

# Reconceptualizing Early College and College-Going in Settler Colonial Hawai'i: Amplifying Native Hawaiian Student Voices

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## The Promise of Early College

Early college has become a strategy to improve college-going by providing college-level learning experiences before graduating from high school. Research suggests that students are more likely to be ready for college, enroll, and graduate if they take part in these types of programs (American Institutes for Research, 2013; An, 2012; Edmunds, et al., 2010; McDonald & Farrell, 2012; Saenz & Combs, 2015). This is promising for minority groups, including Native Hawaiians, who experience lower levels of academic achievement, college readiness, and college-going (Brayboy et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee & Osumi, 2016; Thomas et al., 2012).

Data shows that Native Hawaiian high school students with dual credit coursework enrolled in college at a higher rate compared to students who did not earn college credit in high school (Hawai'i P-20, 2016). However, Native Hawaiian students have been underrepresented in dual credit enrollment, with a -8.1 % participation gap from 2003 to 2012 (Huang & Osumi, 2013), although Native Hawaiian enrollment seems to be increasing, with a -2 % participation gap in 2015 (Lee & Osumi, 2016). With the focus of state and community agencies on narrowing the achievement gap to meet the state goal of 55 % of working age adults holding a two- or four-year degree by 2025 (University of Hawai'i, 2013), a guiding question of this work is how to make early college more accessible, relevant, and effective to the unique experiences of Native Hawaiian students.

While conventional early college models focus on academic and social preparation for college (Edmunds et al., 2010), some research suggests that including cultural elements in early college programs helped to improve academic proficiency and college enrollment for Native American students (Brayboy et al., 2012) and Native Hawaiian students (Roberts et al., 2018). Yet, literature regarding Native Hawaiian-serving early college programs is limited. More information is needed to understand the cultural relevance and effectiveness of these programs for the economic realities and educational aspirations of Native Hawaiian students and families. Additionally, some argue that achievement-oriented approaches to lessening the achievement gap are inadequate without addressing systemic inequities (Ladson-Billings, 2006) that influence student choices and the resources available to Indigenous students and families (Parker et al., 2015).

## Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to critically explore factors affecting Native Hawaiian college-going to reconceptualize and improve early college programs serving Native Hawaiians. Survey and focus group data from an internal evaluation of early college summer programs at the University of Hawai'i -West O'ahu (UHWO) provide insight into Native Hawaiian student experiences in early college and their perceptions of college-going and college readiness. Indigenous research literature emphasizes incorporating the authentic voice of Indigenous students in mainstream education contexts, which can occur through incorporating

qualitative data and Indigenous perspectives and experiences (Harrington & Pavel, 2013). Three questions guided this inquiry: 1) What kind of expectations about college do Native Hawaiian high school students see or hear in their home and community? 2) What obstacles do these students perceive in going to college? and 3) What does being college-ready mean to Native Hawaiian high school students?

Starting with a reframing of the issue of the achievement gap, I review literature regarding early college models, college readiness, and Indigenous experiences of college-going. I then introduce Kanaka 'Ōiwi Critical Race Theory or Kanaka'ŌiwiCrit (Wright & Balutski, 2016; Cristobal, 2018), which provides a culturally grounded framework to analyze data and consider how systemic issues in the form of external, settler colonial consequences affect student understanding, articulation, and actions in higher education.

### **From Achievement Gap to Education Debt**

An important idea behind this inquiry is that educational research and policy designed to address achievement gaps take achievement-oriented strategies and solutions. Rather than focus on the achievement gap, Ladson-Billings (2006) points to the historic and ongoing educational, economic, sociopolitical, and moral inequities evident among different minority groups as factors of an education debt. An education debt is a more accurate conceptualization of the accumulated inequalities over time that have disadvantaged minorities and negatively affects student achievement. Using the metaphor of the national deficit and national debt, Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that a focus on the national deficit, or the amount spending exceeds income at a point in time, ignores the long-term problem of the national debt made of accumulated deficit over time. Likewise, a focus on the narrowing or widening of the achievement gap each year fails to recognize and address long-standing education debt.

In the context of Hawai'i, this cumulative education debt is arguably a result of ongoing settler

colonialism. European and American businessmen and missionaries colonized Hawai'i through the dispossession of Native Hawaiian governance, land, and citizenship while the sociopolitical rise of Asian settlers perpetuated colonial practices (Trask, 2000). Educational journeys of Native Hawaiian students are affected by the consequences of settler colonialism like identity appropriation, militarization, and exploitation of land and resources (Wright & Balutski, 2016). Well-intentioned efforts to close the achievement gap like early college may not affect inequality, let alone make up for generations of inequities if the programs are not designed with such contextual factors in mind. Critical of logics of elimination and containment and settler practices "ranging from colonial administration to the routines of everyday life" (Fujikane, 2008, p.8), Hawaiian culture-based charter schools have proven to better address settler colonial inequity and Native Hawaiian academic achievement than Hawai'i public schools (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2013). Reframing the achievement gap as a symptom of settler colonial education debt may help to reconceptualize achievement-oriented approaches of early college to better address systemic factors beyond academic readiness affecting Native Hawaiian students.

### **Early College and College Readiness**

Early College High Schools (ECHS) were one of the first early college initiatives that

The schools addressed low levels of college readiness and college enrollment of traditionally underrepresented students by creating the opportunity to earn college credits and degrees while in high school (Saenz & Combs, 2015). Common design of early college programs include a partnership between school districts and colleges, programming located on or near a college campus, rigorous college preparatory curriculum and instruction, college readiness development, academic and affective supports, varying levels of financial support (Edmunds et al., 2010; Ndiaye & Wolfe, 2016), small school size or smaller learning

communities, and professional collaboration and support (Edmunds et al., 2010). Besides the stand-alone ECHS model, other models include school-within-a-school ECHS or dual enrollment programs (Ndiaye & Wolfe, 2016), the latter of which is found in Hawai'i. In the 2019–20 school year, 36 Hawai'i public schools offered early college courses where students took college-level courses at their high school campus (HIDOE, 2020). Running Start is another dual enrollment program in Hawai'i, where students enroll in college courses at University of Hawai'i campuses (Roberts et al., 2018).

An important part of the early college model is to promote college readiness by serving as a social and academic bridge to college. College readiness is defined as “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution,” where succeeding means completing entry-level courses and being able to continue on to the next level (Conley, 2007). There are multiple facets to college readiness, including academic, social, and personal readiness (McDonald & Farrell, 2012), key cognitive strategies and content knowledge; academic behaviors (e.g., self-monitoring, study skills); and contextual skills and awareness (e.g., college knowledge, communication, social skills) (Conley, 2007). ECHS students described academic readiness as self-monitoring behavior, personal discipline, time management, and responsibility while social readiness was described as social acclimation to collegiate maturity and interacts, peer support and accountability through study groups, and developing caring relationships with peers and faculty (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). ECHS helped students develop their identity generally (Saenz & Combs, 2015) and specifically as a college student and scholar, representing an important part of personal readiness for college (McDonald & Farrell, 2012).

While conventional early college models focus on academic, social, and personal facets of college readiness, some Hawai'i early college programs

integrated cultural supports. One such program that used culturally relevant mentoring in addition to academic and financial supports saw statistically significant increases in student English and math scores and an 85 % postsecondary enrollment rate (Roberts et al., 2018). Students expressed their satisfaction with their Native Hawaiian mentors, feeling they were there for students and provided important guidance and new knowledge (Roberts & Hitchcock, 2017). Creating a sense of belonging through an extended family structure has proven to support retention for Native American students in college settings (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). Early college models in Hawai'i could benefit from focusing on more than just academic and social aspects of college readiness by including cultural, familial, and financial supports that address the education debt of a settler colonial history.

### **Indigenous Experiences of College-Going**

Family, community, and culture play important roles in the educational journeys of Indigenous students. Native students can rely on family and community members to be allies in college-going (Brayboy et al., 2012). Research with Indigenous college students and graduates suggests giving back to one's family and community is a responsibility and motivational factor in college-going and postsecondary success (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008; Keene, 2018; Reyes, 2019). As students work to understand their kuleana or responsibility to their people (Wright & Balutski, 2016), this hope to make life better for their families and communities “is a reflection of an Indigenous philosophy of putting community before individualism” (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008, p.74).

Other supporting factors helping Native college students included motivation to support and not let down their family, campus social support (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), caring social relationships and networks (Keene, 2018), and connections to 'āina or land (Wright & Balutski, 2016).

These factors are in stark contrast to university administrator and faculty perspectives that money and academic programs were central persistence

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factors for Native American students (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), although academic programs were helpful for some (Keene, 2018). These differences in perspective necessitate a “shift away from dealing with Native American student persistence through purely monetary means and towards creating ways in which Native American students can connect with both the university and their home communities” (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008, p.81). While lack of financial resources and academic preparation remain barriers to post-secondary access (Brayboy et al., 2012) and college completion (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008), one study found that the greatest obstacles to students were family expectations to come home and stop ‘playing school’ and single parenthood (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Native freshmen also described the tension and cost in maintaining their relationships with home and their tribe (Keene, 2018). Tribal colleges and universities help to alleviate cultural differences and discontinuity and institutional discrimination through culture-based education in students’ own tribal communities (Brayboy et al., 2012).

### **Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Critical Race Theory**

First developed by Wright and Balutski (2016) through their research on Native Hawaiian experiences in higher education, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Crit helps to understand and express Native Hawaiian student narratives through culture-based themes of aloha ‘āina (love for the land/nation), mo’olelo (stories, narratives), mo’okū’auhau (connections to people, place, and space), and kuleana (responsibility, privilege, authority) in relation to external consequences of colonialism and occupation unique to Hawai‘i. Wright and Balutski (2016) identify colonial consequences such as myths of multicultural paradise and local identity that affect Native Hawaiian educational journeys and obscure racism and underrepresentation in higher education.

Cristobal (2018) further modified these themes to reflect similar tenets of Kanaka Critical Race Theory or Kanaka Crit (Reyes, 2017). The

resulting relationship among themes and tenets are illustrated in three levels similar to what Wright and Balutski (2016) envisioned. The first level, which reflects how occupation and colonialism are endemic to society, interacts with themes on the second level, which represent the ways students understand and express their own narratives and connections. These themes interact with the third level of student enactment of kuleana through actions of social justice and aloha ‘āina.

While Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Crit and its themes reflect university-level student experiences, I apply it to Native Hawaiian high school students to interpret their educational journeys. This work may contribute to the further development of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Crit and its use to understand Native Hawaiian experiences in education at a range of ages.

### **UHWO Early College Summer Programs and Students**

The University of Hawai‘i-West O‘ahu (UHWO) is the only four-year college situated near one of the largest concentrations of Hawaiians in the world on the Wai‘anae Coast. Compared to the state, the educational attainment level of Wai‘anae Coast communities is lower, as is the median household income level (HIDOE, 2018a; HIDOE, 2018b). UHWO has partnered with other organizations to address low levels of Native Hawaiian college enrollment through early college. The Native Hawaiian student populations of the two public high schools on the Wai‘anae Coast were 71.6 % (Nānākuli High and Intermediate) and 64.9 % (Wai‘anae High school) in 2017–18 (HIDOE, 2018a; HIDOE, 2018b).

In the summer of 2018, three early college programs brought together 97 high school juniors and seniors from the Wai‘anae Coast and Hawai‘i Island, 87.6 % of which were Native Hawaiian. The general purpose of these programs was to increase college readiness of Native Hawaiian high school students by providing them culturally grounded opportunities to learn and engage in college courses and environments. The programs

provided academic, social, and financial supports for its students while integrating cultural protocols, practices, and values.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Near the end of the early college programs, students were invited to participate in focus groups to inform program evaluation and improvement. Approximately 68 students chose to participate in eight, 70-minute focus groups. Two staff members serving as a facilitator and recorder led each focus group and used the same questions and protocol developed by program staff. Because of the relationships built through the program, students and staff were comfortable and familiar with one another, allowing students to be more open in sharing their mo'olelo.

Program staff and student workers helped in the transcription of the focus group audio recordings. For many, this was their first experience in undertaking focus group research. I organized all transcriptions by focus group question for analysis using Excel. Through an initial round of open coding and subsequent rounds of coding using constant comparison technique, I created and further honed emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I then used Kanaka'ŌiwiCrit to understand how these themes related to each other.

### **Findings**

Survey responses provide contextual information to student educational journeys and reveal the education debt they may face. About 14% of students reported that one or more of their parents completed a four-year college degree. The majority (77.2 %) of students reported that they qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Just over half of the students (52.7 %) said their family expects them to contribute to the home financially or take care of others after graduating from high school. Despite expectations of helping at home, 93.5 % of students reported that their parents encouraged them to go to college after high school. Students also expressed their own plans in going to college. About 85 % of students planned to go to a four-year college after

high school, 10% planned to go to community college, and another five % planned on working full-time or going into the military. Qualitative focus group data in the following sections expands upon demographic statistics to more authentically describe the context and factors influencing students thinking about college.

#### ***College Expectations***

Students described family and community expectations about college that reflected hope and anxiety for a better life free from financial worries. Students also reported multiple sources of support from family and community, which helped when students faced negative stereotypes about people from their community.

#### ***Hoping for Better.***

Students echoed their parents' hopes "for a better future than what they had," "a better job than what your parents had to work in," and "that I'm a better role model than they were for their own kids." Many students shared that their parents did not attend or finish college, and some expressed personal motivation to be the first to graduate college:

My mom them push me to go after my dreams. So I want to go to college, pursue my dreams of being a baker. My dad and my brother went to college but didn't finish. I want to be the first one to break that.

This theme shows how family expectations motivate students to pursue college and not let their family down (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). While these students focus on fulfilling their parents' dreams and expectations to make a better life, it is not unlike the responsibility other Native students felt to give back more broadly to their communities and nations (Keene, 2018; Reyes, 2019).

#### ***Multiple Sources of Support.***

Families were generally supportive and helped to check up on homework. Community members also checked up on students and helped them to find their way as they considered college and their future. Other students mentioned school initiatives to get students to college, although as one student

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mentioned, the number of spots in these programs can be limited. This aligns with literature pointing to the support Indigenous students receive from family and community members (Brayboy et al., 2012; Guillory & Wolverton, 2008).

### ***College is Necessary for Survival.***

Almost every student touched upon this notion. They described their parents seeing college as a way to be financially secure and not living paycheck to paycheck. Students expected college to benefit their income and help them to provide for their family. One student shared that “for my household it’s unspoken, just expected to go to college. In the community, it’s like that’s how you get rich. You go to college. If not, you end up working at McDonald’s.”

### ***Negative Stereotypes.***

Although a less prominent theme, several students shared that they face negative stereotypes about people from their communities. One student summarized this notion: “Basically we come from Wai’anae and there’s a lot of stereotypes about how our kids are stupid, violent, not going anywhere in life...” Students saw going to college as a way to break the stereotype of being uneducated and benefit the community.

### **College-Going Obstacles**

Many of the themes of college-going obstacles reflect external forces impacting students’ educational journeys. Being low-income affects family ability to pay for college, transportation options, and ability to supplement and support school resources. And again, students heard and internalized mo’olelo of negative stereotypes that may bias their chances to receive scholarships or acceptance to college.

### ***Lack of Finances.***

This was the most common barrier to college that was mentioned. Students worried that their families cannot afford college, especially out-of-state tuition, and that they will not receive financial aid or scholarships. Many Native American students come

from low-income families and rely greatly on financial aid (Brayboy et al., 2012).

### ***Negative stereotypes.***

A theme under both college-going expectations and barriers, students had to deal with negative stereotypes like people telling them they cannot do it or “you not smart, you not gonna make it to college, you’re gonna fail ‘um.” Two students thought negative stereotypes of their communities affected their chances to be accepted into schools or to receive scholarships when compared to students from more affluent communities. Deficit perspectives of Native students and other students of color are obstacles to college-going, especially when teachers and college counselors have such assumptions (Brayboy et al., 2012).

Other obstacles mentioned included grades, transportation, and cultural/family responsibilities. Several students mentioned not being able to be accepted because of bad grades. One student felt they had to “work ten times as hard” to receive scholarships and be accepted into schools when compared to private school students with quality teachers and technology. This statement represents the inequalities students feel stacked against them. A Filipina student felt pressured to follow cultural roles of women supporting the home and to not go to college, and a Hawaiian student said, “I feel like college to some people in our community isn’t as important as supporting your families. It’s more of a personal goal to some people.” This resonates with the tension other Native students feel in pursuing an education, which may be seen as White or clashing with the needs of the tribal community (Keene, 2018).

### **Perceptions of College Readiness**

Students described skills, characteristics, and values needed to be college-ready and compared their college readiness experiences in high school and the early college program. The following themes make up student mo’olelo and understanding of college readiness and speak to student connections to faculty, staff, and peers.

The most prominent themes of college readiness were time management, responsibility and maturity, and self-motivation and commitment, which could be categorized as academic behaviors (Conley, 2007) and part of academic readiness (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). Students emphasized helpful behaviors beyond academic content knowledge and skills: “It’s about having good habits: good time management, good learning, adjusting yourself more than having the skills.” One student said, “It means to be mature enough to handle adult situations and to be prepared to have a big workload in college. Independence.” The early college programs reportedly helped to build academic behavior skills like time management, student responsibility, and independence more so than high school. Students learned they could not rely on teachers to remind them to turn in assignments or give them literature to research; they had to do it on their own. Relating to motivation and commitment, one student commented, “Being college-ready doesn’t have to mean that you know what you want to do but maybe knowing that you actually want a future.”

Preparedness was another theme, referring to general preparedness for college and the future, but also being mentally, emotionally, and socially prepared. The early college program helped students to build social readiness (McDonald & Farrell, 2012) or what Conley (2007) described as contextual knowledge and awareness as students experienced a college life, environment, and academic expectations.

Less prominent themes of college readiness included having a good mindset, goal setting, academic preparation, and communication. Students reported their high schools focused on college readiness skills of academic preparation and communication in the form of public speaking. Academic preparation was built through writing assignments and strategies in high school, but students recognized that more academic preparation for college was needed to be successful. The early college programs provided a high level academic work and assignments that helped students feel more academically prepared.

Although not included as a theme of college readiness, students expressed that the early college programs helped them to accomplish their work through supportive social relationships with program staff and advisors, most of whom were Native Hawaiian. Students described one program staff member as “one of our relatives” and “our mom.” This finding confirms the importance of having staff representative of the student population and culturally relevant mentoring in early college programs serving Native Hawaiian students (Roberts & Hitchcock, 2017). Relationships with teachers were more distanced and difficult to manage because communication with faculty was a challenge for some students in the program.

### **Discussion and Implications**

Using Kanaka’Ōiwi Crit I placed themes from student narratives in relationships to each other to reflect upon how early college could be reconceptualized to better serve Native Hawaiian students (see Figure 1). First, survey and focus group data described external factors of low parent education and income levels, negative stereotypes of students’ communities, and college-going barriers of lack of finances and related issues (e.g., transportation, schools with limited resources or supports). Focus group themes highlight the role external factors play in student educational journeys as students repeat mo’olelo describing college as necessary for survival or perpetuating negative stereotypes of the community. Reyes (2017) describes how such external factors impact student perspectives as “colonization deeply affects perception, shaping colonized peoples’ understandings of themselves and their lifeworlds” (p.10). Family and community experiences of poverty under settler colonialism and occupation reinforce a scarcity mindset reflected in the mo’olelo students share. Such a mindset tells families and students there is never enough money and that college—the culmination of the Western educational pathway—is the only way out.

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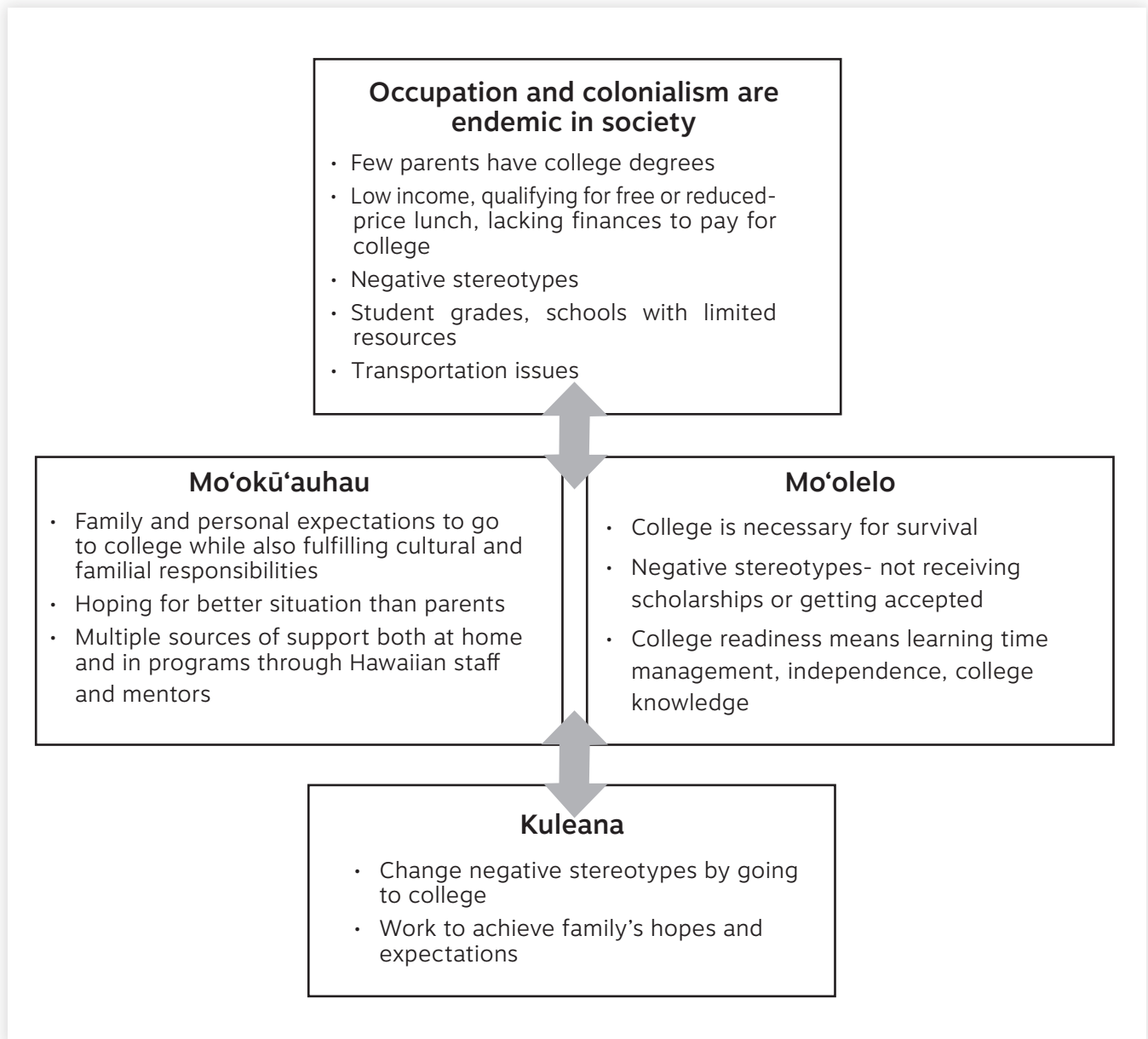


Figure 1. Thematic relationships using Kanaka'ŌiwiCrit framework, adapted from Cristobal (2018)

Students may internalize settler colonial myths of the dispossessed Hawaiian, unable to assimilate and thrive like local settlers (Trask, 2000), and incorporate these negative stereotypes into their education mo'olelo. On the other hand, students may push back against external factors and settler mo'olelo through their actions to prove negative stereotypes wrong and achieve the hopes of family. Thus, college-going becomes a kuleana

or responsibility students take on in an effort to change their situation and that of their family and community.

Students also shared about the support they receive from the relationships around them. Using Kanaka'ŌiwiCrit, themes of hoping for better and multiple sources of support can be understood through mo'okū'auhau (see Figure 1). Students were nourished not only by family but also by con-



cerned community members, college readiness programs in school, and the family-like support of early college program staff. Yet, sometimes the responsibilities that come from student relationships with family and community can also become a barrier to college as pursuing an education can conflict with family responsibilities.

Students confirmed the importance of academic and social aspects of college readiness in early college models (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). The early college programs addressed what students understood college readiness to be by fostering academic behavior skills, contextual knowledge and preparedness, and cognitive skills that went beyond what they learned in high school, thus serving as an academic and social bridge to college within a college for survival narrative. Interestingly, for a program that integrated Hawaiian culture, student perspectives of college readiness and college-going did not speak about culture, cultural identity, or values such as aloha 'āina. This may be due to students not yet seeing how cultural identity relates to college-going or that most students were Hawaiian and so Hawaiian identity was not as pronounced as it would be in settings where students are in the minority.

So what do these findings mean for developing early college programs for Native Hawaiians? Perhaps one aspect to consider is how early college programs could challenge settler colonial narratives, which stem from colonization and historic educational debt, and prevent the internalization of such narratives that affect student choices and actions. Cristobal (2018) uses Kanaka'ŌiwiCrit to show how collective memory of our mo'olelo relates to colonization and occupation endemic in Hawai'i. She argues,

Kanaka 'Ōiwi, as well as all students in the Hawai'i educational system, must be taught from a young age the truth about the history of Hawai'i through a Kanaka 'Ōiwi lens. Students must be presented with a history that is forthright about colonization and occupation and is honest about the cultural strengths and challenges impacting Kanaka

'Ōiwi in the past, present, and future. In gaining this awareness, Kanaka 'Ōiwi students can unapologetically learn their mo'okū'auhau and share their mo'olelo in a way that empowers them to realize the possibilities that exist in exercising their criticality in a way that is personally, culturally, and collectively meaningful (Cristobal, 2018, p.39).

Early college programs, and arguably all educational interventions and curricula, should provide ways for students to unlearn settler narratives, be critical of stereotypes and limiting structures, and learn how to move forward free from logics of containment. Uncovering left out histories of Hawaiian excellence in literacy and education while teaching the impact of settler colonial policies and practices could disrupt negative stereotypes of Hawaiian intelligence and ability. This may also make way for learning and preserving Hawaiian knowledge and contemporary mo'olelo, which informs Hawaiian identity and empowers us to protect the lāhui or Hawaiian nation (Reyes, 2017). This knowledge may also encourage students to continue in the kuleana to prove stereotypes wrong by succeeding in going to college.

Early college programs also need to address the areas of greatest need and tackle major obstacles of settler colonial educational debt like the lack of finances. Like other early college models, the early college programs in this study provided financial support to participate in the program and earn college credits. However, the programs did not include financial literacy in its programming. Also, students did not identify financial literacy as part of being college ready or being a barrier, although in part of the program evaluation they did identify providing financial aid information as a way to improve the programs. Speaking with Native students about barriers in college-going revealed that lack of financial aid knowledge was just as much a barrier as inadequate financial resources (Guillory & Wolverton, 2008). Early college programs serving Native Hawaiian students should teach college financial literacy to students as well as their fami-

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lies in order to go beyond conventional notions of college readiness to really impact education debt.

This leads to another reconceptualization of early college programs and higher education more broadly—the meaningful integration of Native families and communities in education. Findings suggest Native students come from families and communities that value education and expect students to go to college, contrary to deficit perspectives and approaches mainstream institutions may take towards Native students. The early college programs in this study incorporated family through an opening orientation and an end of summer hō'ike, a culminating dinner event where students demonstrated their learning and projects to their families. But how can early college programs better integrate family and community members throughout its programming? The Family Education Model implemented in tribal colleges is built on principles of collaboration, family support and empowerment, seeing families as resources to all involved, and creating flexible retention programs embedded in communities (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002). Education with families and communities thus shifts education from an individual focus to a collective one and transforms “individual and collective powerlessness to personal, political, and cultural power” (HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002, p.31). Through authentic engagement and integration of family, community, and Native nations, mainstream education could better help Native students, benefit themselves from community resources brought into the education system, and begin to alleviate settler colonial education debt.

## Conclusion and Future Research

From conventional Western perspectives of the achievement gap and achievement-oriented programming, early college focuses on academic and social aspects of college readiness. Native Hawaiian student voices reflecting on early college summer programs reveal other factors affecting their educational journeys leading to college. Knowing the major challenges to college-going for these

specific communities can inform program design to address external factors and consequences of colonialism and occupation such as low income and negative stereotypes. Findings also suggest that contrary to negative perceptions of the communities from which these high school students come, families and community members have high expectations of students going to college and support them in doing so. These connections represent a supportive network of relationships that can serve to counter and replace negative stereotypes and rewrite the mo'olelo students may internalize.

This inquiry confirms the importance of centering Indigenous student voices in research on programs serving Indigenous students. It also speaks to the relevance and clarity Hawaiian theoretical frameworks can bring to understanding Native Hawaiian experiences in education. Future research on Native Hawaiian college-going should utilize and continue to develop such theories and methodologies to amplify native voices and bring forth their experiences to inform educational efforts, reconceptualize achievement-oriented programs, and restructure education for all to thrive. More research is also needed to understand why students did not perceive culturally relevant programming as a supportive factor in college-going, although Hawaiian culture-based education has been shown to support positive identity and socio-emotional development and, in turn, academic achievement (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010).

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