stars advertise to imitate their desires and to be viewed as they are viewed.

4. To affirm aesthetic values. Every choice of clothing or jewelry reflects our taste, our aesthetic values and our status. Our choices connect to our lifestyles and groups with which we identify, than to our personalities and taste.

Berger reports (2009) that a sociological perspective offers some interesting insights into the role that objects and artifacts play in our lives, and it also raises questions about how these objects function and the motivation to purchase these objects. We cannot assume that we
recognize and understand the functions or the roles of artifacts. Knowing why we purchase objects helps us to understand ourselves.

Mary Douglas (1997), social anthropologist, suggests a different perspective on the reason people buy things or are accept things that they have. Douglas claims that the objects and services we buy and possess are culturally defined and are tied to our lifestyle. She explains how her idea about cultural life style theory applies to shopping and purchasing things. She identified four lifestyles: Individualist, Egalitarian, Hierarchical, and Eclectic. Membership in these lifestyles shapes their behavior as consumers, and therefore the artifacts they possess. Every artifact we buy can be placed in one of the four lifestyles. For example, if we take games as our topic, we can suggest that the Elitist would prefer Chess, the Individualist would prefer Monopoly, the Egalitarian would like Frisbee, and the Fatalist would like Russian Roulette.

In her article, Douglas wrote:

“…consumption behavior is continuously and pervasively inspired by cultural hostility. The basic choice that a rational individual has to make is the choice about what kind of society to live in. According to that choice, the rest follows. Artifacts are selected to demonstrate the choice… Food is eaten, clothes are worn, …all the rest are choices that conform with the original choice for a form of society… (Douglas, 1997, pp. 17-18)

Douglas commented that shopping is “a struggle to define not what one is but what one is not” (1997, p. 30). This suggests that it is our membership in one of the four lifestyles that shapes our consumer preferences. She further elaborated that cultural alignments is the strongest predictor of preferences…” (1997, p. 23).

Berger (2009) shared that objects do not exist in a void. By this he meant an object that was taken from its original location does not provide the examiner with original context. Was the
object a functional piece? Who manufactured it? Who originally owned it? Was the original owner wealthy? Was the object originally viewed as valuable? Without knowing its original context, the researcher may not fully understand the object (2009, pp. 98 – 99).

Yin (2009) identified six sources of case study evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. According to Yin (2009) “The procedures for collecting each type of evidence must be developed and mastered independently to ensure that each source is properly used. However, the trained case study investigator should be acquainted with the procedures associated with using each source of evidence…” (pp. 113-114).

According to Norum (2008), “Artifacts become data through the questions posed about them and the meanings assigned to them by the researcher” (p. 23). Norum reported that there is no one right way to analyze artifacts. Many disciplines can be utilized to inform the analysis of artifacts, such as anthropology, archaeology, history, human geography, ethnography, and sociology. Norum explained (2008) how artifacts are important to qualitative research:

“In the process of analysis, we are asking the data to tell us something. An artifact has a story to tell about the person who made it, how it was used, who used it, and the beliefs and values associated with it” (p. 23).

Several types of methods can be employed to analyze artifacts, depending on the artifact being examined. Types of analysis include content, discourse, document, historical, narrative, and semiotics. Depending on the particular artifact being analyzed, any method or combination of methods can be used.

The nature of an analysis process involves repeated examination and study (Norum, 2008). The process involves the researcher inferring meaning and making judgments. The
researcher must consider several factors about the nature of the artifact. Many questions must be asked about the artifact, such as: Who made it? What was the occasion? What was the purpose of the artifact? Who was the intended user (an individual or a group)? Did different people use it in different ways? What is shown through the artifact? What is absent? Why was it saved? What was happening in society or in history at the time the artifact was made? What meaning did the artifact have for the owner or user? Has the meaning changed over time? Does the meaning differ for different users?

Norum (2008, p. 24) stated, “Artifacts were created in a context and, thus, must be studied within that context.” Just as it is dangerous to take interview and observational data out of context, it is risky to take artifacts out of context (Norum, 2008). Knowing the context of the artifact requires the researcher to inquiry with available resources. In my case the student that offers the artifact will be asked questions about the artifact. Obtaining the background information about the artifact will assist in better understanding the value of the artifact to the student. In depth and probing questioning may also shed light on unrecognized importance of the student’s artifact.

Additionally, researchers must also consider the context of their own study and producing relevant research and interview questions. Norum (2009, p. 24) suggested the following questions during the analysis phase, “What is the focus of the research, and how is this artifact related? What categories of information need to be developed? What perspectives need to be developed in light of the research purpose? How do these data fit in with other data?” During the analysis phase, the context of the artifacts and the context of the study need to be addressed (Norum, 2009).
**Invitation to bring artifacts.**

This qualitative research study included two data collection instruments. The purposes of the instruments were to gather data on the college experiences of the students. The first instrument was the interview of the college students. The secondary instrument was the review of artifacts chosen, and shared by the student, and examined for underlying significance.

**Artifact protocol.**

Student participants were asked to bring two or three artifacts or objects that symbolized, represented, and/or described them personally and as a college student. The student participants were not suggested to select a specific item, such as a book or a class ring, because that might be exactly what they would bring. What they brought could be viewed as my decision and not theirs’. Therefore it was my intention not to be specific and provide a consistent explanation as to the type of artifact or object that they choose.

Additional instruction involved 1) how an artifact motivated and encouraged an uninspired student, 2) how an artifact brought happiness and delight during times of sadness, and 3) how an artifact brought clarity during confusion and bewilderment. Again no reference to a particular artifact or object was offered.

To encourage the students to participate with artifact sharing, I brought four artifacts/objects to the interviews. I informed the student participants that I would share artifacts with them.

My artifacts/objects were used as an icebreaker to develop rapport with the research participant. It was my intentions to get to know the participant and to have the study participant feel comfortable talking with me and sharing with me in discussion. Gaining insight into my background set the foundation for a relaxed and informal conversation, which lead to the
participant being comfortable sharing experiences. Conversation topics of common understandings include the annual KS annual events, KS traditions, and the buildings and facilities of today and of the past.

**Number of artifacts.**

Martinez, Borko and Stecher (2011) conducted two studies, of middle school science teachers, utilizing self-reflection and an artifact-based instrument for measuring instruction. It was acknowledged at the outset that measuring teacher instructional performance was difficult to accomplish. Self-reporting surveys are subject to error and bias. Interviews as collection instruments depend on participants’ accurate memories of events from months earlier. Martinez, Borko and Stecher (2011) claimed, “artifacts are less susceptible to biases and social desirability effects” (p. 43). “Artifact-based instruments may illuminate features of instruction not apparent even through transitive classroom observation,” according to Martinez, Borko and Stecher (2011, p. 38). Reviewing collected artifacts can be suitable for capturing important components of science instruction that may be difficult to capture using other types of instruments. Reviewing both collected artifacts and self-reflections may create a more accurate method of studying instructional practices.

For the Martinez, Borko and Stecher (2011) study, each participant teacher was asked to submit 15 instructional artifacts such as lesson plans, handouts, rubrics, readings, worksheets, assignments, student homework, and projects. Teachers were provided a disposable camera to provide direct evidence of instruction that cannot be photocopied. The participant teachers were also asked to respond to a series of retrospective questions at the end of the notebook period and assess the extent the portfolios, logs, and vignettes reflected their personal instructional practice in the classroom.
The research participants determined the artifacts to submit. It then became the responsibility of the researchers to determine the significance of the artifact, to understand the teachers through the analysis of the artifact, and to understand what the artifact meant to the teacher. The utility of the artifact for the Martinz, Borko and Stecher study (2011) were the same for this study. I asked student participants to bring two or three artifacts to the interview. The student participants were not directed to bring any particular object; the choice was their own. Upon receiving and examining the artifact, I was responsible to determine the significance of the artifact, to understand the student through the analysis of the artifact, and to understand what the artifact meant to the student during his/her college experience. To accomplish this, the participant was asked to articulate the background of the artifacts and to share his/her feelings about the artifacts. I spontaneously crafted questions with the intent of drawing out contextual, relevant information about the artifact that may have had an unrecognized influence or impact on the student.

Martinz, Borko and Stecher’s (2011) artifact method, which allowed student participants to use photographs of artifacts that are too large to physically bring to the interview, was used for this study.

Artifact conclusion.

The strengths of using artifacts in case study research are the potential insights into personal cultural understanding. The weaknesses of using artifacts in case study research are the need for cooperation from the student to participate to share an artifact and the possibility of not understanding the underlying significance or relevance of the artifact to the student.

As discussed, artifacts can be used to socialize an individual. Artifacts can have unrecognized symbolic meaning. Artifacts can inform observers of status, wealth and position.
Essentially in research artifacts have relevance. It was expected that the inclusion of an artifact-based instrument would contribute to illuminating the students’ college life by triggering unrecognized memories and feelings that are relevant to the essence of their college experiences.

**Data Analysis**

Data collected using qualitative research methods is different from data collected using quantitative research methods. Typically qualitative research methods gather words, and quantitative research methods gather numbers. Statistical analysis is improper for qualitatively collected data. The analysis of qualitative data consists “of dividing the text into groups of sentences, called text segments, and determining the meaning of each group of sentences” (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010, p. 72). Other methods of qualitative data analysis have been established. Merriam (2009, p. 175) stated, “All qualitative data analysis is primarily inductive and comparative.” Besides discussing the different methods of analysis, also of concern would be discussing when analysis of the data should occur. Data could be analyzed simultaneously while data is being collected or the analysis could be conducted after all data is collected.

For this study, analysis commenced with the data collected from the first participant. The analysis of data was conducted in conjunction with data collection, and was not conducted after all data was collected. Standard interview questions were prepared prior to the first interview. As expected newly found ideas resulted in additional questions for subsequent interviews.

Constant Comparative (Merriam, 2009) data analysis method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall objective of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data.
Saldana (2013) uses a similar method and uses the word code that he defines as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). He further explained “in qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes” (2013, p. 4). Comparable to a title of a book or a movie, a code represents and captures datum’s essence as interpreted by the researcher. Anecdotes offered by study participants will be assigned its own unique code. Codes may be very similar but because they were derived from different students’ experiences and feelings, they may have the same or different code. Upon reiterative reviews and interpretative digesting, similar codes may evolve into a single code that comprises several codes.

After each interview I analyzed the transcript, keeping in mind the purpose of the study. I wrote notes in the margins, separate memos, and listed possible emerging themes, hunches, and ideas. I also noted additional questions to ask at the next interview. It was important to review the transcript of each interview prior to the next interview. Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed (Merriam, 2009). Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam (2009) hunches, working hypotheses, and educated guesses direct the investigator’s attention to certain data and then to refining or verifying hunches. She continues by explaining that the process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic (2009).

Another data analysis method, which was utilized for this research study, was the Category Construction method (Merriam, 2009). This analysis method began with reading the
first interview transcript and field notes and jotting down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margin, similarly and as previously mentioned. These notations were interesting bits of potentially relevant information. These notations also identified data that was useful. This was a form of open coding because all data was open for inclusion as relevant information. Notations also included exact words or concepts previously noted. Assigning codes to pieces of data was the way you begin to construct the categories (Merriam, 2009). After constructing categories of the entire transcript, a review was conducted to identify group notes and comments that appear to be connected. This process of grouping open codes is sometimes called analytical coding (Merriam, 2009). During the process, the list of groups identified was expansive and extensive. Later some groups were incorporated into other groups.

Interview transcripts were analyzed utilizing the same Category Construction analysis method. While analyzing interview transcripts it was necessary to be mindful of the grouping list extracted from previous interview transcripts. The analysis of each interview transcript produced a separate grouping list. Each grouping list was merged to create one master list from all the interview transcripts. The master list contained an outline reflecting the recurring patterns of the collected data.

The qualitative data collected via the research instruments and analyzed via the Constant Comparative and Category Construction analysis methods identified what factors influenced college persistence.

**Validity/Credibility**

Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality (Merriam, 2009). The primary validity question was “do the findings capture what is really there?” (p 213).
To understand what research participants shared about their lived college experiences required an understanding of their perceived reality. KS graduates as mainland college students have multiple realities. Their descriptions of their lived experiences were their realities. Whether someone else that reads a transcript of an interview and interprets the lived experience differently from my interpretation is unavoidable. Every research is interpreted by the researcher. Each researcher has his/her own understanding of reality.

To address validity/credibility the student participants were asked to review, member checking, their transcripts of their interview to ensure their words were accurately documented. The transcripts were sent to them via email to provide an unhurried opportunity to review and correct, if necessary, their transcript.

According to Merriam (2009), prior to interviewing those who had direct experience with the phenomenon, the researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. This process is a called *epoche*, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment (Merriam, 2009).

Internal validity addresses important questions that are asked of qualitative research. Did the research findings match reality? And, how congruent are the findings with reality? According to Ratcliffe (1983), “data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator” (p. 149).

According to Merriam, (2009, p. 214),

What is being investigated are people’s construction of reality, how they understand the world. And just as there will be multiple accounts of eyewitnesses to a crime scene, so too, there will be multiple constructions of how people have experienced a particular
phenomenon, how they have made meaning of their lives, or how they have come to understand certain processes.

As the collector and analyzer of data for this study, interpretations of reality are accessed through my interviews of participants. Rigor is necessary to strengthen qualitative research. Merriam claimed, “Though qualitative researchers can never capture an objective ‘truth’ or ‘reality,’ there are a number of strategies that you as a qualitative researcher can use to increase ‘credibility’ of your findings…” (2009, p. 215).

Merriam (2009) identified several Internal Validity strategies of which four are:

• Adequate Engagement in Data Collection strategy.
• Alternate Explanation strategy
• Reflexivity strategy
• Peer Review strategy

The four internal validity strategies identified by Merriam were implemented for this study to increase validity. The strategies are individually discussed below.

**Adequate data collection.**

One common strategy for strengthening internal validity, identified by Merriam (2009, p. 219) is Adequate Engagement in Data Collection. This strategy involves getting as intimate as possible to the participants’ understanding of a phenomenon. How much data is needed is difficult to decide. A good rule is to believe “the data and emerging findings must feel saturated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219).

This study involved interviews with eleven student participants. The interviews were recorded. The interviews involved pre-determined and spontaneously crafted interview questions. The eleven interviews consist of a total of almost 15 digital recording hours. It appears
the student participants were, on the most part, comfortable with their participation and candid with their responses. Very personal information was shared by many student participants, to include health history, relationship concerns, and intimate thoughts. I believe the student participants did share their understanding of college life and their views of college student persistent. I also believe that I grasped the essence of their experiences through their expressions.

**Alternate explanations.**

Another strategy used to increase credibility is to spend adequate time collecting data that could identify other understandings of a phenomenon. Qualitative researchers should search for data that support alternative explanations. Patton argued, “Failure to find strong supporting evidence for alternative ways of presenting the data or contrary explanations helps increase confidence in the original, principal explanation you generated” (2002, p. 553).

As the researcher for this study it was incumbent on me to identify other reasons that could explain a phenomenon. At the analysis stage of this study it was important for me to consider other causes or motives for particular situations. Most of the time the facts were transparent and unambiguous. Factor labeling and categorizing was not difficult. On the other hand there were instances that I had to determine whether a factor was an influence to CSP or not. In instances that judgment was exercised, I explained my rationale.

**Reflexivity.**

It is necessary for the researcher to disclose biases, dispositions and assumptions about the intended research. This allows the reader to understand the researcher’s interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009). Maxwell (2005, p. 108) similarly claimed the reason for disclosure is to understand how a “researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study.”
I have previously acknowledged my affiliation to the Kapalama Schools as an alumni and my intent on determining how to increase college graduation rates of KS graduates attending mainland colleges. My objective of identifying and reporting factors that influenced college student persistence of the eleven student participants did not include a disregard and discounting of factors that shed a negative light on the student participants or their alma mater. In most situations, significant student participant anecdotes were shared verbatim, however; paraphrasing was conducted to keep the student participants’ identities anonymous.

**Peer review.**

To address internal validity, dissertations can be reviewed by a dissertation committee or research colleagues. “A thorough peer examination,” according to Merriam (2009, p. 220), “would involve asking a colleague to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data”

Drafts of this study, while in the final stages, were reviewed by peers to address the plausibility of the findings.

**External Validity**

According to Merriam (2009, p. 223) external validity or transferability “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations.” Merriam (2009, p. 227) stated, “To enhance the possibility of the results of a qualitative study ‘transferring’ to another setting several strategies can be employed.” Merriam (2009, p. 227) related, “The most common strategy is the use of ‘rich, thick description.’” “When rich, thick description is used as a strategy to enable transferability, it refers to a description of the setting and participants of the study, as well as a detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews, field notes, and
documents” (Merriam, 2009, p. 227). This study employed this strategy to address external validity. Research participants were asked to fully describe their experiences to include their feelings. A few research participants experienced difficulties expressing themselves. Participants that provide short responses were asked to elaborate further on the subject. Explanations of student involvement were sought. Understanding how the research participant felt about a phenomenon was crucial to understanding the essence of the experience.

**Reliability**

According to Merriam (2009) reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, per Merriam (2009), if the study is repeated, will it yield the same results? However reliability is problematic in the social sciences simply because human behavior is never static.

Strategies that will be utilized to ensure reliability are triangulation and peer examination. The convergence of data collected from student interviews will be used to confirm emerging findings. Merriam claims that qualitative researchers can never capture an objective “truth” or “reality,” however there are a number of strategies that a qualitative researcher can use to increase the “credibility” of the findings (2009).

Since this research will be conducted as a doctoral dissertation, the quality will benefit from the use of research auditors in the form of my doctoral advisors, dissertation committee members, and colleagues.

**Limitations**

This qualitative case study was limited to graduates from only one Kapalama Schools campus, only one graduating class, the class of 2013, only during a specific time period in
college, and involve only mainland colleges. Further, the study was limited to KS graduates that participated. Not all KS 2013 graduates from this class were sought for this study.

The results of this study are limited because a qualitative approach was selected. A qualitative study would have very different results compared to a quantitative study. Obviously qualitative studies focus on quality, nature and essence, while a quantitative study would focus on numbers. Personal experiences were sought and documented in this study.

Since data collection for this study was planned for the spring 2014, there was a temporal limitation. Data collected in a different year and decade likely would result in different findings.

The various data collection instruments were selected, formulated, and produced by me, which included specifically worded questions in a particular sequence. I also devised follow-up questions during interviews. Therefore, another limitation was the fact that if someone else had devised the data collection instruments, different questions and question sequences likely would have been formulated which again could result in different findings.

Lastly, every research is limited by the perspective of the researcher. Every person also possesses limitations in ability and skills.

**Researcher Bias**

Every person also has a unique perspective and understanding of life, conventions, protocols, and other rules and practices. My age, ethnic background, amount of education, life experiences, and other characteristics influences my perspectives on this study.

Interviewing is one of the main ways qualitative researchers collect data for their studies. Chenail points out (2011) that the researcher is a central and key component of the research instrument utilized in qualitative studies. “It is through the researcher’s facilitative interaction that a context is created where respondents share rich data regarding their experiences and life
world,” claimed Chenail (2011, p. 255). Chenail considered the “researcher” as a highly influential instrument of a study. Chenail is referring to the potential that a researcher could intentionally or unintentionally influence a participant to respond in a particular manner by presenting or implying a partial position or suggesting a particular outcome.

Qualitative research interviews presents challenges in the form of instrument rigor and bias management concerns:

The researcher as instrument (sic) can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness in qualitative research if time is not spend (sic) on preparation of the field, reflexivity of the researcher, the researcher staying humble and preferring to work in teams so that triangulation and peer evaluation can take place. (Poggenpoel and Myburgh, 2003, p. 320)

Many challenges could jeopardize the quality of a study. Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003) identified seven aspects as possible threats during the research process. Along with the seven possible threats I have additionally inserted how bias might affect the way I generate and analyze data.

1. The researcher’s mental and other discomfort could pose a threat to the true value of data obtained and information obtained from data analyses. This aspect involves the researcher being emotionally involved in the research topic and unwilling to ask difficult but necessary questions.

This was not a problem in conducting this study. I admit that I am emotionally attached to the study. I am passionate about knowing how KS graduates understand their college experiences and identifying influences that impact college persistence. However I was overly attached to the study. I did not believe it would be helpful to
current and future KS graduates studying at mainland colleges to arrive at erroneous conclusions. I did have assumptions but I did not have a preferred outcome for the study and preferred to let the findings speak for themselves. I believed the participants would say whatever they wanted. For important topics and responses the participants’ words, verbatim, were quoted. This allowed the reader to determine for him or herself the intent of the participant. The objective was to understand the essence of the student’s experiences, whether the experiences were good, bad, or indifferent. Being accurate and genuine was paramount.

2. The researcher not being sufficiently prepared to conduct the field research. This aspect could involve inadequate background checks to gain sufficient understanding of the context and participant’s culture.

Since I conducted a pilot study, I believed that I had sufficiently prepared to conduct this study. The collection of demographics was important for context.

3. The researcher not being able to do member checking on findings. Research of sensitive topics may involve participants that are willing to tell their story and participate once but do not want to discuss their situation again.

I performed member checking of my findings as soon as possible. The transcripts were sent to the participants as soon as possible and feedback was solicited.

4. The researcher conducting inappropriate interviews.

The authors identified several inappropriate types of interviews: research that involves a biased researcher, leading questions, insensitive researcher, interviews that are too short to collect rich data, and conducting therapy instead of research.
I was sensitive to possible inappropriate interview questions and techniques. I was sensitive to the participant’s level of comfort. I shared at the onset that the participants should only discuss information that they were comfortable talking about.

5. The researcher not including demographic data in the description of the results.

Sufficient data is needed to develop a context to adequately understand the research being undertaken.

I collected adequate demographic data to develop and provide context to my study,

6. The researcher not being able to analyze interviews in depth. Several reasons were provided: the researcher spending insufficient time and not being immersed in the data, insufficiently developed storyline, and the researcher analyzing the data with preconceived ideas.

I spent a significant amount of time analyzing the findings. Immersion into the data was important to fully understand the phenomenon. I let the data create the storyline through the emergence of themes. The review of existing literature informed me of several theories relevant to student persistence and student departure. Knowing about previous studies assists my understanding of what I encountered. I did not theoretically frame my study in an exclusive way to determine the outcome and believed that the data should speak for itself.

7. The researcher describes the research methodology and research results in a superficial manner. It is necessary for the research methodology to be logical and adequately explained for possible future replication. Further, research data must be adequately analyzed and reduced. The themes must be sufficiently identified and explained for the reader to understand.
I believe I adequately explained the findings of the research study. Because the student participants generously volunteered their time to participate in this research study, they deserved the findings to be well explained and supported by documentable evidence.

**Avoiding Bias**

Yin (2009) explained that conducting a case study is similar to a detective arriving on the scene after a crime has occurred and makes inferences about what actually transpired. The inferences must be based on the convergence of facts from physical evidence and witness interviews. However, if the detective seeks only to substantiate a preconceived understanding of the crime, a false understanding could mistakenly be accepted.

To address this concern Yin suggests a test of the researcher’s tolerance for contrary findings, and if possible during the data collection phase. This could be accomplished by using two or three critical colleagues that could offer alternative explanations and suggestions for data collection. “If the quest for contrary findings can produce documentable rebuttals, the likelihood of bias will have been reduced (Yin, 2009, p. 72). Having multiple sources of data is an invaluable advantage to case study research.

Merriam (2009, p. 229) identifies “peer review/examination” as a discussion with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations.” Peer review is one of several strategies to address trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of a qualitative study depends on the level of rigor in addressing possible bias.
Since peer reviews can improve the trustworthiness of a study, esteemed members of my dissertation committee reviewed my dissertation during the normal course of this research process. Several colleagues also conducted reviews of this study during the process.

**Personal Positionality**

“Since bias remains a naturally occurring human characteristic, *positionality* is often used in the context of the inductive approach to social science inquiry as an exploration of the investigator’s reflection on one’s own placement within the many contexts, layers, power structures, identities, and subjectivities of the viewpoint” (England, 1994, Throne, n.d.).

“Positionality allows for a narrative placement for researcher objectivity and subjectivity whereby the researcher is situated within the many aspects of perspective and positionality” (Throne, n.d.)

The researcher attempts to capture reality from the words of the subjects during an interview but it is the researcher’s interpretation of reality. “Data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator” (Ratcliffe, 1983, p. 149). Research studies are naturally and inherently biased because humans conduct them. Researchers have their own perspectives, predispositions, and partialities that may be different from others. Knowing and understanding a researcher’s biases, both realized and unrealized, are important to better understand the findings of the study. Identifying and understanding aspects of my identity helped to understand and develop my relationship with the students that participated in this study.

There are several similarities and differences between the student participants of this study and me. The student participants and I grew up in Hawai`i and attended the Kapalama Schools. My childhood days, however, occurred many decades earlier. The student participants and I are mindful that acceptance to attend the Kapalama Schools was and is highly sought by
Native Hawaiian families. Every year thousands of children apply to the Kapalama Schools but few are accepted. Attending the Kapalama Schools is both an honor and a privilege.

Similar to the student participants of this study, I attended college in pursuit of an undergraduate degree. Unlike the student participants I did not attend a mainland college and I did not attend a four-year college choosing instead to attend a community college. Because of these choices my immersion at a new college was quite a different experience.

Upon graduation from the Kapalama Schools I attended college full-time but always worked at least part-time. In retrospect I struggled to complete college courses and earn a college degree primarily due to a lack of motivation. The cost of a college education, at that time, was affordable and not a restrictive factor for attendance, which is unlike the situation with the student participants of this study.

During the period of conducting this research I was a parent of two college-aged adult children. We experienced the college application and admission process. We also experienced the registration of courses. However, unlike the participants of this study, my sons attended colleges in Hawai`i. Since my sons’ ages are close to the ages of my study participants, my perspective closely aligns with the participants’ parents’ perspectives. My concern for the personal welfare and academic successes of my sons’ is likely similar to the parents’ of the study participants. These concerns include, among other things, successfully socializing and acclimating to campus life, paying for college tuitions, and the exercising sufficient discipline toward academic challenges.

**Triangulation**

Denzin (1978) proposed that four types of triangulation: the use of multiple data collection methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, and multiple theories to
confirm emerging findings. Multiple data collection methods include interviews, observations and documents. Multiple sources of data could involve comparing data collected at different times or in different places. Multiple investigators imply having multiple investigators collecting and analyzing data independently. Lastly multiple theories entail approaching the data with different theories to observe how each theory related to the data, and whether there were similarities and differences.

**Rich, Thick Descriptions**

Another method in addressing researcher bias is to minimize interpretation of the participants’ statements. This can be accomplished by acquiring rich, thick descriptions from the participants (Merriam, 2009). Providing enough descriptions, in the form of quotes, to contextualize the participants’ experiences would reduce the need for researchers to construct interpretations and possibly misunderstand participants.

**Bias Conclusion**

The researcher is an instrument in the collection of data and as a human instrument possesses inherent biases, prejudices, and predispositions, known and unknown. It is a fact of life and should be expected to some extent. The manner in which biases, prejudices, and predispositions are addressed is vital.

Several sound methods were shared and discussed to address biases, prejudices, and predispositions. Identifying and understanding biases and minimizing influences on the collection and analysis of findings should be and was a continuing process.

The interviews must involve probing and exploratory questioning that approaches and accesses each student’s perceived experience. Sharing the events that transpired during the collection of data and the journey experienced during data analysis was explained in this
dissertation. Further, problems were encountered while conducting this research, which were disclosed in the dissertation.

Obtaining rich descriptions was an important intention of this research study to address trustworthiness. Acknowledging personal biases, prejudices and predilection at the outset was an obligation to adequately understand my position.

Understanding the essence of the students’ college experiences can only come from the student participants. Though a researcher’s beliefs cannot be completely disengaged, efforts are still required to minimize flawed findings and implications.

**Researcher’s Role**

During the participant interviews for this research study, my role was limited to data collector. At no time did I participate as a counselor or advisor that analyzed behaviors and recommended any actions.

**Pilot Study**

In the summer of 2012 a pilot or preliminary study was conducted that preceded this dissertation study. The pilot study had two purposes. The first was to determine the effectiveness of the primary research instrument, which are the interviews of college students utilizing semi-structured questions. It was speculated that the pilot study would identify problems with the interview protocol. The second purpose was to determine whether the collected data supported or refuted the college student involvement theory. The data collected and the research method from the pilot study were utilized in this research study. IRB approval was obtained previously for the pilot study.
Pilot Study Research Method

The pilot study involved a qualitative research approach in the collection of data. The participants were selected from a relevant population of high school graduates from Hawai`i that were or are college students on the mainland. None of the participants to the pilot study participated in the subsequent dissertation research study.

It was assumed that determining the effectiveness of the research instrument would probably involve, to some degree, modifications of the instrument. The research instrument was an oral interview conducted with predetermined questions and follow-up questions that are spontaneously constructed during the interview with the participant. The interviews were one-on-one and in private or semi-private locations.

Pilot Study Findings

Research instrument modifications were identified as: the sequence of the questions, the addition of relevant questions, the deletion of unnecessary questions, and the rewording/rephrasing of confusing or unclear questions.

Another finding involved pre-interview discussions. I learned that I should not inform the research participant of my theoretical perspective and assumptions because this may influence the participant to believe that I desire a particular outcome or result. It is better to enter the interview process with a neutral position and not sway the participant in any manner, to allow his/her feelings to be expressed as she/he feels them.

A lesson was learned while conducting in-person interviews in semi-private locations for the pilot study. Quiet out of the way places in public can turn into noisy places during the 45 to 60 minute interviews. It is better to secure a room and prevent interruptions from occurring.
It is important to inspect the private library room in advance because the walls may not be sound proof enough in the event a loud study group is directly next door. For this situation I canceled my reservation and sought a different location to conduct my interview.

Pilot Study Conclusions

Based on the findings of this pilot study I concluded that the college experiences of two participants, Amy and Julie, pseudonyms, supported Astin’s theory on student involvement. Their involvement with their professors; classmates and roommates; and athletics, associations and extracurricular activities, and the fact that they earned their college degrees is consistent with Astin’s student involvement theory.

Also based on the findings, Bruce was a partially involved student. He was not involved with his professors, and was not involved in athletics, associations and extracurricular activities but he was somewhat involved with his roommates. However, based on the evidence I cannot conclude that Bruce’s college experiences support or refute the student involvement theory. Bruce could possibly have continued to study at his mainland college but he chose to change his major and returned home to Honolulu. Since Bruce did not actually fail academically, though his involvement was minimal over three semesters, his situation was deemed inconclusive.

Nick, on the other hand, and based on the pilot study findings, was involved with classmates and roommates, and was heavily involved in playing volleyball and as a member of the Hawai`i Club. Nick admitted awareness of his neglect for studying and over-involvement with other activities. He also discussed not being involved with his professors. Astin’s theory on student involvement did not address over-involvement. Nick’s involvement with volleyball and the Hawai`i Club could have been helpful towards his academic goals but it appears the
significant amount of time involved adversely offset the benefits. This circumstance was not anticipated prior to the commencement of this pilot study.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter identified and outlined the research methodology that was utilized for this study. The research problem, the research question, the purpose of the study, research design, research process and related matters were explained. Also shared are phenomenological research, the case study method, and inherent flaws in research. Specific research areas such as the use of pseudonyms, and the informed consent form were discussed next. Discussion on the data collection method followed. Considerable discussion was presented next regarding the use of artifacts in qualitative research. The chapter discussed data analysis, validity/credibility, external validity, reliability, limitations, biases, and researcher’s role. The pilot study’s findings and conclusions end this chapter. Chapter 4 discusses the collected data, findings and analysis.
Chapter 4

Collected Data, Findings, and Analyses

In inductive, qualitative research, the researchers do not come to the study with a strong hypothesis, but instead intend to induce regularities from participants’ perspectives. (Van Etten, Pressley, McInerney, and Liem, 2008, p. 813)

Chapter Overview

This chapter contains a variety of sections that presents and explains the research findings. The chapter was divided into two parts. Part I generally explains experiences finding participants, how and why the research method was modified, data saturation, and participants selection method. Also in Part I is a discussion on management of collected data to include categorizing, labeling, coding, and definition drift, and the use of artifacts. Part II presents a cross case analysis of the data, and discusses the Key Factors.

Definition of words and terms utilized in this study are presented first in Part I. Though this study had a sound research methodology, Part I continues by discussing the difficulties encountered in locating student participants. Before this study commenced, I assumed that it would be relatively easy to find study participants. The study population sought were Hawai`i students studying at mainland colleges. Data collection started in June 2014 at the end of most colleges’ spring semester and the start of summer vacation. It was expected that many Hawai`i students would be coming home for the summer. However, within the initial period of five weeks only two students and two parents volunteered to be interviewed for this study. This prompted modifications to the research method on three separate occasions to increase the study’s sample population and improve access to student participants. A total of eleven student participants were eventually interviewed.
The Snowball Participant Selection Method (Merriam, 2009) and its effectiveness on finding students willing to participate in this study were discussed next. Several challenges were encountered that required modifications to continue the study with the same objectives.

Next I discussed the collection, organization, and management of data. This discussion was necessary to share how large amounts of data were collected, subsequently organized for future retrieval and use, and how anonymity of the data was preserved, which was an important researcher responsibility. The management of the data was a major undertaking. Also included in the data discussion was the identification, by the student participants, of the factors that influenced College Student Persistence, CSP. The five categories that were created to group the factors are part of this discussion.

Following the data management discussion, the use of self-selected artifacts presented by student participants during the interviews was discussed last in Part I. Student-selected artifacts proved to be a very useful means of enhancing data collection.

Part II of this chapter contains the analyses of the data. The factors that influenced CSP from each case were analyzed in relation to the other cases, a cross-case analysis. The collective experiences of the student participants were the focus of this study. Presented next are tables that were created to illustrate the five categories of factors that influenced CSP. The tables provided a visual way of understanding the factors that influenced the student participants. This is followed by the identification and discussion of six Key Factors that influenced the student participants.
Part I

Research Experiences, Data Management, and Findings

Definitions of Words and Terms

The following words and operational terms used in this study are defined and standardized. The definitions utilized for this study were obtained from Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2004.

- **Category**: Any of several fundamental and distinct classes to which entities or concepts belong. A division within a system of classifications.
- **College Student Persistence**: A continuation of enrollment and studying of a college student from one semester of study to the next semester of study at the same mainland college.
- **College Student Persister**: A college student who returns to the same university for a successive semester of study.
- **College Student Non-Persister**: A college student who does not return to the same university for a successive semester of study.
- **Cope**: To deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties. A problem has to exist.
- **Coping**: Something a person does to deal with a difficult situation. For example a student calls home to talk with family members to cope with homesickness.
- **Factor**: A circumstance, fact or influence that actively contributes to the production of a result.
- **Persist**: To go on resolutely or stubbornly in spite of opposition, trouble, or warning.
o Persistent: Existing for a long or longer than usual time or continuously.

o Persistence: The quality or state of being persistent.

o Student Involvement: Time, energy, and effort a student invests in higher education curriculum, activities, relationships, and experiences.

o Support: Assist, help, to provide a basis for existence or subsistence of. This could also include emotional support.

Experiences Finding Participants

Interviews of participants commenced in June 2014. The initial population for this study was 2013 graduates of Kapalama Schools (KS) that studied at mainland colleges for any period. Most studied for a year and returned to the same college the following year. Initially the interview of one parent of each college student was a separate research instrument. The research methodology involved conducting in-person interviews. Although I designed and proposed a research methodology that was approved, it became necessary to make several modifications during the data collection phase to overcome unforeseen obstacles.

Months before the start of this study, in preparation to collect data, I inquired with numerous friends and family members to assist me in finding participants, both students and parents, for my upcoming study. Friends and family members knew of parents and students of my target population and offered their support. I considered these assistants “Finders” of participants for my study. This word is repeatedly used in this chapter. At that time I told them that I was not yet prepared to start, but asked that they preliminarily inquire with potential participants. Months later, upon receiving approval from my dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board (I.R.B.) to proceed with the study, I informed the Finders of the
approvals and asked for introductions to potential study participants. The introductions were communications via email.

The first phase of this study and research journey began with the assistance from one of my sisters-in-laws. Via email, she introduced me to a parent of a 2013 Kapalama Schools graduate that was studying at a mainland college. The parent was excited to participate in my study and informed me that her daughter would also participate upon her return to Oahu. The parent asked many questions before the actual interview. She was the first person and parent to be interviewed. This occurred in mid-June 2014. I interviewed her daughter a week later. Three days later, at the end of June, I interviewed my second student. A week after I interviewed the second student, the student’s father was interviewed. Regarding my relationship to the second student, I was professionally acquainted with his father. The relationships between the study participants, Finders, and me are shared in a later section of this chapter.

Reflecting on the first month conducting this research, I interviewed four participants, two parents and two students. Each interview was relatively uneventful as the outcomes were as expected. It is important to note that the second student interviewed was not a result of a referral from the first student. I had expected that it would involve a simple referral or introduction by a participating student to secure the next study participant. I did not know at that time that this occurrence would eventually lead to a trend.

**First modification.**

To this point conducting one interview a week was a much slower rate than I had anticipated. I thought that students returning to Oahu would be excited to participate in my study and share their college experiences. I also began experiencing difficulties finding parents willing to participate in my study. Email correspondences with potential students resulted in no replies
after students were to inquire with their parents. Two weeks later I interviewed my third student in late July. The third student was a relative of my high school classmate. The third student was not a referral from the first or second student participant. I interviewed him with a growing sense of desperation even though the participation of either parent was not confirmed at the time of the student interview. After a few weeks passed, and a few email inquiries, it appeared that neither parent would participate. To make matters worse, three weeks passed as I struggled to find another student participant. At this time I believed that requiring a parent to be interviewed with his or her child was constraining my study. After all, the focus of my study had always been the college students. I decided to remove the parent interview requirement and focus exclusively on finding and interviewing college students. It was my belief, at that time, that it would be much easier to find student participants without the additional requirement. This was the first major modification to my research methodology. I reduced the parent interview requirement to an optional interview. By the end of my data collection period no other parent was interviewed.

With a modified research methodology I again set out searching for more participants. I re-contacted potential student participants and informed them of the removal of the parent interview requirement. I hoped that at least one of them would be excited to participate. I was mistaken. After another week of searching I conducted my fourth interview in mid-August. My fourth participant was the nephew of a long-time friend. It was clear to me that 18 and 19 year olds had better things to do while at home on Oahu during summer break than to participate in a study. Their limited time on Oahu was time they probably dreamed about while they were on the mainland. The beach, socializing with friends, and working to earn money were common activities shared with me by those that did participate.
As a frustrated researcher that desperately searched for participants I explored other possible solutions to my problem. To better assess the situation I created a link chart to identify and show the relationships between the Finders and potential student participants. I hoped a chart could better illuminate the situation and identify a hidden limitation or shortcoming. I desired clarity. Unfortunately, the difficulty finding student participants continued. By the time I conducted the last interview, I had collected a total of 53 Finders on this chart. The chart was helpful in graphically depicting the situation to better understand the effectiveness of the participant selection method.

I also created a journal to track my efforts in talking with Finders and searching for student participants. The log displayed the names and the dates of contacts and communications. The journal’s first entry was on June 10th and the last entry was on November 20th. I wrote five pages of single-line space entries in the journal.

**Second modification.**

My study population is mainland college students that graduated from Kapalama Schools in 2013. Many were at home on Oahu during the summer months. This meant that my face-to-face access to these students was time limited. In an attempt to address this urgency and increase my ability to find study participants I enlarged the study population to also include the 2012 graduating class of Kapalama Schools. My study population now consisted of 2012 and 2013 graduates of Kapalama Schools. This was the second major modification to my research methodology. I was rejuvenated in the prospect that doubling my sample population would double my chances of finding participants.

The reason I chose 2013 graduates of Kapalama Schools for my study population was because it was my intention to speak to the most recent high school graduates from Kapalama
Schools and to understand their college experiences transitioning from high school to college. At the time research interviews commenced for this study, the members of this particular study population, 2013 Kapalama Schools graduates, were completing their first year of study at mainland colleges. This class was the most recent graduates of KS. My first student participant, for example, had returned home to Oahu only a few days prior to our interview. The college experiences of these students were fresh and they were the most recent high school graduates from Kapalama Schools. I also believed that graduates of previous years would have one, two or three more years of college experiences that could obscure a clear recollection of their first-year college experience. Selecting the graduating class of 2012 was logically the next best class to include in my study.

My fifth interview took place two weeks later at the end of August. The fifth participant was the son of my sister-in-law’s cousin. My fifth student participant was a 2012 graduate of Kapalama Schools and had returned home to transfer to a Hawai`i college.

The beginning of September meant that members of my study population were quickly returning to the mainland to continue their college education. My only hope was to find participants that were at one time mainland college students, but for whatever reasons either transferred to a Hawai`i college or dropped out of higher education.

**Third modification.**

In the month of September I experienced, as anticipated, difficulty in finding participants that were still on Oahu and had not returned to their mainland colleges. It was unknown how many students transferred to Hawai`i colleges or dropped out completely.

During interviews with student participants, I inquired with them on whether they knew of classmates that were mainland college students but transferred home or dropped out. Most
claimed they were unaware of any, however, a few said they heard rumors that one classmate might have dropped out. I was unable to determine whether the rumored information was true or not. At one time a student participant told me the name of a classmate that had dropped out of college and returned to Oahu, but another student participant refuted the information.

This current dilemma required an additional modification to my research methodology. In an attempt to increase access to student participants, and upon receiving permission from members of my dissertation committee, I incorporated videoconference interviews into my research methodology. This change occurred at the end of September. This change resulted in three videoconference interviews conducted within six days. Serendipitously, I was also informed of a student that studied at a mainland college and transferred to a Hawai`i college. He was also interviewed during that six-day period.

The sixth student participant was the niece of my high school classmate. I conducted the interview via videoconference. The seventh student participant was my friend’s classmate. I conducted this interview in-person. He was the transfer student to a Hawai`i college. In this case the Finder, my friend, was a 2013 Kapalama Schools graduate that currently attends a Hawai`i college. Though he was a KS graduate, he did not qualify as a study participant because he did not study at a mainland college. The eighth student participant was the daughter of my sister-in-law’s friend and the interview was conducted via videoconference. The ninth student participant was the only student participant referred to me by a previous student participant. I conducted this interview via videoconference.

The tenth student participant was the daughter of a friend of a family member. I conducted this interview via videoconference in mid-October. I conducted the last interview at the end of October. The eleventh student participant was the daughter of my friend’s friend. I
conducted this interview via videoconference. After the eleventh interview I continued data analysis while waiting for referred participants.

**Data Saturation**

The audio of each interview was digitally recorded. The recordings were transcribed and analyzed as soon as possible. I analyzed the data simultaneously with collection. By the time I was ready to conduct my last interview, I had already reviewed and conducted the first series of analysis on nine transcripts. At that time it appeared that I was no longer receiving new or different responses to my interview questions, therefore it also appeared that I had arrived at a state of data saturation.

According to Merriam, “Adequate engagement in data collection is a third strategy that makes sense when you are trying to get as close as possible to participants’ understanding of a phenomenon” (2009, p. 219). She continued,

The best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated; that is, you begin to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data. (2009, p. 219)

**Snowball Participant Selection Method**

This section explains my experiences finding study participants. My search for study participants encountered several challenges, which required the implementation of several research method modifications. By design, the primary data source for this study was 2013 graduates of Kapalama Schools that studied at mainland colleges for any period of time. The secondary data source was one parent of each student participant.

Prior to the start of the study I approached a friend who knew potential participants. A parent and her daughter tentatively agreed to participate in this study. At that time the parent and
her daughter tentatively agreed to participate in the study because they were not yet fully informed of the details and expectations of the study.

Upon receiving dissertation committee and IRB approval to conduct the study, I re-contacted my friend. Through email she introduced me to the parent. We began email correspondence and I explained the details of my study. She seemed to accept my answers to her questions and shortly after she and her daughter agreed to participate in this study. Within a few days both mother and daughter were the first to be interviewed.

At about the same time I also contacted a former co-worker who had a son that was a potential participant. It was my intention to simultaneously seek out participants while scheduling and interviewing others. This approach attempted to minimize the wait time between interviews and minimize the total number of weeks to conduct all the interviews. I interviewed the father and his son soon after.

The participant selection or sampling method as indicated in Chapter 3 was the “snowball” participant selection method. Finding college students to participate in this study proved to be more difficult than expected. I predicted that each participant student would easily provide me with names of at least two high school graduate classmates. I further predicted that at least one of those names would participate in the study. Overall, I expected that a chain would develop and each participant would lead to another participant. I hoped that the cycle would continue. In reality, of the eleven student participants that were interviewed, only one student participant was referred to me by a previously interviewed participant. At the end of each interview the participant said he or she would get back to me with names of classmates. I believe the offers were sincere. Each participant needed to reach out to classmates and inquire as to willingness to participate and availability. I believed that the recommendation of a participant
was the best testimonial to attract potential study participants. Ultimately ten student participants did not find or refer another participant to in my study.

The snowball participant selection method was ineffective in selecting participants for this study and thus the time period to find and interview 11 students was five months. This was much longer than I had anticipated. It also should be noted that it was hoped that all student participants were to be interviewed in-person and during the summer of 2014 while they were still at home on Oahu during their summer break.

There were several reasons an in-person interview was preferred over a videoconference interview. Videoconference interviews are subject to technical disruptions such as the Internet connectivity and computer monitor time outs. Significant time zone differences must also be taken into consideration. Additionally, I have no control over the student participant’s setting and possible interruptions, which did occur. An adequate understanding of telecommunication application software such as Skype and Face Time is also required. Lastly, it was my initial preference to have face-to-face interviews to have the best setting to observe the participant’s demeanor, facial expressions, and body language that likely would provide additional non-verbal clues. Such clues might undetectable or not be as noticeable through a video monitor.

The reason only one student participant was referred to me by another student and ten student participants could not find and successfully introduce a classmate to participate is unclear. It is clear why the snowball participant selection method was not effective for this particular study.

It was perplexing that even though I considered the eleven student participants to be the best sales persons or advocates I could have, they could not persuade or convince any fellow graduates to participate with this research. Unlike the friend and family Finders, these graduates
actually participated in the study and could speak first-hand, from experience, about this study. They could attest to the legitimacy of an academic study and they were not harassed, embarrassed or forced to discuss uncomfortable experiences. They could assert that their names or the names of their colleges would not be disclosed. They could also confirm that they were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. Lastly they could state that they received a digital copy of their interview transcript that they were asked to review for accuracy.

Another factor to consider is the possibility that students that participated in the study could have done so through a sense of obligation to the Finder. The relationship students had with their respective Finders may have been the key to why this selection method was more successful than the snowball participant selection method. All the student participants were either a relative or a friend of the Finder. Student participants may have felt a responsibility to obey or fulfill the Finder’s request. This study did not delve into the reasons the student participants participated in this study. No pre-determined or contemporaneously constructed interview question about interview participation reasons was asked.

**Data Collection and Management**

Between June and October 2014, 53 Finders assisted in locating eleven student participants that were interviewed for this study. Six interviews of students were conducted on Oahu and in-person. Five students were on the mainland and their interviews were conducted via videoconference on FaceTime or Skype.

This study sought to identify factors that influenced College Student Persistence (CSP) by understanding the essence of college experiences. All participant interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. After the first interview was transcribed, a careful review of the transcript identified various factors that influenced CSP, both positively and adversely. While
reviewing transcripts, consistent definition of factors was critical to ensure well-grounded and valid study conclusions. Upon adding new factors from succeeding cases the definition of the factors were reviewed for consistency before continuing. Determining and maintaining unambiguous definitions of factors that influenced CSP was essential to fully and accurately understanding the essence of college student experiences.

**Labels.**

Having accurate labels of the participants’ experiences or feelings was critical to the validity of this study. I subjectively determined the words and terms used as labels that influenced CSP for this study.

Standardized labels were not found after a review of comparable research studies. Gary (2008) utilized everyday words such as “goals, institutional help, motivation, adjustment, and coping,” (p 51). Several words used as labels by Gary were also used in this study.

The words used as labels in this study were carefully considered based on connotations and implications. Labels were carefully considered to minimize offending participants. The necessity to accurately represent the participants’ experiences and feelings was also an important consideration. This was a reiterative process as labels were constantly reworded, merged together or combined until I was confident with accuracy. Often words were changed and changed back to reflect an accurate label of the experience or feelings of the student participant.

**Labeling.**

After the audio recording of the first interview was transcribed, a transcript review was conducted to ensure the recorded words were accurately transcribed. This was followed by a transcript analysis to identify factors that influenced CSP. Initially I was completely engrossed in the process, labeling every experience and feeling a student participant shared. I felt the need to
error on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion. I believed that after collecting data from a few student participants, I would narrow my focus and improve my ability to identify and label factors. Subsequent reviews required the removal of factors that did not influence CSP or were shared twice by the study participant.

Soon after, as I anticipated, I realized that I had inaccurately identified and labeled a few factors. A stricter adherence to the definition of factors that influenced CSP was required. This dilemma was expounded upon in a later section “Succeeding examination.”

Also, returning to basics, I had to clearly determine whether there was or was not influence to CSP. If a student participant generally claimed an experience could influence him or her, it was necessary to determine if it actually did or did not occur. It was necessary to determine, conclusively, whether the statement was hypothetical or an actual experience. Some responses were difficult to determine. I did not assume a statement was an experience that directly involved the student. The student participant had to definitively claim to have been personally influenced. Factors provided by participants were labeled based on the words they expressed and my interpretation. The factors that influenced CSP were given appropriate labels.

A few rules were established to define factors used in this study. The number of words for the label would be minimal. If an interview participant reported the same factor twice, or discussed the same experience twice, it was counted as single factor. If, for example, an interview participant reported support from parents and support from an uncle, this was counted as two factors of support.

The following experience shared by a student participant exemplifies this labeling method. She shared her feeling about her college through self-selected artifacts that she brought to the interview. The first artifact she shared was her college student identification card, holder,
and lanyard. She said that “it was my life” referring to its importance in building access and safety. It was also a bus pass for the public transportation system. She elaborated by saying that everybody in the city rides the bus and you can “people watch.” She also said that “it kinda um tied me back to high school because, uh, in high school we had to wear lanyards with our IDs, so it was kinda like a comfort thing, that I, I would wear it like the first semester of college.” She said, “It felt kinda right because I would always wear a lanyard at school,” referring to high school in Hawai`i. It appears that she recognized the value of wearing the ID card on a lanyard, which provided a sense of continuity and dealing with her life in a new city and college. It appears that doing something familiar, something that she did previously, brought a sense of comfort to her. This factor was labeled as “Coping” due to the conciseness and appropriateness of the word. Labeling the other factors for all the study participants took on a uniformed process.

It is very important that experiences shared by student participants interpreted and believed to be a factor that influenced CSP actually influenced CSP. For example, doodling that helped a student to keep focused in the classroom is an example of a factor that positively influenced a student to persist. She claimed it helped her to focus and pay attention. Obligation to oneself or to family, another example, can also be an influence because it is a reason a student is persistent, going on in spite of opposition. However, as a third example, a student participant that claims that he did not engage with his roommate because his roommate did not speak English, was not considered a factor that adversely influenced CSP. It was not considered a positive influence to CSP either. In this case there is no alternative to a neutral or non-influence status. Determining the essence of the expression, experience, or feeling shared by the student participant was crucial to this study.
Spreadsheet.

A list of the factors that influenced the student participants was constructed on an electronic spreadsheet, Microsoft Office Excel. The names of the participants were listed horizontally on the top row of the spreadsheet. Factors that influenced CSP were listed in a column below each participant’s name. Each factor occupied its own cell. Factors were listed in the same order they were found in the transcript. The process of identifying factors from the first interview was repeated for the succeeding ten interviews/cases. The spreadsheet is contained in the Working Notes.

The number of factors that influenced CSP for the first three interviews were: The first student participant had 24 factors, another student participant had 17 factors, and the third student participant had 37 factors. Because the factors from each interview were placed on separate lists but in the same order found from their respective transcripts, the factors were not organized in any particular manner.

After the first interview was conducted and transcribed, the experiences that influenced college persistence were identified, labeled and listed on the spreadsheet. As the factors were identified and listed, I contemplated categories or groupings that could be created and the appropriate name or label for each category or group.

Consistently defining factors was an on-going concern. Ensuring that factors were in fact college persistence influences was also an on-going concern. Occasionally factors were mistakenly listed because the experience was significant or influenced other matters, but not college persistence. Re-reviewing was a necessary part of the process. The factors that were initially included in the spreadsheet but were later deemed not an influence were removed.
**Standardization of factor labels.**

Standardizing factors for this study was a difficult process. The experiences the student participants shared were diverse. Some experiences could be defined under multiple factors. The process was slow and arduous.

The process also involved definition evolution. For example, initially I created a factor labeled Comfort but realized it was difficult to distinguish it from another factor labeled Coping. I learned early on that this was a very common factor amongst the student participants. I tried my best to separate the experiences. It became more difficult as I collected more student experiences. At one time I combined the two factors and changed the label to Comfort/Coping. Later I felt that comfort was one way of coping and viewed coping as a broader category. The label was shortened to Coping.

When faced with a student experience that was difficult to label or categorize, sometimes I considered the option of simply excluding the discussion. Sometimes I believed the experience truly did not influence CSP. The student had explained how he or she felt about something, but it did not appear to influence CSP. I internally debated the significance of the student’s thoughts and considered the loss of data that was excluded. These dilemmas were difficult to resolve. Some were removed. Others were kept and reworded to better explain the situation. Unless it was clearly unneeded, as a general rule I retained everything in this study.

A factor label could represent a positive or an adverse influence to College Student Persistence. As an example, one participant said her confidence was a positive factor while another participant said her confidence was an adverse factor. Confidence was determined to be a factor that positively influenced CSP when a participant expressed having confidence, in the context of a college student, to deal with the everyday demands of a college student. Confidence
was determined to be a factor that adversely influenced CSP when, conversely, a participant expressed not having confidence to deal with the everyday demands of a college student.

Also a participant could articulate that a factor was not significant or was inconsequential but a review of the entire circumstance was required to make that determination. If however it was determined not to be a positive or adverse influence, it was not considered. It may have been included in my notes but it was not included in my findings.

There were factors that were heard only once, included as an influence to CSP, and were considered outliers. Such as a preference for actual books over eBooks by a student participant, which was a personal preference. It was also listed as an adverse factor because he bought eBooks and learned that it did not work for him.

**Examples of factor labeling.**

Four examples of factor labeling are provided to demonstrate the process utilized in this study. Occasionally labeling a factor from anecdotes was simple because the student participant was explicit. This is an example of “weather” as a factor that influenced CSP because the student participant used the word “weather” in her response to the question “What factors did not contribute to your academic goals?” She said,

Definitely, the snow, the weather is such a big factor and I had no idea that it was going to be, but I guess there’s a big difference like here 20 degrees and 80 degrees back home.

In this case the student participant identified a factor, “weather,” that adversely influenced CSP. This was an easy factor to label. Many of the influence factors shared by the student participants were easy to label because the words used in the anecdotes were unambiguous. “Friends” meant “friends,” “homesick” meant “homesick,” and “support” meant “support.” Little or no interpretation was involved with many anecdotes.
Other times labeling a factor required minimal interpretation of the student participant’s spoken words. This next example of factor labeling involved a student participant’s explanation about her student ID card, the ID card holder and a lanyard identifying her college. The three artifacts were attached together. She said,

Ok. So this is my student ID and its ID holder....I would say that it kinda tied me back to high school because, in high school we had to wear lanyards with our IDs. So it kinda of like a comfort thing, that I would wear it like the first semester of college because like it was around your neck, it was so convenient that at the same time it felt kinda right because I would always wear a lanyard a (high) school.

This student participant used the words “comfort” and “felt kinda right” to describe her feelings about wearing a lanyard and ID card and how this feeling influenced CSP. Her anecdote about her feelings was identified in this study as a “coping” factor. This factor was additionally significant to this study because the explanation the student participant provided accompanied her self-selected artifacts and was not a response to an interview question. She raised the topic and identified the factor that influenced CSP. I did not suggest it.

As another example, a female student participant discussed her athletic obligations. She remarked that sometimes practices were “very time consuming so it took away from, like we have late practice and I have a test, like an exam the next day, I end up staying up till two or three o’clock in the morning just studying” (p. 10). This factor was labeled Student Involvement with Athletics and it was a factor that adversely influenced CSP.

The last example of factor labeling involves a careful interpretation of a student participant’s anecdote. This student was asked if he had any fears or concerns about attending a mainland college. He related,
My biggest fear I think was failure…failure, but more importantly disappointing my family. My family had so much riding on me in going to college away in the mainland that it wasn’t so much the idea of letting myself down, it was more the idea, the fear of letting my family down. (p. 8).

The concern that the participant shared was interpreted to involve motivation as a factor that strongly influenced CSP for him. This participant in subsequent responses to interview questions frequently confirmed that his family was very important to him.

**Categories.**

Due to the large number of identified factors that influenced CSP, categories were created to group similar or related factors together. Grouping together factors was an attempt to better understand their meaning, impact, and relationship with other factors. The categorizing process depended heavily upon accurately identified and labeled factors that influenced CSP. The categorizing process was lengthy and complicated. It was difficult to determine the number of categories, determine the characteristics of a category or group, and which factors should be categorized or grouped together. Throughout the categorizing process I also continued to refine the definitions used for the different factors.

Prior to conducting the interviews to collect data, it was assumed that like-factors that influenced CSP would be grouped together. It was believed that logical groups would naturally occur. The following groups were anticipated: factors about the student, factors about others, and factors about the college and university. Since one of the theoretical perspectives of this study pertained to college student involvement, and the interview contained semi-structured questions pertaining to student involvement, this group was also anticipated.
Sometimes factors appeared to fit in more than one category. For example a student participant expressed not being homesick because she was busy throughout the school year with a new city and meeting new people. This factor was categorized under Student Involvement because she was involved in general with people. This factor could have been categorized under Student Self because being busy was a method of Coping with a new environment and prevented her from becoming homesick.

Determining the appropriate category proved to be difficult until standardized definitions were established. Not all factors neatly fit into a category. I tried not to force a factor into one of my created categories. It required constant and continuous review and refinement of definitions.

Sometimes student participants clearly and succinctly explained how they felt and how an act caused a particular result. However, there were other times that I had to use good judgment to connect a result or attribute a result to an action. For example, a student participant was asked what factors did not support her academic goals she mentioned a few matters to include her roommate. Though she said she had problems with her roommate, she said they were “inconsequential.” Other factors needed to be taken into consideration too. I believed that this situation was quite different from a student that did not talk to his roommate because of a language barrier. This situation appeared to involve a relationship that was frayed and stressed. I concluded that this was factor was an adverse influence to CSP.

**Five categories.**

After reviewing four transcripts, distinct groups emerged. Careful review and re-checking of definitions was required. Factors were redefined and re-categorized. Five categories eventually were identified and created: Student Self (Internal), Other People (External), Student Involvement, Institutional Support, and Other Adverse.
**Student Self.**

The category of Student Self includes factors such as a students’ concerns about self-esteem and self-confidence, having coping resources, having coping mechanisms, being motivated and focused, and the ability to make new friends. This category involves factors that the student controlled.

**Other People.**

The category of Other People includes factors such as support from family members at home, roommates, dorm mates, classmates, friends, relatives on the mainland, faculty, and professors. This category includes people that can provide physical, psychological, and emotional support to the students.

**Student Involvement.**

The category of Student Involvement includes factors such as a student’s interest and willingness to engage with professors, classmates, roommates, associates, athletics, and extra-curricular activities. This category also includes employment. Previous studies have supported a positive correlation between more involvement and learning, development, and college completion. This category involves students engaging with people and organizations.

In an attempt to standardize the responses and simplify understanding the responses, student participants were provided four responses to choose from for the Student Involvement questions: Often, occasionally, limited, or none. A response of often and occasionally was considered a factor that was a positive influence on CSP. A student participant’s response of limited or none was not considered an influence.
**Institutional Support.**

The category Institutional Support includes factors such as, but is not limited to campus environment, dormitory assignments, scholarships/ and financial aid, student/college fit, diversity programs, food, and others. Not included in this category were services that were common to all colleges and universities such as guidance counseling, psychological services, and tutoring. This category involves factors within the college or university’s control.

**Other Adverse.**

The last category Other Adverse includes factors that were not categorized under the other four categories. Other Adverse includes factors such as alcohol, parties, the weather, and social media. This category involves events, conditions and devices that adversely impacted the student. This category does not contain positive influences to CSP.

![Figure 4.1 Factor Categories](image)

Figure 4.1 Factor Categories (All factors that influenced CSP were placed in a category.)
Color coding.

Spreadsheet cells of identified and labeled factors received an assigned color to assist in visual identification. The factor of Coping, present in the college experiences of the first three participants was assigned a light green color. Eventually other factors that were dominant across the eleven student participants were assigned a color. Cell colors aided in easy identification of particular factors across the eleven-column spreadsheet.

Coping

Figure 4.2. Example of a Colored Cell.

First examination.

The first examination of the eleven transcripts was exploratory. I attempted to understand and interpret the student participants’ experiences. During the process, I read the transcript and underlined words and sentences, and wrote notes in the margins of the students’ experiences pertaining to influences on college persistence.

Naturally the transcripts were examined in a series from the first to the last interview. The first examination series produced a compilation for a foundational construct. An example of a factor that influenced College Student Persistence, CSP, was Coping. Over a hundred factors that influenced CSP were initially identified and labeled. The foundational construct required subsequent reviews and modifications. Factors were deleted, added, combined and relabeled.

Succeeding examinations.

The second examinations of the transcripts involved a different experience. Though the process was the same, which involved reading the transcript and searching for relevant experiences, my perspective and my intent was different. I continued to consider appropriate
labels of the students’ experiences. After examining a few transcripts, I also tried to identify and group similar experiences. I did experience difficulties in maintaining definition consistency.

The second time I was also more critical in searching for written words in the transcript that disclosed influences to CSP. Obvious evidence of CSP was collected during the first analysis. Subsequent examinations identified less obvious CSPs that were hidden in responses to questions seeking other information. I also made connections from single words or word phrases to CSP that I did not recognize during the initial transcript examination.

Occasionally I did not know the significance of what I heard during the actual interview until listening to the words on the audio recording or reading the words in the transcript. Careful review is essential to identifying positive and adverse influences to CSP.

When analyzing the transcript the second time I discovered factors to consider for re-labeling. For example, I initially assigned a student’s claim of having family members living near his college was a support factor, specifically Support from Family. However, the support provided by his mainland family could have also been considered a way to cope with difficulties and problems. This dilemma required clear and definitive definitions of coping and support. There could have been stronger justification to switch the label to Coping if the student provided a specific example of how his mainland family helped him with a particular problem rather than just providing general support. Every time a definition for a factor or category was revised, it was necessary to review all the other factors and categories to ensure consistency.

As discussed previously, the factors that influenced college student persistence were categorized under one of five themes: Student Self, Other People, Student Involvement, Institutional Support and Other Adverse.
**Simultaneous collection and analysis.**

As explained previously, upon commencing data collection through interviews, case analysis was conducted as soon as a transcript was completed. In other words, I did not start the analysis process after the eleventh interview was completed and transcribed. Case analysis was conducted immediately after the interview. For the most part, conducting case analysis early allowed me to interview the next student participant with a clearer understanding of what I learned from previous student participant interviews. My understanding of the essence of college student persistence developed and evolved through the interviews of all the student participants and continued as I analyzed their spoken words from their transcripts.

**Master lists.**

The spreadsheet visually showed the total number of and types of factors. From the spreadsheet, two master lists were constructed: one master list for factors that positively influenced CSP and another for factors that adversely influenced CSP. Examples of factors that positively influenced CSP are coping ability, support of friends, involvement with professors and a freshman orientation conducted by the college. Examples of factors that adversely influenced CSP are homesickness, a lack of financial aid, and distractions from friends. An electronic spreadsheet was produced to track the various factors.

The purpose of the lists was to identify all the different types of factors that influenced college student persistence as shared by the eleven study participants. The lists did not duplicate any type of factor. In other words, while reading a transcript, any factor that was previously listed was not re-listed. The factors that were positive and adverse influences to college student persistence were listed below in the order that they appeared.
A review of the transcripts identified 63 different factors that positively influenced college student persistence as reported by the eleven student participants.

1. Motivation
2. Identity
3. Coping
4. Focus
5. Overcoming challenges
6. Tuition support
7. Support of friends
8. Support of roommate
9. Involvement with classmates
10. Involvement with roommate
11. Involvement in associations
12. Study ethic
13. Confidence
14. Involvement with professors
15. Involvement in athletics
16. Relatives on the mainland
17. Campus environment
18. Diversity program
19. College fit
20. Responsibility
21. Organized
22. Support of family
23. Food
24. Financial aid and Scholarship
25. Orientation
26. Study system
27. Travel experience
28. Determined
29. Obligation
30. Commitment
31. Immersion
32. Support from tutors
33. Involvement with dorm mates
34. Dorm assignments
35. Flexibility
36. Stress management
37. Study habits
38. Ambitious
39. Self-awareness
40. Support of parents
41. Involvement in extracurricular activities
42. Employment
43. Supportive staff
44. Multicultural support
45. First-generation college student group support
46. Attitude
47. Self-talk
48. High self-esteem
49. Involvement with weight lifting
50. Mental preparation
51. Driven
52. Planning
53. Mindset
54. Support of faculty
55. Positive attitude
56. Inspiration
57. Content
58. Caffeine
59. Religion
60. Grateful
61. Study tool
62. Relationship with boyfriend
63. Hawai‘i club

A review of the transcripts identified 46 factors that adversely influenced college student persistence as reported by the eleven student participants.

1. Low self-esteem
2. Self-confidence
3. Roommates
4. Classmates
5. TV
6. Social media
7. Media
8. Relationship breakup
10. Racial stereotyping                      29. Sexism
11. Family death                             30. Bullying
13. Internet                                 32. Lack of student support
14. Poor writing skills                      33. Parties
15. Distracted by friends                    34. Speaking with an accent
16. Family illness                           35. Distracted by going out
17. Low goals                                36. Lack of student population diversity
18. Illness                                  37. Culture
19. Limited access to classmates             38. Café hours
20. College environment                      39. Athletics practice
21. Tuition                                  40. Accent
22. No friends                               41. Conflict with sports
23. Immersion                                42. Scared
24. Parents’ disapproval                     43. Dance practice
25. Employment                               44. City
26. Alcohol                                  45. Lacking self-discipline
27. Unacceptable campus housing              46. Rudeness

Each list represents the eleven study participants’ collective experiences as college students. Each participant did not share the same number or types of experiences as the other participants and therefore reported different influences on college student persistence. There were also a few factors that were widely experienced and reported by most or many of the student participants.

Transcripts

Initially, audio recordings were sent to two personal friends for transcribing. Both wanted to be helpful, but neither wanted to transcribe all the interviews. Due to the high cost of local professional transcription services, most of the audio recordings were sent to an overseas online transcription service. Each audio recording was uploaded immediately after the interview. Microsoft Office Word documents were usually completed within three to five days.

The transcripts on the most part were accurate verbatim documentations of the audio recordings. In only a few transcripts there were a few words that the transcriber could not
understand and wrote “unintelligible.” If I could decipher the word or phrase I did so. If I could not decipher a word or phrase I left it as it was. On the transcripts, I corrected many Hawaiian words and names that were misspelled.

The total number of pages for eleven interview transcripts was 371 pages. The number of pages per transcript ranged from 20 to 92. There was an obvious positive correlation between loquacious students that attempted to thoroughly answer every interview question and a large number of transcript pages.

All student participants were sent their respective transcripts for review. Only a few responded acknowledging the transcripts were accurate. Most student participants did not respond to my request for review. All student participants were told that if they desired to provide additional information for this study that I would not include the new material with the interview or transcript but rather insert the information on a separate document. No one provided additional information.

**Definition Drift**

Verifying that definitions of factors continued during the analysis process was important to ensure factors were accurately understood and labeled. To address this concern, after analyzing the eleventh transcript I returned to the first transcript to ensure that factor definitions had not changed. To my surprise I learned that while creating and establishing definitions for circumstances, facts, and influences, somewhere along the process a few definitions had evolved. The initial definition was substituted with a proximal definition. An influence that was defined and labeled as a particular factor for one student participant was later labeled as a different factor for another student participant. It was necessary to constantly review definitions to verify definitions were consistently applied.
Also problematic was including circumstances that did not influence College Student Persistence. For example one participant said that her mother found and suggested the college she ultimately chose to attend. She also said that her mother suggested the field of study. Her mother was definitely a strong influence on the participant, but neither decision was deemed a direct influence on her daughter’s persistence while at college.

**Artifacts**

Student participants were asked to select and bring to the interview two or three artifacts that symbolized, represented, described and/or helped them personally as a college student. I did not suggest specific items to the students. Many appeared to be unsure of what artifacts to select when I provided them instructions. It was my intention to be unspecific and provide a consistent explanation as to the type of artifact that they selected.

The use of artifacts during the interview was included as another means of collecting important data for this study. The student-selected artifacts also contributed in understanding the identity of the student. It helped to identify the diverse aspects that were important to their lives. Many artifacts were presented with or connected to a story. Occasionally a life changing event or story was shared because of the facilitative property of the artifact.

The use of artifacts in qualitative studies is considered a research method that searches for experiences and information that are not obvious. Further, artifacts are valuable in addressing the methodological weakness of self-reporting (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Most student participants clearly understood the significance of the artifacts in their lives. It was specifically and intentionally brought from home to college on the mainland for a purpose. However, other student participants did not understand the magnitude of the significance of the artifact to their lives. Some of their experiences were learning experiences. As an example, one student learned
that earphones were very helpful in providing privacy in her dorm room when her roommate was present. The use of earphones by both roommates provided an adequate amount of privacy. She discovered a functional use of an artifact. Artifacts assisted study participants in sharing experiences they may have forgotten or feelings they may have not previously realized.

The type of artifacts varied from ukuleles to blankets and rings. Some artifacts were representative of an activity, such as a spoon that represented a love of cooking. Other artifacts appeared ordinary such as a baseball cap that was worn every day of his freshman year. But the baseball cap had a deep rooted connections to Hawai`i and the love of standup paddle boarding.

All the participants shared student-selected artifacts that aided in learning about each participant. The significance of the artifacts cannot be overstated. The artifacts contributed to information that likely would not have been disclosed through the structured interview questions.

A commonly selected artifact type was a photo of family and siblings. Most confessed photos helped cope with their lives in a time of transition. It appeared the photos prompted recollection of a different period in their lives. A period they were happy and content. Photos were an important item brought from home that many claimed helped to deal with homesickness.

A common purpose in the selection of artifacts was its importance to the student, which was consistent with my artifact selection instructions. Often times the items had an emotional attachment, as mentioned previously, but other times the artifact had a practical and functional purpose, such as earphones assisting a student with studying and privacy.

The student-selected artifact informed me, by design, of what influenced college student persistence. The use of student-selected artifacts facilitated and encouraged sharing of rich college student experiences for this study. It is believed that important data was collected directly as a result of artifacts and such data likely would not have been collected.
Students selected artifacts for particular reasons and typically were able to articulate the reasons. Occasionally a student would simply explain that the article was important to them but did not share the reason. All the artifacts helped the students deal with their college life either mentally or physically. Most of the artifacts helped students deal with the emotional aspects of college life. Examples of these artifacts were photos of friends and family, and jewelry. Examples of artifacts that physically helped students deal with college life were earphones, a basketball, and a Bible.

It should be noted that one student-selected artifacts was not considered a factors that influenced CSP. A student participant shared a family photograph. She claimed the photo did not provide her with comfort. The artifact was of importance to her but her explanations lacked an influence to CSP.

Another student participant brought a bracelet that had a cross on it and also shared the word “grateful.” She related that faith was a big part of her life in general and of her relationship with her boyfriend. She also said that it reminded her to always do good. The word “grateful” she said explains that she felt fortunate in life. She further clarified that she was grateful to have the opportunity to attend college and have good health.

Whether a student-selected artifact was a factor that influenced CSP was based on the words expressed by the student participant. There were artifacts that could have been considered a factor that positively influenced CSP but no assumptions were made and student expression was required. Most artifacts were factors that influenced CSP under the factor name of Coping and category of Student Self.

The use of artifacts to facilitate the sharing of college experiences was helpful to this study. Interviews were the main research instrument for the collection of data. There were no
opportunities for observations of college student experiences since they spoke of past experiences and the students were studying at various college campuses from the east coast to the west coast on the continental U.S. Visiting various college campuses on the mainland to conduct first-hand observations was cost prohibitive.

**Part II**

**Cross-Case Analysis**

Two data analysis methods were conducted for this study: Constant Comparative and Category Construction methods. The Constant Comparative (Merriam, 2009) data analysis method involved comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. This involves comparing data within a case or with other cases. Data are grouped together based on similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall objective of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data.

The Category Construction method (Merriam, 2009) begins with reading the interview transcript and journal notes, and jotting down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margin. These notations should be potentially relevant information. These notations should also be expansive to identify data that might be useful. This is a form of open coding because all data is open for inclusion as relevant information. Notations could also include exact words or concepts previously noted. Assigning codes to pieces of data is a way to construct categories, according to Merriam (2009).

**Working Notes**

The analysis of the eleven cases was conducted on a separate document entitled Working Notes. The Working Notes, contains the majority of the collected data of this study, was disaggregated from the dissertation, Chapters 1 through 5, because each case contains an
abundance of personal details that, viewed collectively, could identify student participants. Anonymity was promised to the study participants prior to their interviews.

The Working Notes was not included in the submitted dissertation. The Working Notes and my completed dissertation were provided to my dissertation committee members for their review. Separating the documents was one way to maintain participant anonymity without compromising the thoroughness, accuracy and rigor of this study.

**Determination of Key Factors**

The eleven student participants identified a total of 109 factors that influenced CSP. A few factors were often reported while many were reported infrequently. The Key Factors were determined and discussed in this chapter. Two fundamental criteria were employed to determine the Key Factors, the total number of times a specific factor was shared by student participants and the intensity of the sharing. Tables were constructed to visually illustrate the number of times a factor that influenced CSP was reported by each student participant. The following section explains how the intensity of the factors was measured.

**Factor Intensity**

To this point, this study has counted the number of factors that influenced CSP of student participants. What has not yet been addressed is a qualitative measure of factors. The strength or intensity of a student participant’s experience, expression, and passion should also be considered and included in this study.

**Measures.**

The following ways of measuring intensity or strength were utilized in determining the Key Factors of this study.
1. **Wording:** The actual words used by student participants are the obvious measures of intensity or strength. Strong feelings are expressed by student participants through strong adjectives or descriptors.

2. **Elaboration:** A strong intensity could be interpreted through elaborate or amplified elucidation by a student participant. Conversely, a weak intensity could be characterized by the minimal use of words in a response statement.

3. **Enthusiasm:** Intensity could also be measured by the enthusiasm projected in the voice of the student participant when responding to an interview question. The speed and the fluctuation of voice in which a student speaks expresses enthusiasm.

4. **Quantity:** The number of times a student participant shared an influence during an interview could suggest strong or weak intensity. Repeated sharing of an experience during an interview may suggest a higher importance to the student participant.

5. **Priority:** Intensity could also be measured by placement on a list of factors. It could be suggested that the first response by a student participant may be the most important factor while the last response may be the least important factor. This particular aspect must be used carefully. A student participant could have listed the most important factor last simply because he overlooked it when he/she started sharing his response.

A student participant’s response to an interview question that did not influence college student persistence or lacked indicators was not included in this study.

**Examples.**

A student participant claimed that her immersion in her college’s culture was awful. “It was hard,” she said. She also said,
It’s probably the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. The east coast is completely different from Hawai`i culture. Being this local Hawai`i culture like, completely different, complete opposites, and no one understands and they expect you to conform to their standards rather than coming to a compromise.

Very exclusionary, very competitive, very self-focused. It’s different. Very, very different, and it’s just really hard because I was always on a different page than everyone else because I just think differently as a result of being from Hawai`i. People think that I need a passport to get from Hawai`i to the mainland. (p. 18)

The next example demonstrates a student participant’s intensity through descriptions, and through the use of many sentences. The significance of the weather is explained several ways. A student explained, “Definitely, the snow, the weather is such a big factor and I had no idea that it was going to be, but I guess there’s a big difference like here 20 degrees and 80 degrees back home” (p. 15). She also said, “it would become night so fast,” referring to how quickly it gets dark. And because of the darkness, she said, “I wouldn’t want to go to class and it’s freezing,” (p. 15). She also said the weather (the cold) made her feel depressed (p. 16).

Tables

All the factors, reported by the student participants, that influenced CSP were grouped under one of five categories: Student Self, Other People, Student Involvement, Institutional Support, and Other Adverse. I constructed a table for each of the five categories to visually elucidate the quantitative perspective.

The top row identifies the eleven student participants by a number. The left-side column is comprised of factors that influenced CSP. Positive and adverse influences of CSP are indicated through the use of plus and minus signs. A factor can have multiple reports, e.g., the support
from parents and support from grandparents is counted as two separate reports. Reporting the support of parents twice during an interview did not result in two separate reports.

The tables visually and easily demonstrate the types and numbers of factors reported by the eleven student participants.

**Persisters and Non-Persisters**

Of the eleven students that participated in this study, two transferred to Hawai`i colleges, one dropped out of college temporarily, and eight continued their studies at mainland colleges. The eight participants that continued their studies at a mainland college are defined in this study as persisters. The three participants that either returned to Hawai`i to continue college study at a different institution or temporarily ceased studying at a mainland college are defined in this study as non-persisters. The non-persisters are identified in each of the five tables with asterisks. They are Participants 5, 6 and 7.

This study did not expect to find and interview an equal number of persister and non-persister student participants. The actual number of total persisters and non-persisters from the 2012 and 2013 KS graduating classes are unknown. If the schools collects such data, the statistics are not shared with the public. Anecdotally I suspected, through my limited knowledge of members in the KS community and of KS alumni, that the number of non-persisters for my study population was very low. After interviewing the eleven student participants during the data collection process, the information the participants shared confirmed my suspicion. Few study participants were aware of any possible non-persisters. Based on this information, I was aware that the ratio of persisters to non-persisters found to participate in this study was on the most part uncontrollable and unpredictable. At best, I had hoped to find and interview a few non-persisters,
realizing that most of my study participants would be persisters. After completing the data collection phase, I was satisfied with having only three non-persisters participate in this study.

**Student Self Category**

For the category of Student Self, the eleven student participants identified a total of thirty-three factors that influenced CSP. Three factors, Coping, Motivation, and Homesickness were deemed as Key Factors because of a combination of prevalence and intensities of responses from student participants. All Student Self factors that positively and adversely influenced CSP are listed in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Student Self Category.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Student Self (Internal)</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>Participant 5*</th>
<th>Participant 6*</th>
<th>Participant 7*</th>
<th>Participant 8</th>
<th>Participant 9</th>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>Participant 11</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Attitude/Mindset/Mental Prep.</td>
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<td>Caffeine</td>
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<td>Drive/Determined</td>
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<td>Homesickness</td>
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<td>Inspiration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other People Category

For the category of Other People, the eleven student participants identified a total of six factors that influenced CSP. Two factors, Classmates and Friends, and Family, were combined and deemed a Key Factor because of a combination of prevalence and intensities of responses from student participants. All Other People factors that positively and adversely influenced CSP are listed in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2 Other People Category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category: Others People (External)</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>Participant 5*</th>
<th>Participant 6*</th>
<th>Participant 7*</th>
<th>Participant 8</th>
<th>Participant 9</th>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>Participant 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/Girlfriend</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmates and Friends</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family (includes family on the mainland, and family illnesses and death)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors, Faculty</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category: Others People (External)</td>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Participant 5*</td>
<td>Participant 6*</td>
<td>Participant 7*</td>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Participant 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Involvement Category**

For the category of Student Involvement, the eleven student participants identified a total of nine factors that influenced CSP. Four types of Student Involvement, Associations, Classmates, Roommates, and Professors, were combined and deemed a Key Factor because of a combination of prevalence and intensities of responses from student participants. All Student Involvement factors that positively and adversely influenced CSP are listed in Table 4.3.
Table 4.3 Student Involvement Category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Involvement Category</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>Participant 5*</th>
<th>Participant 6*</th>
<th>Participant 7*</th>
<th>Participant 8</th>
<th>Participant 9</th>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>Participant 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorm mate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor mate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activity</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional Support Category**

For the category of Institutional Support, the eleven student participants identified a total of fourteen factors that influenced CSP. One factor, College Tuition, Financial Aid and Scholarships, was deemed a Key Factor because of a combination of prevalence and intensities of responses from student participants. All Institutional Support factors that positively and adversely influenced CSP are listed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Institutional Support Category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Support Category</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>Participant 5*</th>
<th>Participant 6*</th>
<th>Participant 7*</th>
<th>Participant 8</th>
<th>Participant 9</th>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>Participant 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Café hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College staff, director,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advisor, doctor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

142
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Immersion</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of Student Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorm Assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Environment</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Groups, i.e., International Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Assistants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Tuition, Financial Aid, Scholarships</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Category: Institutional Support | Participant 1 | Participant 2 | Participant 3 | Participant 4 | Participant 5* | Participant 6* | Participant 7* | Participant 8 | Participant 9 | Participant 10 | Participant 11

**Other Adverse Category**

This category was created to congregate factors that could not be placed in the other four categories. It was important not to disregard factors simply because they did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the other four categories.

Under this category the eleven student participants identified six factors that adversely influenced CSP. The following table contains a list of these factors that adversely influenced CSP. Due to the sparseness of number and low intensities of the factors none categorized under Other Adverse were determined to be a Key Factor. The category Other Adverse is comprised of six factors that are listed in Table 4.5.
Table 4.5 Other Adverse Category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Adverse Category</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>Participant 5*</th>
<th>Participant 6*</th>
<th>Participant 7*</th>
<th>Participant 8</th>
<th>Participant 9</th>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>Participant 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out, the City</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet, social media, media</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Factors**

This study identified 109 factors that influenced College Student Persistence. Six of the 109 total factors, categorized under four themes, were identified as Key Factors that significantly influenced CSP. Factors were determined to be Key Factors based on the prevalence of reports by the student participants and the intensities of the reports.

**Six key factors.**

The six Key Factors and their categories are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 1 Coping</td>
<td>Student Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Motivation</td>
<td>Student Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Homesickness</td>
<td>Student Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Support of Family, Classmates and Friends</td>
<td>Other People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Involvement with Associations, Classmates</td>
<td>Student Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommates and Professors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 College Tuition</td>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The six Key Factors are individually discussed below. Most of the student participants did not report a problem with immersion into college culture, consequently this factor was not considered a significant influence to CSP but is a significant finding. Cultural immersion is discussed after the presentation of the Key Factors.
Key Factor Number 1: Coping/Student Self Category

In this study, the factor of coping was the most reported influence to college student persistence, CSP, and was accordingly deemed a Key Factor. The student participants reported on several different ways they employed to cope with a variety of stress, to name a few, calling home, cooking, playing ukulele, exercising, looking at family photos, etc.

A coping experience that positively influenced CSP was reported forty-four times by ten student participants, a considerable amount. Each of the ten student participants, during their interviews, reported one to nine coping anecdotes. The student participant that did not report a coping anecdote also did not continue studying at her college in the subsequent year.

Coping anecdotes of three student participants were thorough and extensive. Their experiences were descriptive and were related with enthusiasm. Also an experience was shared more than once during the interview. The intensity levels of coping anecdotes of six other student participants were moderate to low. The intensity levels of one student participant’s anecdotes were split; three were moderate to low and two were extensive. A majority of the student-selected artifacts shared during the interviews were connected to coping anecdotes.

Coping is something that a student does to deal with a problem or difficulty. A coping anecdote could have been introduced in this study three ways. The first would be as a direct response to the interview question: Can you share any experiences where you demonstrated coping and resilience? Most study participants responded with an example. Some examples were of low strength or intensity while others were stronger. Next, anecdotes involving coping mechanisms and coping materials could also have been shared in response to other interview questions. One of the last interview questions asks whether a student participant has any information that is related to this study that was not directly asked. A student participant could
have used this opportunity to share a successful coping strategy. Lastly, coping anecdotes could have been reported through the artifacts selected by student participants. In fact the majority of the artifacts presented involved emotion-focused coping articles.

The manner a person deals with stress, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be addressed several different ways. Addressing stress can involve finding solutions to overcome a problem, such as implementing the use of a personal schedule planner to increase efficient use of time, or performing acts to feel better, such as playing basketball or dancing. Whether a college student chooses to think a problem through or temporarily take his mind off the problem, those actions could be viewed as a means of persisting.

The capacity to cope was evident in ten out of the eleven student participants of this study. They reported on several coping strategies, through anecdotes, that they initiated, developed and incorporated in their lives to address the multitude of stresses that college students’ encounter. Some strategies were determined prior to arriving at college and in anticipation of being homesick, such as bringing photographs of family and friends to hang on their dorm walls. Other strategies were developed to address ongoing relationship problems with a roommate or with time management difficulties.

Coping strategies.

Of the three coping strategies that were discussed in Chapter 2, problem-focused, emotion-focused, and meaning-focused, ten student participants reported utilizing two of the three strategies. The most often reported coping strategy was the emotion-focused coping strategy. This strategy does not address the actual problem but instead how a person handles feelings of distress. Examples of this employed strategy are playing an ukulele or guitar, talking
with friends or relatives, and exercising. Efforts to address students’ emotions were prominently reported thirty-six times.

Of the thirty-six emotion-focused coping strategies five participants expressed talking to friends or family as a means to cope with stress. A few student participants identified exercising, playing music, and weight lifting as an activity they utilized to cope with stress. Two student participants related enjoying “local food.” However the use of an object, such as photographs, jewelry, a plant and letters from parents, as an emotion-focused coping strategy was reported thirteen times.

The second most reported coping strategy was the problem-focused strategy. Though not reported as often as the emotion-focused strategy, it was reported eight times by five student participants. One student reported the problem-focused strategy helped with two situations. She related that her earphones allowed her to overcome her shyness to workout at a gym and also provided her privacy while studying in her dorm room.

None of the student participants reported using the third coping strategy, meaning-focused. No one related modifying or reappraising a perceived problem situation by denial or altering a person’s goals or values. I searched for signs of a student sharing a valuable lesson in life or finding humor and using it as a stress reducer for a problem situation. None was found.

Problem-focused coping strategies, as the name suggests, attempts to directly address or confront a problem to identify and implement a solution. The only resolution to a homesick college student is to return home. This perspective may explain why student participants utilized the emotion-focused coping strategy more often than the problem-focused coping strategy. Talking with family and friends and playing an ukulele helped them deal with their feelings of
homesickness. An emotion-focused coping strategy was used instead of a problem-focused coping strategy because the problem could not be fixed.

**Key Factor Number 2: Motivation/Student Self Category**

Motivation was identified as a Key Factor that influenced CSP of the nine student participants due to prevalence and intensity of reportings. Motivation was reported fourteen times in this study. Extrinsic motivation was reported eleven times. Six types of extrinsic motivation were identified: be known as smart, college tuition, future employment, not disappoint family, not disappoint friends, and competing with classmates. The most common extrinsic motivation factor type was family, with five participant reports. Two student participants reported both an intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Three motivation factors were considered intrinsic and were reported by three different student participants. The three types of intrinsic motivation, respectively, were: wanting to live up to the expectations of receiving a scholarship, was taught by parents to be self-motivation, and the study participant studied hard because she was self-motivated.

Three student participants provided explicit motivation anecdotes. They also had at least two different motivations that influenced CSP. The motivation anecdotes of the other student participants were moderate to low.

Interestingly the word “grades” was not mentioned by the student participants but was interpreted indirectly through anecdotes because “grades” is a widely accepted measure of academic performance. Three examples of motivation are: “wanting to be known as the smartest,” “to live up to the expectations of receiving a prestigious scholarship,” and to compete with college classmates.
Key Factor Number 3: Homesickness/Student Self

Homesickness was categorized as a Key Factor that influenced CSP of eight student participants due to prevalence and intensities. The intensities of seven experiences were moderate to strong and the intensity of one experience was weak. Many of the student participants also discussed coping strategies that they employed to address homesickness.

- “I think that was the hardest part…”
- “You can’t help getting homesick.”
- Was “a little homesick,” then said “not really.”
- Homesickness was his “biggest obstacle.”
- Definitely got homesick during the winter months.
- Thought many times about coming home to study.
- Was homesick and sad.
- Was homesick during the holidays and birthdays.

There was a common theme that emerged from the three student participants that claimed that they did not experience homesickness. The three students said, in different ways, that they kept themselves busy. One student claimed,

Because I begin to think of (college) as my home. I gotten so comfortable there…and I knew who I was, I knew where I came from, I knew this is where I’m going, now that I begin to think of (college) as my home.

Key Factor Number 4: Support of Family, Classmates and Friends/Other People Category

This section starts with a discussion on the support of family to the student participants. It is followed by a discussion on the support of classmates and family to the student participants.
As expected student participants reported relations and experiences with their family multiple times. Furthermore, many student participants reported the support of multiple family members. Nine student participants reported that family was a positive and/or adverse influence to their CSP twenty times. There were fourteen positive influences and six adverse influences to CSP. Family was determined to be a Key Factor based on the total number of reports by a majority of study participants and the intensities of the reports.

The adverse influences from family commonly involved the illness or death of a grandparent or parent. Unavoidable life circumstances adversely influenced the student participants in the form of distraction, inability to concentrate, and experiencing grief.

Five of the eleven student participants, almost half, reported dealing with family members that either died or had serious health issues. One student participant reported experiencing tremendous grief when his grandmother died. He said it was very challenging to return to school. He struggled with studying for mid-term exams.

Another student participant explained that a few elderly family members were seriously sick. He said it was heartbreaking for him. He said it was heartbreaking for him. He admitted that it was “a bit rough but it was a growing moment for me because these are the people I’m doing these things.” He said he did not want to let them down. (p. 34)

A third student participant reported that he was very concerned about the failing health of his grandfather. He was worried that his grandfather would pass away while he was on the mainland. He explained the difficulties his grandfather was experiencing and the inability to take care of himself. He said that a part of him wanted to go home but he did not have that option. His grandfather was heavy on his mind.
A female student participant reported that at one time her mother and her father were in the hospital at the same time. (p. 17) She also reported breaking down and crying in a classroom when asked by a professor why she was not attending class. It appears that the family illness situation was overwhelming for her.

Another student participant related having an ill grandparent living in Hawai‘i. She said it was “hard mentally to deal with and worry about. But she said that all she could do was focus on one thing at a time (p. 15). She mentioned that knowing her grandfather was sick made it difficult to be away from home.

It was expected that student participants would express support of friends as a strong factor that influenced CSP. Similar to the support of family factor, many student participants reported the support of multiple friends. The definition of friends includes classmates. It was often difficult to distinguish the difference during the interviews. Attempting to differentiate between a former classmate that is a current friend from a friend that was never a classmate was problematic and was viewed as an unnecessary distinction.

Ten student participants reported that classmates and friends was a positive and/or adverse influence to their CSP twenty-four times. There were seventeen positive influences and seven adverse influences to CSP. Support of classmates and friends was determined to be a Key Factor based on the total number of reports by a majority. Adverse influences from classmates and friends included distractions from studying, stereotyping, unfriendly classmates, and wanting to study later.

One student participant reported a minor one-time stereotyping incident caused by a classmate. Three student participants of the eleven, reported boyfriend/girlfriend relationships had an adverse influence on CSP during their freshman year in college.
One student participant.

One student participant shared, on multiple occasions, her concerns about the subject of friends. This theme emerged early during her interview and continued until the end. It appears that lacking friends was a significant factor that adversely influenced college student persistence for this student participant. The level of intensity for this factor was high and it was reported seven times. This factor consumed this study participant often as a freshman college student. The topic emerged and was explained to me several different ways. It was not one anecdote told to me repeatedly throughout the interview. This student participant was articulate in her explanation of the situations and her strong feelings were conveyed through carefully selected words. The seven anecdotes are:

1. Her response when asked her expectations and assumptions about attending a mainland college was, among other things, that she “wouldn’t be able to make a lot of friends” (p. 4).

2. She offered a picture of her siblings as one of her self-selected artifacts. I asked her when she looked at or thought about the picture. Her response was “When I’m having a rough time and I feel like I don’t have any friends who’ll be able to make me feel better or available for me to hang out with them” (p. 6).

3. She was asked what it meant to her to be a native Hawaiian. Among other things, she explained that she sees the world completely differently from her friends on the mainland. She said this is a “Tangible problem that I’ve run into on multiple occasions and it makes communicating difficult” (p. 8). She further stated, “It makes empathizing with others difficult and having others empathize with me here also difficult…” (p. 8).
4. Her response to the question asking about factors that did not help or support her academic goals was “I didn’t feel supported. I was doing it alone. I didn’t have any friends on campus” (p. 10).

5. She related another factor that did not help or support her academic goals was her roommate. She shared having a lot of problems with her roommate but said, “They’re inconsequential” (p. 11). Later she elaborated by saying that at one time she thought they were close and she could go to her roommate and talk but “I found out right before Christmas or maybe Thanksgiving that that was not the case for her, and after that, we just stopped talking” (p. 12).

6. She related that she worked full-time off campus. I asked her if her job impacted her study time. She related, “I just had to be more efficient with my time. I mean it wasn’t a big deal. People spend their nights at the university, you know, partying, watching movies, talking with their friends, but I just worked” (p. 13).

7. One of the last questions asked of each student participant is what advice would you give future KS graduates preparing to attend a mainland college. Her reply was “Talk to your friends as much as you can. Pick one person from your graduating high school class and keep in touch. Do not lose touch with this one person” (p. 20).

To be fair, this student participant did have positive things to say about her professors and staff. She felt college professors and staff were supportive if you asked for help. This student participant also reported her displeasure with bullying, racism, and sexism at her college.
Key Factor Number 5: Associations, Classmates, Roommates, and Professors/Student Involvement Category

All student participants expressed, to varying degrees, involvement with professors, classmates, roommates, dorm mates, associations, athletics, extracurricular activities, and employment. Quantitative and qualitative measures were conducted in the analysis of this category. The number of involvement was counted. For example, one student was involved with the Hawai`i club, with classmates, and with her professors, for a total of three types. Also measured was the intensity of each involvement. Student participants were asked to identify the intensity or the strength of involvement by selecting one of four levels: none, limited, occasionally, and often. This method was utilized to eliminate interpreting the student participants’ spoken words to determine the level of involvement. Student participants, during the interview, that chose the levels of occasionally and often were considered involved for that particular involvement type. Student participants that selected the levels of none or limited were considered uninvolved for that particular involvement type.

A comprehensive assessment of all student involvement was conducted for each student participant. Three categories of student involvement were created based on the number of and intensity of involvement for an overall assessment: uninvolved, involved or overinvolved. The involvement category for ten student participants was involved. The amount of student involvement by the participant that dropped out of college was considered as overinvolved. No student was deemed uninvolved or under-involved.

Eleven student participants identified nine types of student involvement that influenced CSP. Student involvement with associations, classmates, roommates, and professors were combined and deemed a Key Factor due to prevalence and intensity. Other student involvement
types, to a lesser extent, were also reported: student involvement with athletics, dorm mates, employment, and extracurricular activities.

Involvement with associations was reported by nine student participants. Involvement with classmates was reported by seven student participants. Involvement with roommates was reported by seven student participants. And involvement with professors was reported by eight student participants.

In general the study participants were highly involved at their respective colleges. Four participants reported being involved with associations, classmates, roommates, and professors.

The intensity levels of student involvement were wide-ranging. Some participants’ expressions were considerable, involving details and excitement. Responses by other participants were sparse. One student participant’s discussion about her roommate was explicit. She also explained not being homesick because she kept herself busy. Another student participant discussed his relationship and level of involvement with his roommate several times during his interview. He characterized his roommate as supportive and believed his college experience would have been more difficult without him. He also had strong feelings about his mainland family that took care of him during the school year. He looked forward to meeting them on the weekends and talking with them. He was a very social person and he recognized the need to interact with his cousins, aunties, and uncles. Though he did not elaborate on his involvement with his classmates, he did consider the amount of involvement as “often.”

A student participant was involved in three clubs, two at the level of often and one occasionally. He also was employed on campus and was often involved with his professors, classmates and roommate. Another student participant’s involvement with his professors was often and he provided detailed reasons why he needed to be connected.
A comprehensive assessment of all student involvement was conducted for each student participant. Three levels of student involvement were created based on the number of and intensity of involvement for an overall assessment: uninvolved, involved or overinvolved.

Ten of the student participants were moderately to highly involved in college. The types of involvement were typical student organizations, athletics, extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty members and other students. Two participants reported the least types of involvement with only three. Two participants reported six types of involvement. The remaining seven participants reported four or five types of involvement each.

There were no students participants that could be characterized as under-involved. However, one student could be characterized as over-involved in the category of student involvement, which was detrimental to CSP. During her first year in college, this student participant was involved with a professional association and in performing arts. She explained that she knew all of her professors by name and they knew her by name. She reported being fully engaged with her professors, and worked full-time off campus. Overall the energy and time demands on this student participant were substantial.

It was anticipated that student involvement would be a factor that positively influenced CSP. Substantiating a positive correlation between student involvement and persistence requires demonstrating that students that were involved in college also did return to the same college in the succeeding year, and students that were uninvolved did not return. Uninvolved students that persisted would disprove this theory. It is therefore necessary to show and confirm that uninvolved students did not persist.
Hawai`i club.

Six study participants said they were members of their college’s respective Hawai`i Club. Five study participants said they did not join a Hawai`i Club. Of the participants that joined their college’s Hawai`i Club, the level of participation and the purpose of membership varied.

One student participant was involved occasionally with the Hawai`i Club at his college. He said it was easy for him to make friends with non-Hawai`i students. He was asked and he replied that he did not join the Hawai`i Club because of a need for support from Hawai`i students. He continued that he “felt more acclimated to the mainland lifestyle than most of my Hawai`i peers were, just because I’ve been there (mainland) so often, I’ve traveled there that I know a lot.”

Some study participants did express a desire to join their respective Hawai`i Clubs however most did not express a desire to explore or develop their ethnic identity. Few expressed an interest in associating with other Hawai`i students. It appears that the purpose of membership was to enjoy being with like thinking friends and to help cope with college life.

Student participant.

A student participant was employed full-time during her first semester as a college freshman. She said worked Thursdays through Sunday 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. When asked how working impacted her studying, she said she had to be more efficient with her time. She said, “It wasn’t a big deal.” She said other students partied, watched movies and talked with friends; she worked. Though she downplayed the adverse aspects of being a full-time employee, this time could have been used to study and rest. And the significance of being employed full-time cannot be fully understood without considering the other social and academic obligations of her extremely busy college life. (p. 13)
Key Factor Number 6: College Tuition/Institutional Support Category

It is suggested that student participants’ financial situations involved their particular college tuition costs, the amount of financial aid and/or scholarships received, the amount participants’ parents paid, and income earned by a student that was employed. Four student participants were satisfied with their financial situation. Three student participants received sufficient financial aid and scholarships. One student participant was satisfied with the college tuition, which was the lowest of the colleges that she considered to attend. Six student participants were dissatisfied with their financial situation. Three student participants related receiving an insufficient amount of financial aid or scholarship. One student participant expressed the tuition was too expensive. Five student participants expressed dissatisfaction that their parents had to pay their high tuition costs.

One student participant’s college tuition was an indirect, adverse influence to her CSP. Due to not receiving sufficient financial aid to pay her college tuition, she worked full-time. This considerably decreased her study and rest times.

Other Findings

Three other findings, relevant to this study, are discussed: cultural immersion and integration, ethnic identity, and high school preparation.

Cultural immersion and integration.

Research studies group data into major themes. A major theme identifies patterns and trends and has, to some degree, significance. This study identified six major themes or Key Factors that significantly influenced CSP, as reported by these eleven student participants. As an example, the Key Factor of Coping was reported forty-four times by ten of the eleven student participants. On the other side of the reporting spectrum, some factors were meagerly reported
and can be considered outliers. The reason a factor is sparsely reported and thus considered an outlier could be due to a lack of popularity or the way an interview question was constructed. In the case of college student immersion, the interview question inquired into whether the student participant experienced “difficulties” associated with immersion to a new college and culture. The dominant response of the eleven student participants was they did not experience major difficulties with immersion. One student participant expressed significant difficulties and three student participants experienced very minor difficulties. If, instead, the interview question searched for the opposite experience, e.g., “Was your experience with immersion to a new college culture easy?” the responses would primarily be positive. The opposite response from the majority can be significant (Yin, 1993).

The words immersion and integration are different but have some similarities. In this study successful immersion and integration implies a lack of difficulty in accepting another culture’s values and beliefs.

From one perspective, discussions about immersion with the eleven student participants resulted in the unearthing of one student experiencing difficulty. In refocusing, ten student participants reported immersion was not an adverse factor at their colleges. However, this does not mean it was a positive influence to CSP. This was neither positive nor adverse and should be considered neutral as it relates to this study’s research questions.

This study searched for student experiences of oppression or resistance at college campuses. I searched for indications and suggestions of racial subjugation and mistreatment in the student participants’ words. I desired to understand their experiences being immersed in a new college culture and to identify, if any, signs of struggle and difficulty.
Student participants’ responses to the question about difficulty immersing into a new culture are listed below:

- A female student participant explained, “I don’t have too much difficulty adjusting to changes, in routine, or in like, life… I pick up habits a lot faster than other people so I didn’t really have that much trouble adjusting to a new culture” (p. 19).

- Another student participant said he did not have a problem assimilating. He said, “I made a lot of new friends up there. People from all over the place. I met a guy from Italy, from Las Vegas, from all over the states really and I didn’t know them before and now we’re great friends” (p. 11).

- A male student participant said his college conducted a Parent Orientation, a Move-In Day event, and weekend Orientation Adventure for freshman. The adventure was held on a nearby island with nineteen other first year classmates. The leaders were upper classmates and no faculty members were involved. They backpacked, kayaked, and saw seals, dolphins and sharks. They built a bonfire and did relationship-building exercises. He said the adventure was helpful in orienting him to his college. He was happy to know classmates before the semester started. He said, “I think that they (his college) foster a culture where we…um…we’re very open people. We don’t judge… based of you know the cover, the book on its cover” (p. 73). His advice to future KS graduates was to “know your language…I feel like a lot of people just missed the culture here (in Hawai`i) and they miss you like… being around Hawaiian things” (p. 80). He added that through his experience as a KS student “having that … cultural
base…really helped me” (p. 80). He strongly believed the Hawaiian language was the foundation of the culture. He did not believe a person needed to be fluent in Hawaiian but a person that leaves the islands needs to have a strong cultural foundation that could involve other Hawaiian practices, such as surfing or playing the ukulele. It is something that a person could fall back on.

- A male student participant had extensive travel experience prior to attending college on the mainland. He explained, “There was no big cultural difference that I couldn’t understand or wrap my head around that I wasn’t accepting of” (p. 11).

- A male student participant believed it was challenging to maintain your individuality. He said, “A lot of people would…submit to the people around them to just find the clique and kind of adopt their self to the clique” (pp. 19 and 20). He did not believe that this was pervasive at his college. I asked him how he dealt with this challenge. He explained that he maintained his individuality through two practices. First, he went to church on Sundays. And second, he played his guitar without any care of who was listening.

- A female student participant said, “It was hard…Being this local Hawai`i culture, like, completely different, complete opposites, and no one understands and hey expect you to conform to their standards rather than coming to a compromise.” She explained that the region had different “standards, rules, or social concepts.” She described the culture as “Very exclusionary, very competitive, very self-focused, it’s different, very, very different, and it’s just really hard because I was always on a different page than everyone else because I just think differently as a result of being from Hawai`i,” (p. 18).
A male student participant related that others claimed he had an accent.

A female student participant said she did not have any major problems.

A female student participant said she liked being immersed in her new college culture.

A female student participant said she did not have any difficulty with the new culture.

It is necessary to share the interview responses of experiences of one student participant. During her interview one student participant claimed she experienced racism. Her response necessitates a clarification. In response to the interview question, “What factors did not support college student persistence?” She replied “Alcohol could be one,” then she followed up with, “Stressors that are unrelated to academia such as things like housing pursuit, a clean environment, a healthy learning environment, so a learning environment without racism, sexism, bullying, that kind of thing” (p. 15). It is difficult to consider “racism” in this instance a significant or a moderate factor that influenced CSP for her because it was enumerated after “alcohol, housing pursuit, and a clean environment, and, further, was congregated under the category of “a healthy learning environment.” The factor “racism” cannot be discounted but also cannot be considered important which requires further explanation. She also claimed, “I feel like those could all be huge things that would deter someone fulfilling their degree.” Based on the word choice of “could” in her statement, I was unsure if her statement was hypothetical or an actual experience. Her reply to my follow-up inquiry was “To a degree, yeah,” (p. 16). Again her choice of words was very telling. She did not take an assertive stance in tone or word choice to insist that this was a major problem. It was probably a problem that she did personally experience, but it was not overwhelming or devastating. Another consideration is that she
experienced many minor issues, or minor factors that adversely influenced CSP that cumulatively created a significant overall adverse experience for her.

Another student participant explained that the college she attends is in a major city that is very “activist-oriented.” She said, “So, I feel like trying to fit in in that kind of aspect was, is a lot more like identity distorting” (p. 21). In response to my follow-up question she claimed that she was not forced to acclimate into a group that had different views.

A female student participant said she did not have any major problems with immersion but share two anecdotes. She shared a funny experience with the “shaka” sign. One of her Hawai`i friends gave her the shaka sign and she returned the sign. Her friend from Asia asked what it meant. She explained the significance of the sign in Hawai`i. The second anecdote involves local slangs and that her teammates told her that she has an accent. She said that her teammates teased her about how she pronounced words differently. Again she said these were not major hurdles but were in the category of cultural differences.

A male student participant also reported that his mainland friends said they could not understand him and he spoke with an accent. He said handshaking was different too but these were minor differences.

**Cultural, social capital, and institutional agents.**

The eleven student participants did not report having a cultural, social capital or institutional agent while at their respective colleges that considerably facilitated their transition. Some student participants received minimal advice and guidance, but most acculturated with roommates and friends instead of having agent support.

One student had the benefit of her older brother leading the way and sharing his experiences with her. Though he attended a different college, his experiences attending a
mainland college were helpful to her. She said her brother “played a big part in (preparing to attend a mainland college) because he was attending college already in the mainland for two years,” (p. 4). She claimed that she learned from his experiences and his friends’ experiences. She said she “Did a lot of things he did to prepare so I bought like the right, the same things that he did in terms of like dorm.” Though her brother attended a different college in a different state, she recognized the benefits of his experiences and took advantage of his advice to her. This support could be viewed as a cultural or transition agent. Though he did not reside on her campus, nonetheless, his advice, according to the student participant, was helpful.

Another female student participant found a KS graduate from the previous year at her college. She said,

He just told me like, you know, like I really like this and this. It’s small. You can focus, and just depends on what you want. He’s like yeah, I know, you’re not. I know you’re not focused on like the crazy part of college. He’s like I think it would be really good for you and I just like trusted him. (p. 3)

**Ethnic identity.**

The student participants for this study were graduates of a school that has a rich history of educating Native Hawaiian children. Understanding whether ethnic identity somehow influenced college persistence of student participants was an important study objective. To this end semi-structured interview questions included inquiries regarding Native Hawaiian identity.

This section discussed several aspects related to ethnic identity. The section starts with the definition of ethnic identity and is followed with the student participants’ perspective on their ethnic identities. Ethnic identity is followed by a discussion of their high school preparation.
Ethnic identity is characterized as part of one's overarching self-concept and refers to a group who retains the customs, language, and/or social views of the group (Merriam’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2004).

A student’s identity is related to his/her culture. A student may have strong ties to his/her family and may have strong relationships with family members. A student’s culture may encourage, require and value working together. A student from a collectivist-oriented community may encounter challenges on a competitive or individualistic-oriented campus. In other words, students that are accustomed to working cooperatively and collaboratively may not flourish working independently. There was no clear evidence offered by the eleven participants during their interviews that this type of challenge was experienced.

Extending this thought, students that come from a collectivist-oriented community may find it difficult to turn down invitations to participate in non-studying experiences such as partying, going to the city, sight-seeing, etc. These non-studying experiences are not per se adverse experiences. An inability to decline any invitations or an inability to demonstrate good judgment may be detrimental to academic goals. Excessive participation in non-studying experiences may be instigated by an inability to decline an invitation or a lack of self-discipline. In another perspective, a balance of studying and non-studying is also important, such as socializing, resting, and exercising.

**Participants’ perspectives.**

The eleven student participants were queried whether they identified as Native Hawaiians and if so to what extent. The responses by the eleven participants were diverse. Of the eleven participants, ten claimed to identify, to at least 50%, as a Native Hawaiian. One participant claimed that she identified with another of her many ethnicities. Another claimed identity was
“even” with another ethnicity. Most claimed to have many ethnicities but felt their Native Hawaiian identity was the strongest. Many participants qualified their responses too. Some said they also identified with “western” way of life too. Other participants clarified by saying, “Ohana is at the center of the culture,” and “Yes, a Hawaiian living in America.”

The participants were asked what aspects of Hawaiian culture they identified with. Again the range of responses was diverse. Many explained learning about Hawaiian culture from early years at KS. Some related that the Hawaiian language was very important to them. They expressed the importance of Hawaiian values such as aloha (love), kuleana (responsibility), and ha`a ha`a (humility).

One participant shared his adverse experience with racial stereotyping during a class discussion. Also related to a collectivist-orientation, another participant shared her experiences with community service, something she did since she was in grade school.

A student participant further related that at her college people usually identify with one race while she identifies with numerous. She also explained that while at home in Hawai`i she felt different from her classmates because she “wasn’t as Hawaiian as them” (p. 9).

Another student participant reported, “Hawaiian is up there” meaning he strongly identified with being Native Hawaiian. He added, “And I guess some Western you know. There’s a whole bunch of Western influence here in Hawai`i (p. 10).

When asked what it meant to be a Native Hawaiian, one student participant replied, “I didn’t go to college to discover myself, and I feel like a lot of people do, but I knew who I was when I left and the reason why I left was to challenge myself” (p. 46). He explained that being Native Hawaiian was more than “blood… it’s the practice of course” (p. 46). The aspects of culture that resonated with him were the language. He explained that the language was “the
foundation of my tree of knowledge” (p. 47). In an extensive reply he said he did not want to label everything as Hawaiian practices but he referenced playing ukulele, surfing, pounding poi. He said, “It’s intrinsically…like I want to say like it’s woven into us” (p. 47). He highlighted the responsibility as a Native Hawaiians to carry himself properly and not bring shame to his teachers, friends or others. He further explained “you have to identify yourself by … what you do, your actions speak louder than your words” (p. 48). By extension he carries this responsibility of how he behaves at his college.

This student participant continued by discussing the importance family and ancestors are in the Hawaiian culture. He claimed, “Your family like the ohana is at the center of the culture” (p. 48). He admitted that he has other ethnicities but being a Native Hawaiian he said, “We do have a responsibility because our ancestors knew how to live in harmony with their environment…” (p. 48).

Another student participant is multi-ethnic but identified more with being a Native Hawaiian. He had strong feelings about being a Native Hawaiian. He believed that Native Hawaiians are a dying race. He also felt that as a Native Hawaiian he has “a responsibility to protect Hawai‘i, to rejuvenate Hawai‘i, to rejuvenate the people and most importantly prepare the next generation to carry on this job” (p. 15).

A male student participant identified with being a Native Hawaiian. He believed that it was impossible to be a true Hawaiian in this current day and age. By this he meant a person Could not work a farm the way a true Hawaiian would. That is why he identifies himself as a “Hawaiian living in America” (p. 9). He explained, “We are following their (America) rules and their customs, but I still call myself Hawaiian because I know our history” (p. 9). When he can,
he practices his culture but it is not something he does every day because it is difficult. He also related that he speaks Hawaiian and can hold a conversation but does not claim to be fluent.

The other student participants did not report oppression or resistance at their respective college campuses. The immersion into a new culture by the student participants, on the most part, was not difficult or challenging. They did not report being subjected to racial subjugation and mistreatment at their respective colleges from professors, classmates, roommates and other friends. There did not appear to be any issues with navigating or negotiating to a new college culture or multicultural environment. I did not detect any sign that students were subjected to cognitive dissonance, as explained by Museus, or were marginalized within society.

Ten students did not express difficulties with oppression. These students did not claim they were forced to undergo identity transformation. One student participant did report an experience that he labeled as “stereotyping” but it was not extensive.

**High school preparation.**

The majority of the student participants explicitly reported being academically prepared by their high school alma mater to study at mainland colleges. They were asked in a structured interview question whether they believed they were ready to study at a mainland college. Some acknowledged their high school and were complimentary. Two students did not acknowledge their high school. Excerpts of student participants responses are provided below.

- She did not speak directly to whether KS prepared her for college, but she did say that one of her expectations was that it would be “just a lot harder” and “more grueling, I guess, academically” (p. 3).

- KS “prepared me really well. I felt like all the classes were a breeze pretty much,” (p. 4). Believed that KS actually prepared him for college.
• She was very prepared for her first year of college. She added that as a high school student she did a lot of research about her college beforehand so when she got to college she knew…what she wanted out of school” (pp. 9 and 10).

• One artifact was his KS ring. He said, “It was a reminder to myself of where I had come from… (KS) have prepared me for this and I knew I could do it,” (p. 10).

• Believes his writing skills are not up to par with college writing. He explained that in Hawai`i we speak Pidgin English and we sometimes write the way we speak. He said he received low grades for his work because it was not written in proper English. This is why he sought the assistance of a tutor. (p. 26)

• He believed he was academically “very prepared” for college because of his high school was college preparatory. He also said that he was ready to study at a mainland college.

• Her high school “Prepared me extremely well. She also said that she knew how to be “a hard worker,” (p. 9). Her response to the “expectation and assumptions” question was that she thought college would be academically difficult.

• He acknowledged being “pretty well prepared” to attend college. He was complimentary to his high school saying it “was just the perfect way to adapt into college because they give you so much work and you don’t know that you’re doing so much work in such little time” (p. 10).

• Upon arrival at college, initially this student participant had her doubts about whether she was ready to study at her college, but after the first semester she believed that it was doable. She felt that she was “prepared enough,” (p. 8). She
also said that the education she received from KS was “sufficient” and “In general KS does a good job and we’re ready for college,” (p. 8).

- She believed that her high school prepared her more for college than other high schools do. She felt the academic act KS was more rigorous.

**Additional Limitation**

An additional limitation was identified after data was collected. Limitations occur due to the nature of conducting research on human subjects. During the interview, some student participants spoke considerably while others spoke sparingly. In an interview scenario, it is difficult to determine whether a participant’s responses are limited because of a lack of experiences or a lack of ability and/or willingness to express one’s self. Verbose participants are helpful to a qualitative study but a researcher cannot deselect less articulate participants. For this study the student participant that dropped out of college also expressed having the most factors that adversely influenced CSP. It is unknown if this was because the participant was articulate, thoughtful, and obliging. In fairness to all the study participants, everyone was given the standardized interview questions and was given the opportunity to express himself or herself when each question was first read to them during the interview. Participants were told that if they did not understand a question, they could ask me to repeat it, ask me to rephrase it, or ask me for examples. As a preface, I clarified with all the participants that the interview questions were not ordinary conversation questions typically asked by family members and friends. I informed them in some instances that they might need more time to contemplate their response, partly because they may need to reflect on experiences that occurred sometimes 12 months prior, therefore it is unnecessary to express the first thought that comes to their mind. I also informed the study participants that silence between us should not be viewed as undesirably.
If a student misunderstood an interview question, and I was unaware of the misunderstanding, I would consider the response to be an accurate answer to my question, unless the response was illogical, which would have been followed up by a clarification question. Nonetheless, it is possible that I accepted an untrue statement that was mistakenly provided.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings and the analyses of the study. The presentation included sharing data collection experiences. The data was collected through interviews involving semi-structure questions. The data from each case was analyzed in relation to the other cases, a cross-case analysis. The themes that emerged from the data identified 109 total factors of which six were deemed as Key Factors that influenced CSP. The next and final chapter presents a discussion on the implications to the literature and the implications to practices. The next chapter discusses recommendations for future studies.
Chapter 5

Implications and Discussion

Homesickness, you know, that was definitely a factor, homesickness… and you can’t help it, you know, you feel it. You feel a longing for something familiar.”
(Kalani, p. 64)

Chapter Overview

This chapter starts with a summary of the study followed by responses to the study’s research questions. This chapter continues with a discussion on the implications the findings have on the literature and practice for each of the six Key Factors that influenced CSP. Next this chapter provides the advice the eleven student participants shared to future KS graduates planning to attend mainland colleges. My thoughts about college student persistence are offered before a discussion on the recommendations for future research that concludes this chapter.

Summary of Study

This study was conducted because I believed there was a need to identify factors that influenced student persistence of KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges. The significance of this study was to understand the college experiences of the KS graduates to potentially increase their mainland college graduation rates. Results from the eleven student participants of this study identified over a hundred factors that influenced college student persistence. Six Key Factors were identified. These factors have implications to related theories and to the KS community. I believe findings from this study can assist future KS graduates, planning to attend a mainland college. This study could also inform their parents and increase their understanding of the challenges of attending a mainland college.
Research Questions

The modified research question of this study: What factors influenced college student persistence of 2012 and 2013 Kapalama Schools graduates that studied at mainland colleges?

Response to research question.

Eleven student participants of this study identified 109 different factors that influenced CSP. Of the 109 different factors, 63 factors were a positive influence to CSP and 46 factors were an adverse influence to CSP. All the factors that influenced CSP were grouped under five categories: Student Self, Other People, Student Involvement, Institutional Support, and Other Adverse. Further, from the 109 factors, this study identified six factors as Key Factors due to prevalence and intensity of reporting. The six Key Factors are:

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<td>3</td>
<td>Homesickness</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Support of Family, Classmates and Friends</td>
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<td>6</td>
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A lack of difficulty with college culture immersion and integration was not reported by a majority of the participants as an influence to CSP however this discovery is a significant finding.

Secondary research question #1.

Does the environment influence student persistence, and if so in what ways?

Response to secondary research question #1.

This study concluded that the environment does influence CSP. Four Key Factors were identified that influenced college student persistence: the support of family, classmates and
friends, involvement with associations, classmates, roommates, and professors, college tuition, and immersion. Succeeding sections discuss implications of these Key Factors.

**Secondary research question #2.**

Does student involvement influence student persistence, and if so in what ways?

**Response to secondary research question #2.**

This study concluded that student involvement influenced CSP. Four types of Student Involvement were identified as Key Factor that influenced CSP: Involvement with Associations, Classmates, Roommates, and Professors. Succeeding sections of this chapter discuss implications of these Key Factors.

In this study student involvement had a positive correlation with college student persistence. Ten students of this study were considered involved students. One student was considered over-involved. Eight of the ten involved students persisted as it is defined for this study. The remaining two of the ten involved students returned to Honolulu to continue their education, however the reason for their return was due to a financial reason and their families did not expected them to graduate from their respective mainland colleges.

As discussed previously because this study did not contain an uninvolved student, conclusions cannot be drawn between an uninvolved student and an outcome.

Employment while a college student, recognized and categorized under student involvement, is discussed in a separate section of this chapter because of a significant finding that emerged in this study.

**Implications to Literature.**

Various types of literature were reviewed prior to the collection of data to build an understanding of college student persistence, and to inform and prepare for this study. This is the
currently established practice in preparing to conduct research. Literature that was relevant to the purpose of this study was selected for review and inclusion. Certain assumptions about what would be uncovered from this study were made, which drove the decision on what literature would be reviewed and included. However, it is inconceivable to believe that every possible study finding could be anticipated. In other words emerged findings from this study could include matters that were not previously researched and reviewed in preparing to conduct this study. Therefore, this chapter consists of literature that was not included in Chapter 2 because of this inability to predict all the factors that study participants would claim influenced CSP.

The implications that the six Key Factors of this study have on existing theories are discussed in this section.

Coping.

Albee’s prevention equation theory (1982) identifies the factors that cause and prevent incidences of behavioral and emotional disorder in individuals. The factors that lead to an undesirable state should, if possible, be eliminated or reduced. Factors that lead to a desirable state should, if possible, be increased. Albee’s theory did not address a specific community of society and generally spoke about mental illness. Albee’s research focused on an unspecified population but could apply to the lives of college students.

Three factors of Albee’s Prevention Equation coincidentally were areas of inquiry for this study of college students. Interview questions pertaining specifically to coping, social support and self-esteem, denominator elements of Albee’s prevention equation, were asked of each student participant. Students can potentially reduce risk to the extent that the student possesses coping skills, perceives him or herself as adequately supported, and has positive self-esteem. The three Prevention Equation factors as they relate to this study are discussed next.
Coping was the first factor listed in the denominator of Albee’s Prevention Equation. In this study, the ability to cope was the most reported factor that influenced CSP. Ten students reported forty-five occurrences of coping during their interviews. Appropriately, coping was deemed a Key Factor that influenced CSP for this study.

Social support, another denominator factor, was also prominently reported in this study by the ten student participants as a factor that influenced CSP. Eight student participants reported the support of classmates and friends were positive influences to CSP. Eight different student participants also reported the support of family (in Hawai`i and on the mainland) as positive influences to CSP. The student participants also reported adverse influences by classmates, friends and family.

Albee’s third denominator factor, self-esteem was adversely reported only once in this study as a factor that influenced CSP. It appears that self-esteem was not a problem with the majority of the study participants.

It is unknown if the student participants’ for this study increased their coping skills, social support, and self-esteem. Whether the student participants increased these factors to improve their chances of graduating from college are beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, their anecdotes did disclose the use of coping strategies, that they did rely on support from others, and most had adequate self-esteem.

The Environmental Level Prevention Equation postulated by Elias (1987) was not applied to this study because the setting or environmental factors were not adequately investigated through interview questions and this study did not gather data from any college or university attended by the student participants of this study.
Albee, Joffe and Dunsbury (1988) submitted that many social problems, such as child sexual abuse, violence against children, sexism, racism, family disruption, poverty, incarceration, have a commonality. They suggested that people without power are exploited by powerful individuals and economic groups (1988). Albee, et al (1988) asserted the exploiters justified the victims’ psychopathology by attributing a defect in the person. This rationale can apply to colleges and college students, where colleges can be viewed as powerful and college students as powerless. Historically it has been the norm for colleges to attribute student departure on the unprepared and unmotivated students and not take any responsibility for student retention.

Models such as those discussed in the literature review did not focus specifically on college students however; Albee’s theory involved several comparable factors to the findings in the analysis for this study. The student participants in this current study demonstrated various prevention techniques in the form of emotion-focused coping strategies.

The ten student participants that employed coping strategies continued their college education while the student that did not employ a coping strategy did not continue her college education. Further, in reference to Albee’s Prevention Equation, ten student participants did not express exploitation at the hands of their respective colleges. One student participant did acknowledge mistreatment at her college. She identified racism, sexism and bullying. She also identified abuse by the Teacher’s Assistants. She also did not continue her college education. This study cannot claim that mistreatment alone was the cause for her discontinuing studying at her chosen college.

This study concurs with Albee’s valuation of the three prevention factors, coping skills, social support and self-esteem, as vital factors, though Albee’s setting was in mental and
emotional health and this study was the college campus. In both settings these factors are acknowledged for their importance on prevention.

Further, the objective of Albee’s Prevention Equation (1982, 1988) to reduce incidences of behavioral and emotional disorder in individuals is similar to this study. In this study, reducing disorders could likely lead to a student participant’s objective to complete each semester and ultimately graduate from their college of choice. Specifically increasing coping skills, increasing social support and improving self-esteem could arguably contribute tremendously towards this objective.

**Motivation.**

Motivation can be defined as the “urge to push or carry out a specific action or behavior,” according to Brouse, Basch, Le Blanc, McKnight, and Lei (2010, p. 1). Brouse et al. (2010) asserted that people should not simply be characterized as motivated or unmotivated based on a single dimension. Intrinsic motivation is located at one end of the “motivation spectrum” (Brouse et al., 2010). Intrinsically motivated actions and behaviors are executed for the purpose of self-satisfaction. Extrinsic motivations are actions and behaviors that “are carried out as a means to an end rather than an end in itself” (Brouse et al., 2010).

“Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual rather than relying on an external pressure,” while “extrinsic motivation comes from outside of the individual,” (Tohidi and Jabbari, 2012). Common extrinsic motivations are incentives such as praise and grades. Performing or achieving due to an obligation, compulsion or responsibility to others, such as family and friends, is also considered an extrinsic motivation (Tohidi and Jabbari, 2012).
A considerable number of studies have indicated that extrinsic motivation (contingent rewards) can sometimes conflict with intrinsic motivation or the individual’s desire to perform the task for its own sake, (Benabou and Tirole, 2003). Previous studies have demonstrated that participants that did not receive compensation were more likely to continue to play and reported greater interest in the task than compared with compensated participants, (Benabou and Tirole, 2003; Deci 1975).

Kim and Lee (2011) suggested that in individualistic cultures, such as the American culture, people tend to think of themselves as individuals and place great emphasis on “I”. However, collectivistic cultures are more group-centered and emphasize “we” (Kim and Lee, 2011). This perspective connects individualistic cultures with intrinsic forms of motivation and collectivistic cultures with extrinsic forms of motivation. The findings from this study show that the student participants identified with extrinsic forms of motivation, which is consistent with Native Hawaiian culture.

Museus suggests, “There is some evidence that Asian American Pacific Islander students and other students of color are more likely than their White peers to come from collectivist-oriented communities” (2013, p. 112). Students of color having collectivist-oriented traditions encountering college campuses having individualistic practices could experience incongruence and tension that could lead to student departure.

These theories generally resonate with the findings that emerged from this study’s analysis of college student persistence. Many of the student participants in this study did claim that motivation was a factor that positively influenced CSP. Further, both motivation types, extrinsic and intrinsic, were identified in their anecdotes.
The extrinsic motivators shared by the participants in this study could also be viewed as obligations to others. The others that they identified were family, mother, grandfather, granduncle, and parents, twice, in relation to paying college tuition. The prevalence of extrinsic motivation suggests that these students relate more with a collectivist-orientation, a foundation of their home-culture than with an individualistic-oriented culture. Collectivist-oriented cultures value strong familial interests over one’s own interests.

**Homesickness.**

Homesickness can be defined as “the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home” (Thurber and Walton, 2012). Missing something about home is a common human experience that leads to a common reaction and feeling. Thurber and Walton (2012) assert, “In its mild form, homesickness prompts the development of coping skills and motivates healthy attachment behaviors, such as renewing contact with loved ones. However, intense homesickness can be painful and debilitating” (p. 1).

“More than 15 million students are currently enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States alone” (Thurber and Walton, 2012, p. 1). A study of children and adolescents suggested that about 7% of persons spending time away from home experience intense symptoms of homesickness associated with significant symptoms of anxiety and depression (Thurber, 1995).

Thurber and Walton identified (2012) risk factors for intense homesickness to include young chronological age, little previous experience away from home, low perceived control, high perceived distance from home, and high reliance on family members. Two of Thurber and Walton (2012) risk factors appeared in my study, perceived distance from home and high reliance on family. Of course all of the student participants from my study are from Hawai`i,
which means they are quite a distance away from home. The cost to return home over weekends is prohibitive. Furthermore, student participants that attended colleges on the east coast are even further away in distance and time zones, an additional hurdle. Calling home from the east coast is a challenge because of the five or six hour time zone difference.

Many student participants from this study appear to have collectivist-culture orientations as opposed to individualist-culture orientations. Their lifestyles evolve around their families and, commonly, there is a heavy reliance on family support as their anecdotes suggest. It should also be pointed out that the difference between home culture and college campus culture could complicate adjustment challenges. The greater the difference, the more difficult the adjustment may be. Many studies offer suggestions for student success but are based on white students and may not be suitable for minority students.

**Support from family, classmates and friends.**

The eleven student participants identified the support of family, classmates and friends as a factor that influenced CSP. The prevalence and intensities of their reporting in this study demonstrates the importance of this factor and designation as a Key Factor. The factor of support from family, friends and classmates, found in my analysis, can be also be found in the literature. Several studies acknowledged support from others as a significant factor.

Tinto recognized that increasing student success was not the sole responsibility of the students. He suggested changes that higher education institutions could implement to increase student success (2005) and colleges could work collaboratively with students.

Tinto (2005) suggested that higher education institutions could increase student success by the addressing six conditions: commitment, expectations, support, feedback, involvement, and learning. Two of Tinto’s conditions are evident in this study, support (social and financial) and
involvement. Tinto (2005) believed that three types of support promote success: academic, social and financial. This study concurs with Tinto’s assertion that social support is crucial for the success of students. Colleges could address social support with student organizations, academic and athletic programs, and extracurricular activities. Minority students could benefit from ethnic student centers, and ethnic clubs. Social support can be also be addressed through friends and, in this case, by family members at home in Hawai`i. Similar to the Tinto (2005) study, the student participants of this study claimed college tuition, financial aid and scholarships both positively and adversely influenced CSP. Lastly, the student involvement condition of Tinto’s study (2005) was similar to my study.

Another study corroborates the benefits of support from others as suggested in this study. Bell and Bromnick (1998) claimed that students who report having made close friends in whom they can confide are less likely to become intensely homesick.

**Student involvement with associations, classmates, roommates, and professors.**

Alexander Astin’s theory on student involvement hypothesized that greater levels of college student involvement contributed to student’s development and remaining in college, whereas the lack of involvement contributed to the student’s departure (1999). Astin clarified that it was not important what a student feels but instead what a student does or behaves that defines involvement. Both the quality and quantity of energy that students invest in college activities and with others impacts learning outcomes and personal development.

In a quantitative study involving secondary analysis, Matsumoto (2010) examined the educational outcomes of 515 Native Hawaiians that graduated from high school in 1993, 1994 and 1995. The majority of the participants graduated from the Kamehameha Schools. The other participants received postsecondary financial aid from a Native Hawaiian Foundation. The
research questions attempted to identify a correlation between college graduates and non-completers as they related to residing on campus, peer involvement and commitment to faculty. The theoretical framework for this study was Astin’s student involvement theory.

The Matsumoto study (2010) hypothesized that Native Hawaiian degree completers were significantly more likely than non-completers to have resided on campus, engaged with their peers, and engaged with college faculty. Matsumoto’s overall findings were consistent with Astin’s theory on student involvement. On the most part, the findings of the Matsumoto study were consistent with the findings from this study. This study identified and deemed involvement with classmates, roommates and professors were Key Factors that influenced CSP. Most of the student participants for this study resided on campus, which likely contributed to their persistence. Astin explained that, “a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus…” (Astin, 1999, p. 518). Undoubtedly a student that resides on campus will logically spend more time on campus than a student that resides off campus. One student participant that resided off-campus did not return to study at her college for the succeeding year. She criticized the on campus housing system saying it was awful. Although she expressed disdain for the housing situation, residing on campus could have contributed to her persistence instead of her departure.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Morrow and Ackermann’s online quantitative study articulated that non-cognitive factors such as faculty support and peer support were important to college persistence and student retention. Morrow and Ackermann (2012) hypothesized that faculty support was significantly and positively related to intending to receive a university degree and peer support was a significant predictor of second-year retention. Consistent with the findings of this study, student involvement with associations, roommates, professors and
classmates were Key Factors that influenced College Student Persistence, CSP, as reported by the study participants.

Tinto (2005) believed, which is consistent with Astin student involvement theory, that the more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and eventually graduate from college.

The interviews with the eleven student participants, in this study, inquired to their actual involvement and level of involvement at their respective colleges. This study identified four types of student involvement that were deemed Key Factors that influenced CSP: associations, classmates, roommates, and professors. This was determined by the prevalence and intensities of reporting by the eleven student participants. Other student involvement types, to a lesser extent, were also reported: student involvement with athletics, dorm mates, employment, and extracurricular activities.

Almost every model insists that student involvement is essential for learning and personal development. This study’s findings corroborate a portion of Astin’s student involvement theory but not the entire theory. An important aspect of Astin’s theory lies in the fact that the theory involves a comparative assessment. Evidence necessary to corroborate Astin’s theory are 1) involved and uninvolved college students and 2) that the involved students learned, developed, and remained in college, while the uninvolved students did not learn, develop and departed. A single study of only involved college students or only uninvolved college students would not produce comparative evidence.

Of the eleven study participants, none were considered uninvolved or under-involved college students, a requirement to corroborate Astin’s student involvement theory. This study reported ten study participants were involved students and persisted in college. Though two
returned to Oahu, they continued higher education at different institutions. One student participant was considered over-involved as a college student during her freshman year. She reported taking authorized leave of absence for health reasons.

Prior to the start of this study, I was unable, of course, to know in advance the number of involved and under-involved students that would participate. Also prior to the start of this study, I was unable to know the number of persisters and non-persisters that would participate. The only criteria for inclusion in this study were 1) a 2012 or 2013 graduate of the Kapalama Schools, and 2) had studied at a mainland college for any amount of time, including a portion of one semester. The participants to this study were randomly found and not screened. Five months of data collection resulted in the interview of eleven study participants that included ten involved students and one over-involved student.

**Student involvement and employment.**

Students involved with employment is discussed in this subsection because three student participants were employed while attending college. Two students were employed part-time and one was employed full-time.

Astin discussed employment as it relates to student involvement. According to Astin (1999, p. 523), “Although it might seem that working while attending college takes time and energy away from academic pursuits, part-time employment in an on-campus job actually facilitates retention.” Astin elaborated that students spend “time on the campus, thus increasing the likelihood that he or she will come into contact with other students, professors, and college staff” (1999, p. 523). Astin also suggested that “relying on the college as a source of income can result in a greater sense of attachment to the college” (1999, p. 523).
He further related that full-time employment off-campus has an adverse effect on student retention. The full-time employed student, he explained, spends “considerable time and energy on nonacademic activities that are usually unrelated to student life” and “full-time work off campus decreases the time and energy that the student can devote to studies and other campus activities” (1999, p 524).

A student in this study, as discussed in Chapter 4, worked full-time off campus. She was also considerably involved in college associations and extracurricular activities. Based on all of her areas of involvement, this student participant was deemed as over-involved. She was one of three students that did not continue her education at her college and she was the only student that did not continue her education by transferring to another college. Due to the complexity of multiple influence factors, this study cannot conclude that student involvement alone was responsible for her departure from college. This student’s over-involvement is consistent with Astin’s student involvement theory regarding employment. It could be speculated that this student could have benefited from social support of friends and classmates. However, this student expressed the necessity for her to work full-time for financial reasons. Her reasons, realistic and practical, contribute to discussions about lower college tuitions, and higher financial aid and scholarships.

The findings of this study are consistent with Astin’s theory on student involvement as it relates to employment. Two student participants were employed part-time on campus and continued their studying for the subsequent college school year. These two students are categorized as Persisters. The one student that worked full-time and off-campus did not continue studying that was discussed earlier is categorized as a Non-Persister.
College tuition.

Since 1969, the average cost of college has almost doubled compared with the median family income (Bernasek, 2014). Higher tuition levels at many institutions may adversely affect not only the completion of a postsecondary education but may also adversely affect the time it takes to obtain a college degree (DesJardins, Ahlburg, and McCall, 2002).

The cost of a college education has increasingly drained the bank accounts of students and their families. The importance of securing financial aid and scholarships is crucial for students to stay in college.

It is no surprise that ten out of the eleven student participants identified their college tuitions, financial aid, and scholarships as a factor that influenced to CSP. Due to the significant number of anecdotes, both positive and adverse, this factor was deemed a Key Factor.

Tinto recognized that increasing student success was not the sole responsibility of the students and suggested strategies that universities and colleges could implement. Tinto (2005) suggested that higher education institutions could increase student success through the implementation of six institutional conditions: commitment, expectations, support, feedback, involvement, and learning. Tinto (2005) believed that three types of support promote success: academic, social and financial. This study concurs with Tinto’s assertion that financial support is crucial for the success of students.

Merit-based financial aid is awarded to candidates based on the strength of their applications exclusively. This would mean, for example, that even children from families of significant means might be awarded the grant. The support would be in the form of a straight reduction in tuition. In most cases, and unless otherwise specified, all merit scholarships are renewable each year, and last through to graduation. Curs and Harper (2012) assert that merit-
based financial aid has a positive and significant effect on the first-year grade point average (GPA), and a relationship between financial aid and GPA exists for the subsamples of low-income students and students of color.

Changes in financial aid distribution and increased college costs are probably linked to lower rates of college enrollment and degree attainment by low-income and minority students compared to high-income and non-minority peers (Melguizo and Chung, 2012; Astin and Oseguera, 2004; Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson, 2009).

Oliveira’s study on Native Hawaiian Success (2005) attempted to determine whether parent encouragement, high school experience, college financial aid, and a Hawaiian sense of belonging influenced Bachelor’s degree completion. The participants of her study were Native Hawaiian high school graduates, including Kamehameha Schools graduates from the years 1993, 1994 and 1995. The research was conducted in 2005. Oliveira’s study (2005) advances that financial aid was the most likely predictor of Bachelor’s degree completion for the study participants. This current study also concluded that financial aid was a Key Factor that influenced CSP. Three participants claimed receiving an insufficient amount and three other participants claimed receiving a sufficient amount of financial aid/scholarships. This study supports the Oliveira study (2005) that claimed financial aid was the most likely predictor of Bachelor’s degree completion for 515 participants in a quantitative study of Native Hawaiian high school students.

Makuakane-Drechsel (2000) examined Native Hawaiian student persistence at four public community colleges in Hawai’i. The five-year, ten-semester quantitative study focused on factors that promoted persistence of students pursuing liberal arts or vocational-technical degrees. The study identified four factors that were significant for both liberal arts and
vocational-technical majors: cumulative grade point average, financial aid, average credit hours, and enrollment at four community college in Hawai`i. Two variables were significant for only liberal arts students: reverse transfer and attending an urban high school. The Makuakane-Drechsel study focused on the four colleges, different from this current study of mainland colleges. Hawai`i students studying at mainland colleges received a different experience transitioning to a culture in a different state and region of the United States. The Native Hawaiian participants of the Makuakane-Drechsel study did not experience this transition. Although this was a difference between the studies, financial aid was identified in both studies as a factor that promoted student persistence. In general terms the influence of financial aid to mainland college students is likely more impactful due to the higher cost of a college education as compared to a state public community college.

Guo, Wang, Johnson and Diaz (2011) investigated the perceived economic stress among college students. Employing mixed research methods, over 500 undergraduate students were surveyed to assess their perceived economic stress, especially on employment conditions, economic outlook, and financial burden. Results of the study determined that “College students are not immune from the adverse influences of economic contraction” (p. 541). Further, the study explained, “Economic stress has shadowed the already stressful college life and it adds on economic-induced stressors that require college students to use more coping energy” (p. 541).

Findings from the Guo, Wang, Johnson and Diaz study are consistent with this current study. Ten of the student participants of this study suggested college tuition, financial aid and scholarships as significant concerns that influenced college student persistence. The extent of the influence on the student participants may not be clear due to the fact that this was one of several
factors that emerged from this current study. Future studies focused specifically on this topic may better identify and measure the influence economic factors have on college students.

Other Finding

The student participants were asked a very general question regarding whether they encountered difficulties immersing into a new culture. Only a few student participants experience very minor issues. One student claimed it was awful but her response is complicated due to many other concerns she raised at the same time. Nevertheless, though cultural immersion was considered one of the 109 factors that influenced CSP it did not rise to the level of being a Key Factor. Cultural immersion experienced by the student participants is discussed next because although it was not deemed a Key Factor, the topic is sufficiently important to discuss.

Cultural immersion and integration.

Chapter 2 discussed Tinto (1988) and student integration using Arnold Gennep’s (1960) “The Rites of Passage,” theory that advancement of an individual from one stage or status to another involves three distinct stages: separation, transition, and incorporation. Tinto claimed that separation requires students to “disassociate themselves…from membership in the past communities, most typically those associated with the local high school and place of residence” (Tinto, 1988, p. 443). Tinto clarified that this may not apply to students staying at home attending college. The second stage, transition, is a period between the old and the new associations. The student has not yet established personal bonds to the college community and is still learning the norms and patterns of behavior considered appropriate. According to Tinto, because social interactions are the primary means that integrative associations occur, incoming freshmen have to establish a relationship with members of their institution. The third stage occurs as the student establishes bonds with the college community.
Tinto identifies the two main types of cultures that involve college students. One that exists at the students’ respective campuses and the culture of origin that refers to the culture in which the student was engaged prior to college.

Tinto (1975) clarified in his student integration theory that students must dissociate from their cultures and adopt the values and norms of the cultures of their respective colleges to integrate into the academic and subsystems, and maximizing their likelihood of success in college. Failure to integrate, Tinto asserted, leads to isolation and in turn may lead to student departure from college.

Tierney’s (1992, 1999) asserted that it would be detrimental for students of color to assimilate into the cultures of their institutions. According to Museus (2013) “Tierney (1992, 1999) asserted that the expectation for students of color to assimilate into the cultures of their institutions was a form of cultural suicide that places a disproportionate share of the burden of adjustment on the undergraduates of color and ignores the responsibility of colleges and universities to foster success among these students” (p. 111). Alternate models (Kuh and Love, 2000; Museus and Quaye, 2009) suggest students are more likely to succeed in college when connecting to both the college’s culture and the minority student’s culture.

Cultural immersion was not considered a Key Factor in this study because difficulties were not reported by the student participants. A search for cultural immersion factors that influenced College Student Persistence, whether adversely or positively was conducted. Ten of the college students that participated in this study did not report cultural immersion difficulties.

Benjamin, Chambers, and Reiterman (1993) believed that all students, to include Anglos, American Indians, and other minorities, “approach the college challenge from a unique cultural base” (n. p.). Benjamin et al., further believed “that a distorted view of student strengths and
needs relative to persistence is obtained when an inappropriate ethnocentric model is used as a reference point in examining persistence” (1993, n. p.). Concerns were raised about whether colleges were “sufficiently informed and sensitive enough to recognize or to value this cultures (American Indian) multi-faceted manifestations of persistence behavior” (1993, n. p.). Again the student participants of this current study did not report or suggest that their respective colleges were under-informed or insensitive to their home cultural values. This also suggests that the student participants from Hawai`i were sufficiently confident in their identities.

**Racial identity.**

According to Yeh and Hwang, “Racial identity is based on a sociopolitical model of oppression and on a socially constructed understanding of race” (2000, p. 422). Racial identity encompasses the manner in which people abandon the effects of marginalization and exclusion. To this point the question turns to the participants of this study. Ten student participants asserted they did not experience racial oppression or subjugation as college students. The majority of the student participants from this study, when asked directly, claimed they did not experience any difficulty with immersion into a new culture. This study asked student participants various questions about persistence, academic goals, and support in relation to their experiences as freshmen at a mainland college. None of the students expressed or implied any demand or pressure to renounce their culture of origin, or home culture, and adopt the culture of immersion, college culture.

One student expressed, in her response to the immersion question, difficulty claiming the culture of immersion was very different and completely opposite from Hawai`i culture. It must be noted that 1) this student earlier, in the interview, claimed racism, sexism and bullying as
factors that did not support college persistence, and 2) this student did not continue her education at her mainland college.

**Ethnic identity.**

Ethnic identity according to Yeh and Hwang, “is not theoretically grounded in oppression but may include cultural conflicts and prejudices associated when ethnic minority values conflict with those of the dominant culture” in this case the college culture (2000, p. 422).

The participants of this study did not report ethnic identity or integrity issues as college students. The student participants of this study brought their cultural identities with them to their respective mainland colleges. Their identities are woven in their many anecdotes about their families and their lives. Their family includes parents, older and younger siblings, grandparents, and uncles and aunts. The importance of these relationships was conveyed through their anecdotes, which on the most part were emotion filled.

There identities were also evident in the self-selected artifacts that they shared with me during the in-person and videoconference interviews. Musical instruments shared were ukuleles and a guitar. Hawaiian artifacts were items such as a graduation kihei, a lei, a necklace and pendant, a school blanket, and a flag. These artifacts were likely instrumental in grounding the student participants and helped them, primarily with emotion coping, to deal with the challenges of college life.

An identity development model established by Marcia (1966) distinguishes four distinct stages of development: diffuse, moratorium, foreclosure and achievement. An ethnic identity that has yet to be explored represents the diffused stage. A commitment to identity based on parental values and not independent represents the foreclosure stage. The moratorium stage represents characterized by an individual that is exploring his or her ethnic identity but is uncommitted to
one. And a person that has explored his or her identity and has committed represents the achieved stage. Progress and development on this model has occurred over the years but this fundamental model continues to be the model often referenced as seminal.

While the student participants of this current study were inundated with a broad range of questions during their one-on-one interviews, I don’t believe I collected sufficient data to conclude that any of participants fit any of Marcia’s identity development stages. It appears on the surface that on the most part the student participants had reached the achieved stage. But then I don’t quite know if they were at the foreclosure stage, having adopted the values of their parents. Their expressions shed light on and hinted at identity development that could possibly apply but sufficient evidence was lacking. A future study could confirm the possible stages of KS graduates that study at mainland colleges. The lack of solid evidence to ascertain an identity development stage of these study participants leaves this question unanswered.

**Cultural, social capital and institutional agents.**

The eleven student participants in my study did not report having or using a cultural agent (Museus and Quaye, 2009) or Social Capital and Institutional Agents (Museus and Quaye, 2009) at their respective colleges. There were reports of support from a brother or other relatives and professors that were situationally helpful, but none that could be considered at the level of a cultural agent, social capital agent or institutional agent.

Museus claimed that Asian American students that do not experience “salient events” that cause cognitive dissonance (e.g., a hate crime) or encounter spaces that will catalyze cognitive dissonance (e.g., ethnic studies courses), “these students might be less likely to experience significant disequilibrium, become comfortable with the reality that they are inevitably marginalized within society, and subsequently experience an increased Asian American racial or
ethnic” (Museus, 2014, p 88). During their interviews, ten student participants of this current study did not express experiencing a major event that caused cognitive dissonance. On the most part they identified healthy experiences and supportive friends, classmates and family.

**Collectivist versus individualist-cultural orientation.**

It is important to understand how culture plays a role in how college students learn. Clayton (2003) suggested, “Collectivistic cultures thus favor cooperation rather than competition” (p. 37). He also claimed, “Harmony within the group is important and cooperation bring that about more than competition” (p. 37). Collectivist-oriented students may not be as assertive due to their upbringing. Collectivistic students are socialized to be sensitive to others and consequently are less assertive about their own feelings (Clayton, 2003).

Taking into consideration difficulties collectivist-oriented students could encounter at a new college, in this particular study ten of the eleven student participants did not express or suggest experiencing major or prevalent cultural complications. The ten student participants are from various colleges throughout the mainland, majoring in a variety of majors of study. One student reported knowing that she was not as assertive as her classmates, explaining that she was raised that way. This current study did not focus on a specific factor that influenced CSP, other than a theoretical perspective on student involvement. Because the intent of the study was to identify the factors that influenced CSP, a broad search was conducted rather than an in depth exploration into each factor.

**Conclusions to Implications to Literature**

Collectivist-oriented culture versus individualistic-oriented culture theories was intertwined with several Key Factors: Motivation, Student Involvement, and Homesickness. Clearly a collectivist-oriented culture was also involved in Cultural Immersion and Integration.
Whether known or unbeknownst to college students, it emerged from their anecdotes. Racial identity concerns as defined by Yeh and Hwang did not emerge as an issue to the student participants. Neither did ethnic identity issues. Lastly, the use of agencies, as discussed by Museus and Quaye, did not play a large role in influencing the student participants.

**Implications to Practice**

The implications that the six Key Factors identified in this study have on practices are discussed in this section.

**Coping.**

Future KS graduates attending colleges on the mainland would benefit from knowing the various types of stress they likely may encounter and various methods to adequately deal with stress. It would be helpful for them to know that they can address the source of stress by dealing directly with the problem, or if that is not possible, they can deal with how stress affects their emotions by seeking relief.

Being unaware of and unprepared for the detrimental effects of stress may result in a host of adverse consequences such as poor academic performance, homesickness, and a premature departure from college. Practical steps such as bringing photographs of family and friends from Hawai`i and musical instruments, such as an ukulele or guitar, should be brought to the mainland to fight against homesickness. It is unnecessary for college students to simply accept or be forced to live with unnecessary or excess stress. It is helpful to understand that certain types of stress, such as homesickness, cannot be addressed with a problem-focused coping strategy. In this case relief is available through emotion-focused coping strategies.

Determining a communications plan with parents, siblings, other relatives and friends, prior to leaving for college, is probably a good idea (Thurber and Walton, 2012).
What does it mean that the majority of the coping strategies employed by the student participants of this study were emotion-focused coping strategies and not problem-focused coping strategies? To better understand why this phenomenon occurred it would be helpful to understand the nature of the problem. A review of the coping factors revealed that the most common problem was homesickness and dealing with the daily stresses of college life in general. Realistically, the only way to solve homesickness using a problem-focused coping strategy is to return home. This was not a feasible option to most of the students because obtaining a bachelor’s degree from a mainland college was the goal. And having a busy day is sometimes unavoidable. This actually cannot be viewed as a problem when it is simply normal college life. Thus an emotion-focused coping strategy was commonly utilized and is highly recommended for future KS graduates.

Since there are several coping strategies, certainly the list this study compiled is not exhaustive, future college students should search for other coping strategies that are effective for their particular situation. It makes sense that a future college student identifies his or her interests and values to determine an article or articles that could be used as an Emotion-Focused coping strategy. The below list identifies the coping strategies utilized by ten student participants and also identifies whether the strategy was a Problem-Focused or Emotion-Focused strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Artifact or Act</th>
<th>Coping Strategy Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>HS graduation cards</td>
<td>Emotion-Focused 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>College ID card, holder &amp; lanyard</td>
<td>EF2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Earphones</td>
<td>Problem-Focused 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Notebook</td>
<td>PF-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Planner (time management)</td>
<td>PF-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ukulele</td>
<td>EF3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Shaker bottle/Weight lifting</td>
<td>EF4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Baseball cap</td>
<td>EF5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation.

Two types of motivations are identified, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation can be understood as placing importance on what a person thinks, believes or feels over others. Three
participants expressed being intrinsically motivated while most participants expressed being extrinsically motivated by family, friends, and other students or classmates.

Future KS graduates attending mainland colleges would benefit from knowing that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations exists and their predecessors, the participants of this study, were primarily influenced by extrinsic motivators. Of course the motivation factors discovered through this study are not all inclusive and future KS graduates may utilize some of them but it is also possible that different types of motivations could be discovered.

Table 5.2 Motivation Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>Motivation Reason</th>
<th>Intrinsic or Extrinsic</th>
<th>Motivation Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>Wanted to be the smartest and to be known as the smartest (grades)</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>Heavy burden on her parents to pay the college tuition</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>Increase value as a future potential employee</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 3</td>
<td>Not disappointing his grandmother.</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 4</td>
<td>Not disappointing family</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 5</td>
<td>Not disappointing his grandfather</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 5</td>
<td>Inspired by granduncle</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 6</td>
<td>Earn good grades to prove she deserved a scholarship.</td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>What she thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 7</td>
<td>High tuition cost.</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 7</td>
<td>Self-motivated</td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>What he wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 8</td>
<td>Her mother.</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 9</td>
<td>Friends and family</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 9</td>
<td>Friends back home</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 9</td>
<td>Self-motivated</td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>What she thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 10</td>
<td>Competition with classmates. (grades)</td>
<td>Extrinsic</td>
<td>What others think.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Homesickness.

In chapter 4, due to the prevalence and intensity of influences, homesickness was categorized as Key Factor that influenced CSP for this study. Eight student participants reported experiencing homesickness. The intensities of seven experiences were moderate to strong. One student participant reported a weak intensity.

The prevalence, eight out of eleven, of student participants suggests the likelihood that KS graduates attending mainland colleges would experience, to some degree, the adverse effects of homesickness. Due to the seriousness of homesickness as a detrimental factor to college student persistence, taking preventive measures could prove helpful. There are steps that a KS graduate heading to a mainland college could take to better deal with potential homesickness. Understandings the effects of homesickness and being equipped with knowledge to counteract the effects are recommended. The coping strategies discussed previously are suggested.

Effective prevention strategies were formulated for incoming college students to address potential homesickness (Thurber and Walton, 2012, p. 3). These are strategies that KS graduates and their parents could consider prior to the student’s departure.

- Encourage practice time away from home in the months prior to matriculation. Spontaneous learning about the effective coping strategies occurs when incoming students take trips unaccompanied by their parents.
- Address, and perhaps resolve, family stressors. Although it is impossible to mend all sources of family strife, incoming students do best when parents have thoughtful conversations with them about complex family dynamics, such as a recent divorce.
- Plan for how and when to maintain connections with home. Letters, email, video chats, phone calls, and in-person visits can all be part of a healthy connection with friends and
primary caregivers. Such connections promote positive adjustment and are important for parents and students to discuss prior to the start of school.

- Discourage parents from making “pick-up deals” or framing matriculation as a trial separation from home. When well intentioned, loving parents say, “If you feel homesick, I’ll come and get you,” the incoming student has a preoccupying emotional crutch on which to lean. Moreover, the parents are left with an untenable choice between rescinding their promise (and thereby eroding trust and inducing feelings of abandonment) and fulfilling their promise (and robbing their adult son or daughter of an important educational and social experience).

- Normalize feelings of homesickness and encourage parents and students to openly discuss concerns about the time away from home. It is a myth that talking about homesickness induces homesickness. Candid discussions about college adjustment challenges and solutions may initially stir up anxiety but enhances feelings of preparedness and confidence.

- Encourage self-compassion. Students should be informed that the transition to postsecondary school presents normative challenges to every young man and young woman. They should be coached to accept and embracing their personal academic, athletic, artistic, and social hurdles with the knowledge that it is part of the experience, that they should forgive themselves for feeling bad, and that sustained coping efforts are effective in gradually diminishing the intensity of homesickness.

**Support from family, classmates and friends.**

The majority of the student participants had established and maintained close relationships with either friends or roommates. Several student participants had close
relationships with relatives or a combination of people such as KS classmates, family, and a teammate. These relationships with family involved either family in Hawai‘i via telephone, videoconference, or texting, or with family residing on the mainland.

One case from this study supports the importance of students establishing and maintaining social interdependency while studying at a mainland college. This student participant expressed disappointment and unhappiness because of a lack of close friends. As mentioned previously this student recognized this as a shortcoming many times during her interview. She ended her interview advising future KS graduates attending mainland colleges to select one friend from high school and keeping in touch during your freshman year.

The benefits of establishing and cultivating a support system cannot be over emphasized. Establishing a support system could involve maintaining relationships with high school classmates and other friends from Hawai‘i. Determining dependable individuals may require effort. Steadfast friends may still be in Hawai‘i or may be high school classmates that have matriculated to other mainland colleges. The common experience of studying at mainland colleges may be the primary reason for maintaining contact. Current advanced technology in the form of videoconferencing, email, and text messaging provides low cost and very convenient means of communications.

This study recommends that KS graduates studying at mainland colleges identify a person or persons to maintain contact for support purposes. Finding someone that shares common interests can be the difference between staying in college and returning home. Support provided by others, often times on a daily basis, can be taken for granted when it exists and sorely missed when not present. Expecting friendships to occur naturally may not be the best
approach to an aspect of college life that is so crucial. It is probably best to intentionally seek friends with common interests soon after arriving on campus to determine close friends.

**Student involvement with associations, classmates, roommates, and professors.**

KS graduates attending mainland colleges can strongly, as suggested by many studies, benefit from involvement at their respective colleges. As mentioned previously this study did not identify an uninvolved or under-involved student participant. These student participants were involved in many types of college organizations and athletics programs. They were also very involved with their professors, roommates, dorm mates, classmates and friends. The student participants were also involved with their respective Hawai`i clubs to different degrees. Some were very involved while others were partially involved.

The benefits of student involvement may not be obvious to a college student but as many theories indicate increases in student engagement with college related people, increases opportunities to discuss college related academics, increases college loyalty, and increases a sense of identity and belonging. Student persistence is a complex phenomenon that does not involve a simple linear equation and does not involve a silver bullet that solves every student’s problems. However, student involvement theories have been identified and enjoy considerable support by the academic community to be useful to college students.

Deciding on student involvement activities in college by KS graduates need not involve a drastic adjustment or departure from personal and academic interests demonstrated and experienced in high school. Programs and activities such as community volunteering, professional clubs, athletics, and associations enjoyed and appreciated in high school can continue in college. KS graduates can also venture into and take advantage of activities not
offered in Hawai`i such as rowing and lacrosse. Also KS graduates can take advantage of sightseeing and tourist attractions.

Being an involved college student is highly encouraged. There are ample benefits. There are, likely, plenty of student involvement activities on college campuses that would be helpful to students. Involvement with roommates, though highly dependent on compatibility, can be a strong source of support. Over-involvement caused by employment likely overextended one student participant of this study. Though full-time employment is a necessity for financial reasons, students that must be gainfully employed must also understand the possible adverse ramifications that may occur.

**College tuition.**

As shared in Chapter 4, ten out of the eleven student participants identified college tuition, financial aid, and scholarships as a factor that influenced CSP. Since the number of students reporting this was prevalent, and many of the student participants raised this topic multiple times during their interviews, this factor was deemed a Key Factor.

Regarding college tuitions, what can future KS graduates do as college students? It is important that they understand the seriousness of their college costs. College tuition, and financial aid/scholarship opportunities needs to be seriously considered when choosing a college. Future KS graduates must also understand that high college tuition costs and low or inadequate financial aid and scholarships may be emotionally distressing for the student. Student participants from this study expressed discontentment with their parents paying high college tuitions. On the other hand, this financial situation may be responsible for an increase in extrinsic motivation because students worked harder to ensure tuition payments were not wasted on failed courses or courses that produced substandard grades. In this situation, students also strongly
desired to finish college on time and not extending their college careers and at the same time increasing their overall college costs.

Other Findings

As mentioned in the Implications to Literature section, cultural immersion was a factor that influenced CSP but did not rise to the level of being a Key Factor. Cultural immersion is be discussed in relation to implications to practice. The benefits of cultural agents, social capital agents, and institutional agents are also discussed.

Cultural immersion and integration.

It appears, for the most part, that the KS graduates that participated in this study adequately integrated into college life. There did not appear to be a significant difference between their home culture and the culture of their colleges that could have jeopardized college student persistence. Kuh and Love (2000) understood that considerable difference in cultures relates to weak persistence. Again, this did not appear to be the case with ten of the eleven student participants. Further, the student participants did not report cognitive dissonance or cognitive disequilibrium experiences due to a dominant campus culture.

Ethnic identity.

The student participants shared their cultural values through their anecdotes. They expressed the many different ways they maintained and practiced their Hawaiian culture. They loved Hawaiian music and dancing hula. Playing the ukulele and surfing were important aspects of their lives. For others, speaking Hawaiian and understanding Hawaiian values was central to the ethnic identity. Major events from their high school were cherished and intentionally recalled to deal with stresses. The student participants maintained their home culture while on the mainland. The values of their home culture co-existed with the values of the campus culture.
There was an absence of cultural incongruence reporting by the student participants. I viewed and interpreted their experiences as typical college student experiences.

Evidence did not emerge from the student participants in this study that they experienced cultural conflicts and pervasive prejudices as an ethnic minority. However the sample population for this study by no means suggests that this is the norm for all mainland colleges. Nonetheless future KS graduates that attend mainland colleges should be aware of experiencing cultural conflicts. This involves, more so, KS graduates that attend a mainland college knowing the campus culture is quite different from his or her own home culture.

**Cultural, social capital and institutional agents.**

Future KS graduates studying at a mainland college could benefit from acquiring a cultural, social capital or institutional agent to assist in the transition to the new culture. Someone that is willing to aid in the acclimation process. KS graduates attending predominately white colleges may need cultural translators to assist in navigating through mainstream cultural norms and practices. The agent could be a college student that has been on the campus longer than the incoming freshman or a faculty or staff member well versed in college culture. A person, either a college student or faculty or staff member, that was from Hawai`i could be additionally beneficial because of the shared culture and experiences. Cultural agents could also refer students to student organizations such as a Hawai`i Club or other ethnic groups. Cultural, social capital and institutional agents can provide racial minority college students with access to social networks and college resources. Studies allege that colleges who validate the cultural backgrounds of students of color can produce a positive effect on their college experiences and outcomes (Museus and Neville, 2012).
Future KS graduates can be aware that their respective colleges’ Hawai`i Club may provide comfort in terms of cultural familiarity and social support. It appears that college students from Hawai`i fall on a continuum of needs in reference to an ethnic organization such as a Hawai`i Club. Some have no need or interest to fraternize with students from Hawai`i and do not experience homesickness, while others experience homesickness and seek comfort in social familiarity. For some club membership may help to relieve the tension caused by difficulties experienced in transitioning to a new culture. This can be viewed as a means of coping with their emotions and does not directly address solving a particular problem.

**Conclusion on College Student Persistence**

Throughout this study, the term “college student persistence” was used extensively. The term was used in reference to factors, both positive and adverse. After reiteratively reviewing the findings, it appears persistence can be purely an emotional influence based on how it is perceived and it can also have an actual physical impact.

A student that plays his ukulele and acknowledges that it makes him feel better when he feels homesick is consciously attempting to address mental distress. Playing the ukulele does not change the problem of being away from and missing home. This act focuses on the person’s emotions instead. The consequence of a student participant that believes his or her college tuition is low or high is only in the student’s perception. The factor only influenced a student participant’s mind. The consequence of the factor could play heavy on the student’s mind. I am not suggesting that this influence was unimportant; it was. However there were other factors that had substantive impacts. A substantive impact, for example, is a student receiving financial aid. Receiving financial aid allows the student to continue attending college while not receiving financial aid could result in departure from college. This factor certainly can cause emotional
distress. This factor also has the serious potential to remove the student from college.

Kapalama Schools graduates accepted to attend mainland colleges prepare to temporarily relocate and study in various ways. Buying the latest lap top computer with the needed software is one example. Buying clothing appropriate for the weather conditions at college is another. These are just two examples of an innumerable number of ways to prepare to attend college. The six key factors identified from this study did not focus on material items but instead on the student’s attitude and outlook. The findings recognized the importance of knowing and employing coping strategies, knowing that college stress is a normal experience, and that being involved with others and having a social support system is important.

The findings also suggest that future KS students would likely experience homesickness, which is a normal experience. And lastly, high college tuitions, and low amounts of financial aid and scholarships are realities that should not distract a student from trying his or her best. KS graduates do understand that securing college scholarships and financial aid are competitive.

It is important for KS graduates to understand that certain knowledge could increase their ability to stay in college and successfully earn a college degree. It is hoped that the findings from this study could serve to inoculate college students and diminish stresses to the extent that student retention is increased, and ultimately leads to college completion.

Advice From Student Participants to Future KS Graduates

Student participants were asked advice they would share with future KS graduates attending mainland colleges. These are their words.

• Don’t be afraid to make mistakes.
• Don’t miss classes.
• Keep an open relationship with your family, express yourself, focus on who and what supports you.
• Keep an open mind.
• Pick your friends wisely (not all will help you in time of need) and take advantage of all college resources.
• Pick one friend from your graduating class and keep in touch.
• Relax and have fun, and know your priorities and that you are responsible for your decisions.
• Bring things from home, don’t lose contact with your KS friends, you need to have a base and someone to talk with. Do what you want not what others want you to do.
• Maintain concentration on your studies, remember why you are in college, homesickness will draw you away.
• Don’t doubt yourself, things are going to be different, enjoy it. Work hard.
• Enjoy your time at home, especially your family. It is easy to take it for granted.

Study Recommendations to Future KS Graduates

This study identified difficulties that eleven student participants shared from their experiences. Based on the findings of this study, the following practices are suggested for future KS graduates planning to study at mainland colleges.

1. Bring articles that provide you with comfort, such as musical instruments, photographs, letters, your kihei, a lei, and other objects that have special meaning to you. These articles may provide emotional support and motivation.
2. Know that students experience stress and difficulties with college life. This is normal.
3. There may be differences between your home culture and your college’s culture. Expect
to encounter them and be flexible.

4. Know that coping strategies exist to help solve problems and improve how you deal with stress. Some problems cannot be solved, which requires students to deal with their emotions. Healthy solutions involve various types of physical exercise, sharing your feelings with others, and involvement in organizations, clubs, athletics, etc.

5. Know that you are academically well prepared for college. Non-academic aspects such as dealing with roommates, experiencing different social norms, and the weather will challenge you. You can overcome these challenges.

6. It is important to maintain KS friendships and contact with family members while on the mainland because eventually you may need their support, and you may be unwilling to call if you did not maintain a relationship. A good source of friends could include KS classmates that attend other mainland colleges that may be experiencing similar homesickness or other college life difficulties. A proactive approach may mean the difference between remaining in college and returning home.

7. Establish a communication plan with family and friends prior to heading to college. Keep in touch on a regular basis.

8. Take advantage of all forms of electronic communications to keep in touch with others. It is simple and inexpensive.

9. Create new friends at your new college upon arrival. Make an early and genuine effort to make new friends. Making friends may not be easy. A positive attitude in spite of discouragement is necessary.

10. Keep busy by being involved in student organizations, athletics, clubs, etc. Also involvement with classmates, friends and professors is crucial. According to studies the
greater the student’s involvement in college, the greater the amount of student learning and personal development.

11. Identify and utilize a cultural, social capital, or institutional agent at your college to facilitate a successful transition and integration.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provides unique contributions to our understanding of persistence relative to KS graduates studying at mainland colleges. The discovery of new knowledge leads to new questions.

- Conduct a study of mainland colleges to determine assimilation strategies employed on KS graduates to their campuses.
- Conduct a study of KS graduates that attended mainland colleges but did not persist.
- Research the differences between KS graduates attending mainland public and private colleges.
- Research whether the major of study of KS graduates attending mainland colleges influenced CSP.
- Since coping skills was a Key Factor for the student participants of this study, conduct a larger scale study to identify coping strategies employed by KS graduates that attended mainland colleges and have this information shared with future KS graduates that plan to attend college.
- Research the difference between KS graduates attending mainland colleges on the east coast and the west coast of the mainland.
• The models hypothesized by Adler (1968) and Braxton (2002), along with the results from my analysis, provides a foundation and framework upon which to build future research regarding college student persistence.

Closing Remarks

This research study has been years in the making. It was my intention to conduct a study that would be meaningful and helpful to the KS community. I believe that this study produced two major achievements. First, it identified factors that influenced CSP for eleven KS graduates that studied at mainland colleges. Second, it provides a foundation for future research studies of KS graduates that attend mainland colleges. Further studies of this unique population could benefit future KS graduates.

This study closes with my heart-felt expression of best wishes to the eleven students that took a chance by being interviewed for a study by me, an unknown person/researcher. This entire dissertation was created based on their spoken words. They impressed me with their intelligence, courage, strong sense of caring, and ambition as young adults that will change the world. Imua.
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Appendix A

Interview Guide (v.8-27-14)

Case Study
The purpose of phenomenological research is to describe and interpret the experiences of participants in order to understand the essence of the experience as perceived by the participants. There are multiple ways of interpreting the same experience, and that the meaning of the experience to each participant is what constitutes reality.

Focus on what is essential for the meaning of the event or interaction. Focus on understanding the participant’s voice. Isolate the phenomenon in order to comprehend its essence. The goal is to better understand someone’s experience.

The product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. Data in the form of quotes support the findings of the study. These quotes and excerpts contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research. During the interview do not transcribe participant responses to each question. Jot down brief notes of important points to ask subsequent questions without having to interrupt the participant’s train of thought. Get to the essence of their experiences.

• Odd questions will be asked about the past. Need not respond immediately.
• Silence is ok. You may need more time to reflect on the past.
• If you don’t understand the question, please ask for me to repeat it or explain it.
• I will minimize my acknowledgements of your responses to minimize unneeded transcribing.

Student’s Questions

College Selection (Are there issues with college selection that impacts persistence?)
Who or what influenced you to decide to attend college?

What were the reasons you decided to attend a mainland college? (6-9-14)

Did you apply to other colleges?

What factors determined the mainland college that you selected to attend?

How much influence were your parents in this decision?

How do you think your parents felt about your decision? (It if was the student’s decision.)

Did you visit the college you selected prior to making the decision?

Upon making the decision, at that time, how did you feel about your college choice?

Why did you choose to attend this particular college/university? (6-9-14)
Did you have friends or relatives that previously attended your college?

Did you know if other KS classmates were going to attend the same college? If yes, did this influence your decision to select this college? (6-9-14)

How do you feel about your college choice now?

Preparedness (Are there issues that impact persistence?)
What were your expectations and assumptions about attending a mainland college?

Did you have any fears or concerns about attending a mainland college?

How did you prepare to attend a mainland college?

Do you think you were ready to study at a mainland college?

Have you previously lived on the mainland?

Do you have travel experience? If so, please explain.

Artifacts (Take a photo of the artifact.)
Please explain the significance of each of the artifacts that you have brought today.

What does it mean to you to be a Native Hawaiian? (5-16-14)

Do you identify with being a Native Hawaiian? If so, what is the level of intensity? (6-13-14)

If so, what aspects of being a Native Hawaiian do you feel you identify with? (6-20-14)

Student Involvement (Are there issues that impact college persistence?)
Did you set academic goals for college experience? If so what were they? (revised 6-9-14)
What factors helped or supported your academic goals?

What factors did not help or support your academic goals?

What was the extent of your involvement with your professors? None, limited, occasionally, often. (6-9-14)

Did you speak to any of your professors about non-academic matters? If so, in general, what was discussed?

What was the extent of your involvement with your classmates and your roommates? None, limited, occasionally, often. (6-9-14)

Were you involved in any athletics, student associations, or extracurricular activities? If so, what was the extent of your involvement with athletics, student associations, and extracurricular activities? None, limited, occasionally, often. (6-9-14)

While you attended college were you employed?

**College Persistence**

What do you think about educational persistence? (i.e., necessary, unimportant, haven’t considered it, haven’t contextualized it) (6-9-14)

What personal acts did you perform that demonstrated educational persistence? (6-9-14)
(To go on resolutely or stubbornly in spite of difficulties. Doing the same thing?)

Can you share any experiences where you demonstrated coping and resilience? (6-9-14)
(To struggle to overcome problems or difficulties.)
(The ability to recover from or adjust easily to change or misfortune. Adjusting?)

What was helpful to you during your first year in college? (6-9-14)

Was there any particular person that was helpful to you during this period? (6-9-14)

What factors supported college persistence? (same question, different wording)
What factors did not support college persistence?

What kind of student environment did your college have? (i.e., friendly, unfriendly, helpful, open, happy, serious, academic-oriented, social-oriented, cliquish)

Did your college have established support systems available to you? (6-9-14)

Did your college have a supportive environment? (6-9-14)

Can you explain your experiences being immersed in a new culture? (6-19-14)

How would you describe your confidence or self-esteem while at your college? (6-26-14)

Home/Parents (6-20-14)
To what extent did you communicate with your parents during the school year? (6-20-14)

Did you experience homesickness? If so, to what extent? (6-20-14)

Closing Questions (Are there issues that impact college persistence?)
Were there any major personal events that strongly impacted your college academic experiences?

What do you believe was most beneficial to your first year in college? (6-20-14)

With your current knowledge what would you do differently? (6-20-14)

What advice would you give to future KS graduates preparing to attend a mainland college?

Is there anything you would like to add related to this subject that you think would be helpful to this study? (6-20-14)
Appendix B

University of Hawai’i, Mānoa
College of Education

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Identifying factors that influence persistence of Hawai`i students studying at mainland colleges, a phenomenological multi-case study of higher education.

Student Individual Interviews

I am respectfully requesting your participation in a research study. Currently I am a University of Hawai`i, College of Education doctoral candidate. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a member of the 2012 or 2013 graduating class of [redacted school name]. Your classmates will also be asked to participate in this research study. The results of this research study will contribute to a doctoral dissertation.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the phenomenological research is to identify factors that influence student college persistence.

PROCEDURES

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

1. Participate in private interviews, which I will facilitate.
2. The interview questions will generally pertain to your first year's college experiences.
3. The interviews will be audio recorded. Recording the interview will help in ensuring the accuracy of your responses and afford me the opportunity to focus on the interview instead of handwriting your responses.
4. The duration of the interview is anticipated to be 90 minutes.
5. It is hoped that twelve 2012 and 2013 [redacted school name] graduates will participate in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

In general, there are no foreseeable risks, discomforts or inconveniences associated with your participation in this study, other than the time necessary to complete an interview. Though the identity of participants will be anonymous historical and private information shared may identify the source. It is important to understand that the participant maintains complete control of all responses shared in the interview.
POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Although you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, your input can provide the [redacted school name], future graduates, parents, universities and colleges, and others with an increased understanding of college student persistence.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your true name and the true name of your college/university will not be disclosed or included in the dissertation or any publication. A pseudonym will replace your true name and the true name of your college/university. The collected data, including true names and assigned pseudonyms, will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible to only this writer.

The audio recordings of the interview(s) will not contain your true name or the true name of your college/university but instead pseudonyms. The audio recordings of the interview(s) will not be available for public review unless your consent is previously obtained. All audio recordings will be destroyed three years after the study is completed and the dissertation is published.

Should the results of the research be discussed at a conference, your true name and the true name of your college/university will not be disclosed.

PUBLISHED DISSERTATION

As a doctoral degree requirement, the dissertation will be published. Access to online publications is limited to students of colleges and universities that subscribe to online publishers, or can be reviewed online for a fee.

PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary and without monetary or other forms of compensation. No unwritten promises of compensation will be offered.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose to participate or not participate in this study. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty to you. This is a voluntary study and your participation will not affect your relationship with your college/university. Further I may remove your information from this research if circumstances develop which warrants removal.
CONTACT INFORMATION

In the future should you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (808) 391-8320 or email me at kevin.lima@hawaii.edu. My dissertation advisor at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, College of Education, is Dr. Clifton Tanabe. He can be contacted at (808) 956-7901, by email at cstanabe@hawaii.edu or at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, College of Education, Wist Hall, room 111, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, 96822.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

As mentioned previously, you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Further, at no time are you waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above and I fully understand the rights of a potential participant in a research study involving people as participants. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

At this time I: [ ] Agree to participate in this research study.
[ ] Agree to be audio recorded.

___________________________________________
Print Name of Participant

___________________________________________
Signature of Participant  Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

The research study has been explained to the participant and any questions that were asked were answered. I believe that the participant understands the information described in this document and freely consents to participate in this research study.

___________________________________________
Kevin Lima, Investigator

___________________________________________
Signature of Investigator  Date
Appendix C

Student Background Survey (v.6.25.14)

Interview Date: _______________________________________

Participant Name:  _____________________________________________________

Pseudonym preferred: __________________________________________________

Email address or text message number: __________________________________

College/University:  ___________________________________________________

Pseudonym:  __________________________________________________________

Location:  [ ] West coast  [ ] Middle USA  [ ] East coast  [ ] Other _____________

Size of College/University:  [ ] Large  [ ] Middle  [ ] Small

College/University type:  [ ] Public  [ ] Private  [ ] Religious

Academic Discipline (major): _____________________________________________

Mainland College First Semester GPA:  __________________

Mainland College Second Semester GPA:  __________________

Mainland College Third Semester GPA:  ______________________

Grade you entered KS:  ___________________

KS 2012-2013 Cumulative GPA:  ______________

Scholarship:  KS $_____________  Other $_____________  Other $_____________

Athletics, extracurricular activities, associations while at KS/level of involvement:

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Appendix D

Sample Introductory Email

Aloha,

My name is Kevin Lima and I am a doctoral student at University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, College of Education. Two people have suggested that I contact you for assistance: Ms. Marsha Ninomiya (EDEF) and Dr. Erin Kahunawai Wright (EDEA). Dr. Wright is a member of my dissertation committee.

The purpose of my email is to ask you if you know any [redacted name] graduates from the year 2013 that have studied on the mainland for part of a semester or for the entire year. This narrow population is the subject of my study. To clarify, the KS graduate need not have completed his/her freshman year studying at a mainland college.

Please let me share my academic background. I have completed my coursework, and passed both the Qualifying exam and Comprehensive exam. My dissertation committee has approved my dissertation proposal, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved my application to study human subjects.

In general my study investigates college student persistence. It is a qualitative, phenomenological multi-case study. My data collection method is primarily the private interview. The participants of my study will remain anonymous. I will use pseudonyms to replace their names and their colleges’ names.

If you know of graduates from this class that have studied on the mainland, I would be very appreciative if you could ask them to contact me to participate in this study. I must clarify that I am not asking for confidential/KS information. I am asking for your personal referrals. I have already interviewed four graduates and would like to interview at least six more. You certainly could forward this email if it is convenient for you.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Your assistance is requested. Mahalo.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lima
PhD Candidate
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
College of Education
Educational Foundations