

Development of the “Indigenous Self” in Indigenous-Centered Student Services: An Examination of the Kōkua a Puni Summer Enrichment Program

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I argue that a necessary first step in reevaluating the failure or success of particular instruction methods used with subordinated students calls for a shift from a narrow and mechanistic view of instruction to one that is broader in scope and takes into consideration the sociohistorical and political dimensions of education (Bartolomé, 2008, p. 128).

Conventional theories of student development are often used to explain student persistence, attrition, and matriculation in education and thus, formulate the basis for student retention models. Student development theories fail to consider the diverse set of socioeconomic, cultural, and academic experiences of Indigenous peoples, in this case Hawaiians, as they interface with institutions of higher education. This examination of the Kōkua a Puni Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) will help to identify gaps in student development theory, offer an Indigenous-centered model of student services, and facilitate a discussion on how this model promotes the program goals of leadership, self-actualization, and identity exploration.

In 1986, the Ka’ū Report was released by a consortium of Hawaiian faculty and staff from throughout the University of Hawai’i System and documented the egregious absence of Hawaiians at the University of Hawai’i. Despite improvements in post-secondary educational representation and support from federally funded initiatives like the Native Hawaiian Education Act, Hawaiians continue to be underrepresented among college students and graduate-level professional students. According to recent surveys, Hawaiian parents have high expectations for their children’s post-secondary education (Kanaiaupuni, Malone & Ishibashi, 2005, p. 116–117). More than four out of five Hawaiian respondents expected their children to continue their studies beyond high school at either a four-year institution (62%) or a two-year college or technical

institute (24.4%) (ibid.). Further, improvements were made in post-secondary Hawaiian enrollment figures over time. For example, the number of Hawaiian students enrolled in the UH System increased by 25.2%, from 4,517 in 1990 to 6,248 in 2001 (ibid, p. 120). Using special tabulations from Census 2000 data, a recent report from the University of California Asian American and Pacific Islander Policy Initiative indicates that Pacific Islanders have made modest progress in educational attainment across generations (UCAAPI Policy Initiative, 2006).

Despite modest gains in representation, Hawaiians continue to be underrepresented in postsecondary enrollment and educational attainment. A 2003 study found that for Hawaiians 25 years and older, 43.2% had received up to a high school diploma or equivalency, 6.9% had received an associate’s degree, 9.4% had received a bachelor’s degree, and 3.2% had received a graduate or professional degree (Kamehameha Schools, 2003, p. 4). An additional 22.3% (about 27,000), had completed some college, but had not received a degree, which is testament to the college retention issue facing the Hawaiian population. A study conducted in 2011 by Freitas and Balutski, “Our Voices, Our Definitions of Success,” attempted to understand how Hawaiian students navigate, persist and matriculate through UH Mānoa. They tracked the enrollment and graduation of a cohort of first-time Hawaiian freshmen to UH Mānoa in Fall 2005 and thereby analyzed different enrollment and persistence patterns over a 5.5-year period. The

results of that study showed that by the end of that time period, 49.8% of the cohort of 271 students had either graduated or were still enrolled at UH Mānoa. These preliminary findings suggest there may be a larger college retention issue facing Hawaiian students within both UH Mānoa and, perhaps, throughout the UH system as well.

Group	Group description	Semesters enrolled					N
1A	Continuous completer	X	X	X	X	BA	97
1B	Continuous still enrolled	X	X	X	X	X	22
2A	Stop out, return, drop out	X	X		X		22
2B	Drop out, did not return	X	X				113
3A	Stop out, return, completer	X	X		X	BA	8
3B	Stop out, return, still enrolled	X	X		X	X	8
0	Missing data						1

Table 1: Our voices, our definitions of success cohort characteristics

Kōkua a Puni (KAP) is a federally funded five year grant initiative supported by the US Department of Education, Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Strengthening Institutions Program. In 2005, the Pūko‘a Council, a system-wide council of the University of Hawai‘i Native Hawaiian serving programs, identified key challenges facing Native Hawaiian students and programs: the lack of funding, cultural insensitivity by faculty and administration, increased cross-program support, student-focused mentality, and the need for additional space. Based on this information, UH Mānoa developed a successful federal grant proposal that funded KAP.

The goals of KAP are to support and provide guidance to Hawaiian students so that they graduate, foster leadership among our haumāna (student(s)), reinforce and grow our sense of Hawaiian identity at the UH Mānoa campus, include our ‘ohana (family, relative) and community in higher education and, most important, serve our lāhui (nation; race). Generally, KAP focuses on enrichment activities, the most intensive of which is SEP. The primary purpose of SEP is to provide an enrichment experience for community college students who are either entering UH Mānoa or are interested in attending but are not yet accepted.

Limitations of Conventional Higher Education Student Development Theories in Understanding Indigenous Students

In considering the general underrepresentation and poor success rates of Hawaiians (and other Indigenous peoples) in traditional forms of higher education, identifying possible contributing factors is a natural outcome. Moving away from the “personal-deficit approach” (Pavel, 1999), which tends to blame individual students (and their cultures and families for seemingly not valuing education) for educational underachievement, we can begin to examine and interrogate the predominant conceptual frameworks higher education employs to understand its students and, in turn, frame its student experience.

For disenfranchised populations, education is recognized as a viable means for intellectual, political, and social empowerment. Freire (1993) says that the educational process is critically important to the psychological “liberation” of the colonized. By empowering individuals, education can, in turn, transform societies. Similarly, Guardia and Evans (2008) say for American Indian students enrolled in tribal colleges, “. . . the impact of attending college often goes far beyond learning content knowledge and obtaining a degree . . .” (p. 238). For communities that value collectivity and collaboration, earning a college degree can transform an entire community.

Hawaiians value education in much the same way: it provides a means for individual and community empowerment. The idea of education as empowerment is especially evident in the rise of pre-Kindergarten through 12 Hawaiian culturally-centered community-based schools like Pūnana Leo Family-Based Language Nests, Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai‘i (The Hawaiian Language Immersion Program), and Hawaiian culturally-based public charter schools over the last two decades. In these educational contexts, which consciously support and reinforce Hawaiian identity, we see positive movement for Hawaiian youth in the form of slightly better performance on standardized tests on which, traditionally, Hawaiian students have not done well (Tibbetts, March 2005). Although more research needs to be conducted to make stronger correlations between culturally-based education and

academic achievement, even germane issues, such as better rates of attendance and the development of a stronger cultural identity, provide us with a hopeful glimpse into a brighter educational future for Hawaiian students (Kanaiaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003; Kanaiaupuni et al., 2005; Tibbetts, Kahakalau, & Johnson, 2007). Like tribal colleges for American Indians, it is quite evident that in these particular Hawaiian culturally-based educational settings, academic achievement, the intentional reinforcement of cultural identity, and community engagement are interrelated (*ibid.*). Unfortunately, though, Hawaiian schools are still relatively small in comparison to the population of Hawaiian students.

Despite the small growth in the number of culturally-based schools as well as their marginal success in raising test scores and actively involving communities in education, higher education matriculation for Hawaiians has been relatively flat (Kanaiaupuni et al., 2005). According to the little data we have on Hawaiians in higher education, Hawaiians have also found the higher education terrain quite treacherous for many of the same reasons that prevent successful matriculation of American Indian students: cultural dissonance with the institution, poor academic preparation, poor social integration, full-time employment, and lack of role models.

Much of what we know about the ways in which higher education is organized and implemented centers around the ideas put forth by student development theory. In their critique of student development theory as a meaningful body of knowledge and organizing principle for student affairs, Bloland, Stamatakos, and Rogers (1994) define student development theory as “the body of theory associated with concepts to explain the process of human development as it applies to college students of any age” (vii). Consequently, student development theory was thought to provide higher education with a framework for understanding students and, in turn, providing an environment which best addressed the developmental hallmarks outlined by these theories. Essentially, these theories attempt to chronicle and explain human growth and the influence of educational environments on this growth.

There are several student development theory typologies or taxonomies. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)

provide a very useful taxonomy. It highlights principal student development theories used in higher education and provides a detailed explanation for each prevailing typology: psychosocial (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Ortiz, 1999), cognitive complexity/cognitive structure (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Perry, 1968; Piaget, 1964), typological (Heath, 1960, 1974; Meyers, 1980; and Cross, 1971, 1981; Helms, 1995 all as cited in Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 36–38) and person-environment (Astin, 1984/1999; Pace, 1979; Tinto, 1975, 1987). It is imperative to note that these typologies house numerous theories and models. Among these typologies, the one which student affairs draws heavily upon is psychosocial, an area developed by educational researcher Arthur W. Chickering (*ibid.*; Ortiz, 1999). Psychosocial theories view development as a succession of stages: thinking, feeling, behaving, valuing, and relationships with others and to oneself. In his “Seven Vectors of Student Development,” he provides a framework for understanding student change on various levels but focuses on the idea of “identity development” and how college influences that development.

In turn, these theories have also been used to explain student persistence, attrition, matriculation, and achievement across diverse populations (Grayson & Grayson, 2003). Thus, understanding student development theory is integral to understanding the broader context of higher education in the US, especially if we hope to create educational environments that are more conducive to understanding and facilitating Indigenous students’ access and success.

Despite the enormity and weight of student development theory literature, there are several gaps, especially with regards to the experiences of Indigenous students in higher education. Although the pitfalls of applying traditional student development theories to underrepresented populations are well documented (Bloland et al., 1994; Guardia & Evans, 2008; Taylor, 2008), it is still important to reiterate the primary inadequacies.

The bulk of student development theory was developed around the experiences of “traditional” college students from the 1960s through 1980s. These students were predominantly white, typically college-aged, and mostly male. Obviously, these traditional

theories do not include developmental processes of other groups of people, for example, women, adult learners, and Indigenous peoples, which would provide a much different view of “student development.”

The theoretical constructs undergirding student development theory, such as “cognitive complexity,” “cognitive structure” and “development” are largely western. Indigenous epistemologies embody different, oftentimes antithetical, ideas of what constitutes knowledge, cognition, competency, and development. Moreover, there is an absence of research examining the applicability of these theories specifically as they relate to Indigenous students. Consequently, given that student development theories are used to organize and operate higher education, it is not surprising that many Indigenous students find they do not resonate with these institutions.

Related to this, there is also a general failure among institutions of higher education to utilize a “cultural lens” when examining theory and research as it applies to Indigenous students (Guardia & Evans, 2008; Smith, 1999). Culture is integral to the lives of Indigenous peoples and, in turn, integral to understanding their experiences in higher education. Consequently, it is crucial that we use a more complex, culturally appropriate means of understanding the developmental processes of Indigenous students in higher education to promote empowerment, access, success, and achievement in culturally significant ways.

Indigenous Ways of Understanding Indigenous Students

There is a growing body of literature examining the experiences of Indigenous students in higher education that is culturally appropriate, culturally relevant, and largely conducted by Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2008; Bartolomé, 2008; Benham & Heck, 1998; Benham & Stein, 2003; HeavyRunner & DeCelles, 2002; Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003; Pavel, 1999, 2007; Kanaiaupuni & Malone, 2006; White Shield, 2004–2005). In the US, much of this work centers on the experiences of American Indian and Alaska Native students, with a growing body of research on Hawaiian students as well.

What this work offers to the field of education, in general, are different perspectives on the challenges facing Indigenous students based on a culturally based understanding of the issues. For example, Pavel (1999) links the poor representation of American Indians in higher education to the challenging K through 12 educational environments and social contexts many American Indians encounter. He argues that, “. . . college test scores and academic criteria, such as high school GPA, are not powerful predictors of college success . . .” (p. 242). Rather, educators and researchers should “broaden our scope to include appropriate attributes . . . better indicators of success would be school and environmental attributes that determine the quality of schooling American Indians receive throughout their K [through] 12 experience . . .” citing that many American Indian students live in poor, isolated rural settings and attend schools with little or no college preparation courses (ibid.).

White Shield (2004–2005) and Benham and Heck (1998) also help to redefine the challenges American Indian and Hawaiian students face in higher education by discussing the sociohistorical context, including the impact of federal policies on these populations. In particular, White Shield (ibid.) states that the past shapes the current reality for American Indian students. She terms this collective experience as “historical trauma,” a reference to the cumulative wounding across generations as well as during one’s lifespan. Bartolomé (2008) writes that understanding the sociohistorical context of students’ “lived experiences” is imperative to understanding the academic performance of Indigenous students (p. 127).

Also central to this understanding is culture and spirituality. White Shield (ibid.) and Ortiz and HeavyRunner (2003) discuss the concept of “cultural discontinuity” which asserts that Indigenous peoples experience reality in a completely different way from the dominant culture even as it is signified and expressed in higher education institutions. Battiste (2008) writes, “To effect reform, educators need to make a conscious decision to nurture Indigenous Knowledge, its dignity, identity, and integrity by

making a direct change in school philosophy, policy, pedagogy, and practice...” (p. 89). This change would help bridge the cultural disconnect and reinforce Indigenous Knowledge.

Part of this body of work is offering recommendations for enhancing educational experiences for Indigenous students based on these redefined perspectives. Collectively, the recommendations provide us with, as Bartolomé (2008) writes, “. . . a shift from a narrow and mechanistic view . . . to one that is broader in scope in the way we reconceptualize Indigenous education . . .” (p. 128). The following ideas are common themes and promising practices identified throughout the literature for creating meaningful educational experiences, which, for our purposes, we extend to the field of student affairs.

As referenced at the outset, an influential theme is integrating, reaffirming, and supporting the cultures of Indigenous students. HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) offer the “Family Education Model” (FEM) for higher education. In a closer examination of factors impacting higher education, the authors found that retention among American Indian students centered on replicating the extended family structure in the institution. Creating a mirror of the extended family in higher education provides American Indian students with a greater sense of belonging through engaging family members and community support networks in the educational process and, on a related note, providing structures embedded within the institution to support the student and her/his family.

Another theme evident in the literature is creating culturally relevant learning environments. In a study conducted by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators in 2006, culturally relevant learning environments, like cultural centers, contribute to American Indian students’ participation and persistence (Capriccioso, 2006).

Building institutional capacity is also important to supporting Indigenous students. On one level, increasing the number of Indigenous faculty and staff provides role modeling and mentoring for Indigenous students. On another, providing

professional opportunities to build knowledge on Indigenous peoples and students, in particular, is important to creating an environment for Indigenous student success.

The Transcultured Student: Using Indigenous Identity as Educational Empowerment in Hawaiian Student Services

Perhaps the most influential theoretical framework that affected the design of the Kōkua a Puni Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) is the “transculturation hypothesis” discussed by Huffman (2001). Huffman conducted a five-year longitudinal study of 69 Indigenous students who enrolled in a Mid-Western university to explore personal perspectives and academic experiences.

One key finding was the identification of “transcultured” students who used their ethnic identity as a “firm social-psychological anchor, where these students displayed a confidence and sense of security that emerged from their American Indian ‘ethnicity’” as well as possessing a “strong identification from traditional American Indian culture and did not aspire to assimilation” (p. 9).

In opposition to “traditional Indigenous students,” who were estranged from the university experience and had significant-to-extreme difficulty, “transcultured” students found the strength in their Indigenous identity, cultural values, and spirituality to persist towards degree completion. They acquired the necessary confidence, self-worth as an Indigenous person, and sense of purpose to succeed in the higher education experience. In general, experiences of self-discovery moved students into the realignment and participatory stages that taught them to relate to Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures simultaneously as the situations they encountered demanded. Consequently, Huffman provides a helpful framework to meaningfully integrate and encourage Indigenous identity in creating our Hawaiian student support program.

As will be discussed, SEP represents an attempt to retool the way a higher education student services program is designed, using Indigenous ways of understanding Indigenous students as a result of the gaps in conventional student development theory and the growing body of literature in Indigenous education.

Developing the “Indigenous Self” and “Student” in the Summer Enrichment Program (SEP)

My life was without direction, I didn't realize it at the time, but like most situations, where you're stuck somewhere and understanding it is impossible, I was oblivious to my potential. I yearned to be Hawaiian, to live the ways of our ancestors, yet to understand this seemed a dream at best. I was perplexed by the sheer nature of Western ways and blinded by its influences. My intended future was one wrought with complication, with no real destination. I knew I was ready for Mānoa, but I was overwhelmed by the unknown, the vastness of campus, the breadth of the student body, the many workers bees that make the place run. It was all so foreign me. (personal communication, SEP 2010).

Ortiz and HeavyRunner (2003) note several factors that are relevant to the design of the Kōkua a Puni SEP: affording students opportunities to connect early with people who can help them negotiate the larger, more complex institution; surrounding students with people who encourage them to succeed; recognizing that faculty play a critical role in their lives as students; and assisting with the development of strong bonds among peers and faculty (Taylor, 2001 as cited in Ortiz & HeavyRunner). SEP was created to provide culturally grounded academic enrichment to Hawaiian students entering UH Mānoa from system community colleges. The program's blueprint drew from three main design elements: academic preparedness, sociocultural integration, and community engagement, elements that KAP found essential for a successful Hawaiian enrichment program. Ortiz and HeavyRunner (ibid.) discuss the “system approach” which attends to learners' academic needs and the multiple responsibilities a learner may encounter during their educational journey, for instance tending to needs of family or community. Accordingly, the goal is to be synchronous. Aside from these design elements, an overarching “holistically Hawaiian” theme guided the overall program implementation to support the development of transcultured students. That is, Hawaiian knowledge was interwoven into the program design to further demonstrate the presence and relevance of Hawaiian culture and people in higher education. The academic coursework was

infused with Hawaiian subject matter and perspectives. The orientation activities introduced students to Hawaiian individuals and campus programs so they could begin to recognize that UH Mānoa can be a place of Hawaiian learning. The community activities provided a valuable exposure to Hawaiian community-based initiatives and a way for them to connect their classroom learning to the broader Hawai'i context.

In July 2008, Kōkua a Puni accepted its first SEP cohort; a total of nine students, eight of whom completed the program. Since 2008, Kōkua a Puni has accepted two cohorts, seven students during the summer of 2010 and ten students during the summer of 2011. Despite the small number of program participants, there are extremely valuable insights and lessons learned from SEP. Throughout the tailored four-week programs, several evaluations were conducted with students. These qualitative assessments allowed us to better understand student needs and its relationship to program design. Several assessment tools were used, including in-depth student-derived surveys, student reflections, and interviews. Part of our assessment design was to offer students a range of ways in which to express their own learning using, for example, multimedia or performance. Program staff also engaged in program reviews to collectively debrief on each SEP.

Academic Preparedness

All SEP cohorts were enrolled in a four-week academic program designed to develop critical thinking, writing, and reading skills at the baccalaureate level of instruction. The classes were taught by UH Mānoa instructors who specifically tailored their regular semester-long classes to fit the SEP time period and format. Classes varied and included topics such as Hawaiian Literature & Political Thought, Hawaiian Geography, Hana No'eau Mā'awe Hawai'i (Introduction to Hawaiian Fiber Arts), and Lā'au Lapa'au (traditional Hawaiian medicine).

Sociocultural Integration

Throughout the program, KAP arranged “Meet and Greet” sessions where Hawaiian scholars and community leaders shared their 'ike (knowledge; insight). All of the Hawaiian scholars invited had

doctorate degrees in fields like psychology, ethnic studies, education, political science, anthropology and geography, and most of them were current faculty within the UH System. The community leaders also provided valuable contributions to SEP, as they shared their experience with various community initiatives that strengthen and bring vitality to the lāhui.

Additionally, SEP students participated in enrichment workshops and on-campus orientations and tours that helped familiarize students with the campus and, in particular, different on-campus services and departments like the libraries, tutoring, and financial aid.

For the duration of the program, SEP students also had the opportunity to experience UH Mānoa residential life. We included this design element so the cohort was able to connect with one another, and to the program overall, during the four weeks. Students could study together, socialize and share experiences, and, generally, get to know one another well since they lived together. Students also benefited from this experience to see if residence life was right for them during the academic year.

Community Engagement

Huaka'i kaiāulu, or community excursions, were also integrated into the SEP curriculum to introduce students to Hawaiian community initiatives. They met members of the broader Hawaiian community, learned about community-based activities, and provided hands-on kōkua (help). The students visited Paepae o He'eia Loko I'a, Ke Kuleana o 'Ioleka'a, Kaho'olawe island, Papahana Kuaola, and Nā Kamakai He'enalu at Waikīkī. Students' experience at Paepae o He'eia Loko I'a and Ke Kuleana o 'Ioleka'a allowed them to interact with ongoing community enterprises that attempt to preserve ancestral fishponds and revive sustainable mechanisms of land stewardship on a family kuleana (small piece of property, as within an ahupua'a: Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 179). Their visit to Kaho'olawe helped them understand the importance of political activism in defending Hawaiian rights, including caring for and protecting sacred sites. Students learned about Nā Kamakai He'enalu, a nonprofit organization that empowers Hawaiian youth through ocean awareness

by teaching the traditional values of stewardship and reciprocity with the environment.

Overall, SEP attempted to further develop our students' academic and social preparedness for UH Mānoa through a culturally-based and culturally-validating learning environment.

Supporting Hawaiian Student Success

Considering success factors discussed by Ortiz and HeavyRunner and the literature on Indigenous ways of understanding Indigenous students, three broad themes emerged which resonated with SEP: supporting the culture of Hawaiian students, creating a sense of place through culturally-relevant learning environments, and role modeling.

Supporting the Culture of Hawaiian Students

One way in which we attempted to support the culture of Hawaiian students was through what HeavyRunner and DeCelles (2002) term the "Family Education Model" (FEM), which addresses the need for family-based education in higher education. In a closer examination of factors impacting higher education, the authors found that creating a mirror of the extended family in higher education provides American Indian students with a greater sense of belonging through engaging family members and community support networks in the educational process and, on a related note, providing structures embedded within the institution to support the student and her/his family.

In replicating the 'ohana (extended family) structure, SEP provided opportunities for students to develop strong support networks within their cohort and with SEP staff and kumu (teacher) through residence life and a highly intensive schedule. Although the intention of our design was to create a strong relationship between the students, it was difficult to foresee how strong the bonds between the students would become and the unique "family" dynamics that would occur within each cohort. When asked about the purpose of the program, one student answered, ". . . definitely to get us together and make us strong together so we can have this giant support group if ever we need anything, or if we feel lonely, or if we just wanna meet up for lunch, or talk kinda thing . . ."

(personal communication, SEP 2011). In another cohort, a student compared their relationship with their peers to an 'ohana.

Our first week seemed to drag on much longer than the others that followed. Time somehow slowed down just enough for us to let our guards down, and get used to each other. After that, things didn't know how to slow down, and we rocketed through the final weeks with unnerving ease. It all became a blur. Multiple memories and experiences, all crammed together in a tightly bound schedule Our adventures together forced us to become a family. We experienced the entire spectrum of human emotions during those short four weeks: Happiness, joy, exuberance, pain, loss, frustration. (personal communication, SEP 2010).

As reflected in HeavyRunner and Ortiz (2002), creating relationships between the students and key people on campus was another way in which SEP supported students. Connecting students to these programs early was important so that students would have the support of an extended family structure on campus before they transferred regardless of when they decided to transfer.

Creating a Sense of Place through Culturally-Relevant Learning Environments

The literature also supports the need for culturally-relevant learning environments (Capriccioso, 2006). The SEP students as a hui (group) participated in a host of campus tours to places like libraries and student services offices, and experienced on-campus living and dining. Students also took advantage of academic advising well in advance of the start of their first semester on campus. As such, "culturally-relevant" in this sense meant helping students to familiarize themselves with the campus like kama'āina, a term used for individuals who are intimately familiar with a particular place. For example, when asked how connecting them early to resources on campus changed their perceptions of Mānoa, students responded in this way:

- ❖ "Mānoa's not so scary after you get to know it."
- ❖ "It made me more comfortable with the university environment."

- ❖ "I do feel comfortable now here, you know, being introduced to a lot of other programs and some of the teachers and people here. So, in some ways, yeah, it has changed where I just feel more comfortable."
- ❖ "So like this program...unlocked the potential in people. Definitely. Like for me...it helped me realize that I wasn't alone" (personal communications, SEP 2011).

The point of connecting students early was an intentional process of making the campus and its resources familiar and less intimidating. Not surprisingly, this helped students "think differently" and realize "how personal the campus can get..." (personal communication, SEP 2011). Ultimately, this newly perceived familiar and personal campus helps to create a more culturally relevant learning environment—perhaps the foundation of a truly Hawaiian place of learning.

We also created culturally-relevant learning environments in more overt ways. The content of the program was culturally grounded and aimed to also help students recognize the possibilities of linking their academic journey with their culture. One of the benefits of working directly with instructors to develop coursework for SEP was the flexibility to adapt the curriculum to fit the needs of the students and to also explore ways to make the courses more culturally-focused. This flexibility allowed more room to undo the "culture discontinuity" described by White Shield (ibid.) and Ortiz and HeavyRunner (2002). In interviews, students discussed how SEP helped them see the possibilities of having their academic interests grounded in culture.

The purpose. . . . I would say, just to give us options of what is out there for Hawaiian students . . . because they incorporated so much about Hawaiian culture and all our scholars were for [sic] the Hawaiian community, it was pretty much just seeing the options of what could happen if you have that solid foundation of your culture, and being able to network out into anything that you are passionate about. (personal communication, SEP 2011).

Additionally, students were asked at the end of the program to rate the degree to which they felt the

classes were relevant to the major they wish to pursue, intellectually challenging, and interesting. In all instances program participants indicated the highest degree of satisfaction. Students recognized that culture (Hawaiian knowledge) and education (“academics”) were not separate and, in fact, SEP helped students recognize the connection culture had to their higher educational aspirations.

Another way in which the program fostered culturally-relevant learning environments was by connecting the university experience with the community. *Huaka’i kaiāulu* were designed to create linkages between classroom learning and community issues. In this way, the relevance of the subject matter and the value of education are imbued with meaning beyond the academy. Generally, students’ introduction to these initiatives helped provide them an understanding of how many people in the Hawaiian community are involved in preserving, perpetuating, and innovating aspects of our Hawaiian past that serve to inform and empower the future of our *lāhui*. Education becomes very relevant because it affects our contemporary lives, the communities in which we live, and the daily lives of our *‘ohana*. When asked whether or not their excursions enhanced their cultural experience, the students gave these responses:

- ❖ “. . . to go to these places and give back to the land and learn about these places was a great experience.”
- ❖ “It allowed me to see places I probably never would have gone to as well as give me a new sense of Hawaiian feeling in these areas.”
- ❖ “Saturday excursions taught me about the concept of *mālama ‘āina* [care for the land] more than I ever experienced before. I also learned how to work with other people as a part of a team. Most importantly, I tried things I might not have done otherwise so it taught me to venture out and experience new things” (personal communication, SEP 2008).

For a student in another cohort, an emphasis was placed on sharing their experience during *huaka’i kaiāulu* with their family. “The experience we had with going to help out at these *lo’is* [taro terraces] and places, it just kinda made me wanna really, not so

much just for the community service hours, but just to help out and learn and grow and gain information, and pass that on to my friends, my family, so that they can get involved and get the rest of the community involved” (personal communication, SEP 2011).

The students also found the correlation between the excursions and their academic success. For example, as one student describes, “. . . with *Kōkua a Puni*, being introduced to the *lo’i* and other places where we got to connect to the *‘āina*, that’s where the success comes from, you know? It comes with the individual. It’s like finding that purpose and that passion you have for whatever it is” (personal communication, SEP 2011). Students were able to successfully connect multiple culturally-based learning experiences (in multiple environments) with their goals in higher education.

Role modeling for Indigenous students

Developing strong bonds to the people in higher education has traditionally been viewed as a strategy that supports student success. Particularly important was role modeling by Hawaiian scholars, community leaders, and instructors.

SEP included opportunities for our students to actively engage with Hawaiian scholars and community leaders through guest lectures, *huaka’i* and the SEP courses. Students were asked to rate the degree to which the individual evening speakers would be beneficial to their college success. Students indicated the highest level of benefit. Program staff observed that each student understood and empathized with the oftentimes challenging, yet rewarding, educational journeys taken by some of the scholars. More importantly, students seemed to be influenced by the human side of the scholars and realized that “if they can do it so can I.” Lastly, participants seemed to be awed at the level of commitment, dedication, and sacrifice of community leaders as they negotiate their work in the community.

SEP instructors also played a critical role in the lives of students especially since they had the most regular interaction with students. In the classroom, the instructors created the educational environment for students, from seating to curriculum to pedagogy. All classes used Hawaiian subject matter and a variety

of instructional methods, such as labs and excursions, to help improve academic skills and enhance student learning. Given the nature of the classes, instructors served as role models through their scholarship and teaching as well as through the mentoring they provided to our students around assignments and classroom interaction.

Role modeling also occurred during guest lectures. Students had the opportunity to attend lectures by Hawaiian scholars, such as RaeDeen Keahiolalo-Karusuda, Ty Tengan, and Kalei Nu'uhiwa, who are recognized for their scholarship and strong relationship with the community. The small cohort size also allowed students the opportunity to meaningfully engage with them. For example, one student described, "not one of the scholars after they were done talking to us . . . didn't give us their contact information. And then like, all the while, if you ever need anything, anything at all, just wanna talk to someone, like if you're feeling low, someone to get you [to] work, keep you inspired and keep you going, just e-mail us. Call us at any time, we'll get back to you and we'll help you out and we'll be there for you" (personal communication, SEP 2011).

Students also appreciated the willingness of the guest speakers to mentor them in their academic journey. One student described the powerful impact mentors and role models can have, "It was just such a good feeling to know that people that you aspire to be like are there willing to help you get to their level. So that's just exciting for us." (personal communication, SEP 2011)

Thus, the overall positive self-reported evaluations by students and the observations by staff indicate how the short-term outcomes of a tailored enrichment program approach has the potential to influence participants' ability to become transcultured students. The most instructive short-term outcome from SEP is illustrated by one SEP instructor who wrote,

The students grew a lot personally, formed lasting and meaningful relationships, and in a way, showed a need for such a program. . . . To this day, whenever I see any of them around campus there are always warm hello's and lots of aloha (personal communication, SEP 2008).

Conclusion

Currently, the educational literature as it relates to Hawaiian students in higher education is sparse. It is clear there is a need for new areas of research and inquiry to both inform practice and to be informed by current practice. In fact, there are many effective educational models currently in place throughout the Hawaiian community that could lend themselves to informing inquiry and building a body of Hawaiian student development theory in higher education. As Bartolomé suggested at the outset of this piece, in creating educational interventions and extending this line of inquiry, we must also broaden our perspectives of design and efficacy to include sociohistorical and sociopolitical contextual factors. For KAP, these broader considerations contributed to the design, implementation, and assessment of the retention program employing a more culturally-based student support initiative. KAP challenges western epistemologies of student development, success, and achievement. In its first year, participant feedback illustrates that KAP was successful in achieving its programmatic goals of fostering leadership, self-actualization and identity exploration among students engaged in SEP. The SEP program may serve as a preliminary testing ground for higher education professionals who deem it necessary to reframe student success models and, furthermore, to develop lasting and relevant educational structures that resonate deeply with the daily lives, struggles, intellectual curiosity, and dreams of our students.

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