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Ignite the Night to Keep Talk Story: Hānai Pedagogy as an Act of Liberation

Robin Brandehoff[1]
University of Colorado Denver, USA

Abstract: Acting as a roadmap for doctoral students, scholars, and pedagogues, this narrative explores my journey through education and how I have used the confines of the academy to pursue research back home in Hawai'i using Kanaka 'Ōiwi methodologies (Oliveira & Wright, 2016) to interview 10 Kanaka community members who entered into teaching as part of a homegrown teacher program called Ka Lama in the most densely Hawaiian populated area of Hawai'i to better serve their community and as an act of social justice. Additional data includes 12 semi-structured interviews with school administrators and Ka Lama-associated personnel and over 150 hours of classroom and community observations. As a result of this research, the Hānai Pedagogy framework (Brandehoff, 2023a) emerged, which is grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and encompasses the values of Hands-on activities, Aloha, Navigation, Authenticity, and Interrelations, which are discussed at length in the findings. This study is limited to the specific area and participants of the setting; however, Hānai Pedagogy is now deeply woven throughout the curricula and doctoral programs designed and taught by the researcher to move toward action and liberation.

Keywords: Hānai pedagogy, Native Hawaiian, Kanaka, mentoring, grow your own, homegrown teachers

The code was "Mālama Pono," meaning to take care or to protect. Kumu, our teacher, had a game for us where we each had a responsibility to shield the 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) writing and pictures around the classroom with their English counterparts any time the principal or someone in authority did a walk-through. My station was the standing flipchart paper near the back door. The back half of the chart was filled with 'ōlelo Hawai'i songs and sayings—layers of vowels that flowed softly as streams of melodies, accented with symbols like playful children dancing beneath banyan trees in an afternoon downpour. We each took our role very seriously, walking quietly back to our seats, trying to muffle our giggles behind pursed lips as we each respectfully greeted the principal, who eyed each of us in turn. Kumu would carry on like we weren't even playing the game. She was a great actress, but so kolohe (mischievous)! When Mr. T would leave, she'd turn around, wink, and say: "maika'i!" (good!) and we knew we won another round.

[1] Corresponding author; Assistant Professor in Education Foundations in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. Please direct all correspondence to the University of Colorado Denver – 1380 Lawrence Street, Denver, CO. 80204, USA. E-mail; Robin.Brandehoff@ucdenver.edu

How Does This Work Create Spaces That Defy Colonial Academic Standards?

In 1896, Hawai'i had over 40,000 native speakers when the Law of the Republic of Hawai'i 1896 (Act 57) was passed, forbidding the teaching and use of ʻōlelo Hawai'i in schools (House of Representatives, 2022). By 1978, only 2,000 native speakers existed in the state. In 1986, Act 57 was overturned. However, after 90 years of oppression, Kanaka educators were still hesitant to believe that they were allowed to share the language in schools freely, and many administrators, like mine, still forbade it. And yet, rebel teachers continued to teach the language and culture because they were the (un)designated torch bearers charged with keeping the flames of ancestral language ignited. They continued to carefully tattoo these songs on paper, preserved in laminate, so that we may know our history and sing today.

The experience of social, linguistic, and academic oppression are common themes reflected in the broader narratives of the Global South diaspora. Colonization and displacement have impacted colonial academic structures in these spaces by eradicating cultural and ancestral knowledge and replacing it with Eurocentric texts and standardized assessments that do not reflect the lived experiences or histories of the historically marginalized and displaced. Kumu sought to disrupt this narrative by enacting a fugitive space (Givens, 2021; Stovall, 2024), whereby she taught us our history and how to communicate with our ancestors through our mother language and content. In her likeness and as a strategy of self-sovereignty to resist colonial structures of linguistic oppression, this paper will use ʻōlelo Hawai'i terms followed by the English definition only once.

Honoring Indigenous Ways of Knowing

As a scholar and a human, I identify as mixed-plate. I grew up at the loving intersection of Hawai'i and East Los Angeles and was the first in my family to graduate from high school. My path is heavily seasoned with metaphors and anecdotes. My kūpuna (elders) in both worlds brought me up through mentor stories of their own journeys, and I learned through their experiences as well as my own follies. Throughout this paper, like them, I draw from what Kovach (2019) refers to as conversational methodology or what Kanaka ʻŌiwi methodologists refer to as *talk story* to share my own story "as a means to assist others" (p. 124). My experiences both as a doctoral student and as junior faculty have been unique, and I use these experiences to advise and guide my students today as they navigate their own paths. Using stories as data or as an opportunity to teach others dates back to our earliest forms of education and is the root of Indigenous ways of knowing (Parter & Wilson, 2021). Stories give us an opportunity to connect with others through the relations we cultivate through research and the respect that comes with honoring our participants and those who imparted their knowledge to us (Wilson, 2008). In addition, stories remind us that these relationships are reciprocal. When we share our stories, we also share the wisdom and advice given to us and thereby honor the caretakers and mentors of the knowledge that guided us. Reciprocating and passing that knowledge on allows the storyteller to show gratitude (an important act in many Indigenous cultures) for the knowledge they gained from others by teaching those who come after (Swidrovich, 2021).

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The Ph.D. Journey: A Highly Caffeinated Choose Your Own Adventure Model

The thread of my epistemology unfurled and sparked in a rebel classroom in the 1980s in Maui, Hawai'i. Though illegal at the time, Kumu used flip chart paper to teach about Hawaiian traditions, language, and how to have aloha (love) for the ʻāina (land). Similarly, my interest in critical mentorship (Brandehoff, 2023b) stems back from growing up in gang-impacted areas around East L.A. and the mentoring advice I received from neighbors and local elders growing up (Brandehoff, 2020). These "unconventional" educators and ways of learning shaped my pedagogy as a professor and doctoral advisor to a growing body of students of the Global Majority. These experiences have shifted my stance on education and have prompted me to examine learning with a critical race lens (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Dixson, 2021)—to ask questions while looking to the past and Indigenous ways of knowing, but also dreaming about opportunities for growth and change for new groups of students entering into our halls tomorrow.

As an alumna of my university, where I later became faculty, I wanted to honor the mentorship that I received from a select few professors, but I also set out to improve the experiences that doctoral students of the Global Majority had in our program. As a doctoral student, I only had three full-time faculty scheduled to teach my courses, while the rest were adjuncts. I was frustrated with the organization of the program because many of the adjuncts would cancel half of the classes or spend the majority of our sessions trying to sell us Arbonne makeup products (I wish I had made this up). My statistics adjunct was fantastic, and she was later hired on as full-time faculty, but even strong adjuncts are not allowed to serve on our dissertation committees; and as a first-generation high school graduate, I always approach every assignment with the end in mind. If the majority of my professors are adjuncts, who can I turn to for my committee? What if the three professors I have in my program do not have the capacity to serve on my committee? This advising barrier was a setback for many of my colleagues and I decided that if I was paying for this degree, I was going to choose my own adventure and make it mine.

"Just Make It Tight"

At the end of my first year, I began cold-emailing professors whose biographies I found on the school website, asking if I could meet them for coffee to learn more about their work. This gave me a chance to interface with professors that I would never have met otherwise because they either didn't teach doctoral students or didn't teach subjects in my field but used methodologies that I was curious about. As a student who was on campus regularly, these connections with faculty helped me feel a sense of belonging in the department that my peers never felt. I also learned that I don't have a taste for kombucha.

Through these meet-and-greets, I connected with a Latiné first-generation college graduate who was an associate professor in the department with a theatre of the oppressed background and expertise in ethnography methodology—a research method I was hoping to learn more about. I shared with him my defeat in tracking down an ethnography course on campus (Anthropology held one, but it was a theoretical class with no fieldwork). I remember him setting his lips and nodding his head toward his keyboard in time to a beat that I couldn't hear. After a very long pause of contemplation, he said, "Okay. Just make it tight." Somehow, in that conversation, I convinced him to create and hold an ethnography class (after we recruited enough students to fill a daytime class), and it remains one of the best classes I have ever taken.

In addition to being a full-time student and TA'ing or teaching classes each semester, I was also a graduate research assistant, which introduced me to Grow Your Own (GYO) teacher

programming and networking opportunities that catapulted my academic and professional trajectories in unimaginable ways. My employer became my new advisor, and much like the individual mentioned above, she was a first-generation college graduate Latina associate professor, and she also supported me in an independent study course to explore special topics around my dissertation interests. Next up, I asked my former professor (also the only Black professor we had in the School of Education, not counting our Associate Dean who did not teach), who is an individual intrinsically tied to the local community of Denver, to support me in another independent study course examining the impact of local gentrification on a formal mentoring program in my area. Under his guidance, I learned how to write a formal proposal to submit to an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for my study, got it approved, and conducted it. This experience paved the way for my dissertation, which had a very difficult IRB because of the vulnerable populations I was interviewing, and gave me invaluable experience for my future work and research.

I took two courses outside of the university and solicited the first professor I ever had (who later served on my committee and is now a dear colleague and mentor) to support me in one last independent study, which was a class to focus on my literature review and prepare for the comprehensive exam. I personally believe that there were so many gaps in the Ph.D. program (at that time) that had I not sought out the professors that I did and solicited the individual mentorship and specific coursework that I received, I would not have been as successful as I was or finished as quickly as I did. I am eternally grateful for the professors who took me under their wing and ping-ponged me back and forth for independent studies, who stepped in on my dissertation committee in the 11th hour, and who talked me down off of ledges when everything seemed impossible. These *Prominents*, a sublime fusion of professors and mentors, were the real ones. We know the academy is not built for first-generation students of the Global Majority, especially when it is cobbled together with limited resources and advising guidelines that prohibit mentorships from advancing students toward their degrees. But I wasn't brought up in the academy. I was brought up in rebel classrooms, guided by *Prominents*, finding fuel to ignite the night and "make it tight." And it didn't stop there.

Critical Mentoring

For at-promise students of the Global Majority, formal mentoring programs are either not always readily available due to their location (Brandehoff, 2023b), or they're not appealing because these programs are structured much like school and lack a "coolness" factor. Speaking for myself, the Boys and Girls Club was around the corner from my house, but I never stepped foot in the building. The staff going in and out always changed and weren't from our neighborhood. Instead, I cultivated my own mentoring relationships with adults on my block (Brandehoff, 2020). Ethnically, we were different, but culturally, they saw a kinship in me and identified with the ways in which I grew up in the projects and hustled to get food for my family or how I used language and movement to animate my narratives when I talked to them. These elders saw my disjointed family unit and understood that I worked hard in school, but also understood why I later dropped out to work and take care of my younger brother (much like some of them did when they were younger). They looked out for my family as the newcomers to the neighborhood and invited me into their homes to teach me about art, cooking, wrapping gifts, dancing, and storytelling. Our entwined culture was rooted in the block, and we looked out for one another like extended family.

Longmire-Avital (2020) discusses critical mentoring as being "custom fitted to the student" (p. 1), and this is exactly what our block culture was and how I continue to mentor today. Critical mentoring is a process that is tailored to the individual student while taking into account race,

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gender, sexuality, and other intersections of identity (Weiston-Serdan, 2017) to guide and prepare mentees to enter into a personal or professional space which has been largely inequitable and systemically racist so that they may later reciprocate the mentoring process and continue to pay it forward (Brandehoff, 2023b; Lee & Budwig, 2024; Liou et al., 2016; Morales et al., 2022). My early critical mentors were rebel teachers, tattoo artists, and gang members who saw a hardened kid whose mixed-race identity and accent got her into scraps but whose academic potential was something that could inspire other kids to choose a different path than their parents had chosen before (Brandehoff, 2020). These critical mentors not only shared with me their wisdom but also a sense of familial love and kinship that I did not receive at home. In their homes, I was an adopted daughter or niece, and I was guided by their love to learn a craft or trade that was passed down through their family as a sign of respect and familial inclusion. In Hawai'i, we call this sort of relationship "hānai," which means "adopted kin."

Make it Hānai

Hānai Pedagogy (Brandehoff, 2023a) is a pedagogical framework developed from my work with the Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture (INPEACE) and their Ka Lama teacher preparation program. It is purposefully hopeful and collaborative and is rooted in critical mentoring (Gist et al., 2021). As such, this pedagogy acts as a form of decolonial resistance to Eurocentric academic structures in the United States and is drawn from culturally sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2014; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017) and similar social and educational worldviews of decolonizing education and research (Meyer & Kotler, 2008; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008), but it is specifically situated within the space of Wai'anae, Hawai'i, and the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community of teachers, mentors, and students within the frame of the study. Their experiences and knowledge are rooted in their community and specific lived histories. Yet, they are also akin to the current experiences and forms of learning of students of the Global Majority diaspora who have also held on to their historical and educational capital through painful acts of colonialism and cultural violence to pass on their ancestral knowledge to future generations. As a tool of disruption, Hānai Pedagogy may inspire similar frameworks whose commitment centers on the Global Majority. This framework recognizes and honors this history by amplifying silenced experiences and celebrating the familial connections that can be forged within educational and community spaces as a call to action to serve and support each other for the continued growth of the next generation.

Leveraging Resources to Pursue My Own Research Path

As an early clinical faculty, I understood that research was not an expectation of my role for my position, but it was something that I was deeply invested in and wanted to pursue. My colleagues were supportive of my drive to conduct research, but understandably, my contractual course load needed to come first. As an early scholar, I had been developing work around my dissertation, but from that study, new inquiries around critical mentoring and pedagogy emerged, which made me examine my own epistemologies and origin story. I used this as fuel to apply for an internal university research grant which was matched by my school to begin my study. Additionally, I also pursued a fellowship with ThinqStudio, a collective think tank of faculty, staff, and students from across the university campus whose aim was to think about critical pedagogy in nuanced ways. As a fellow, I was given opportunities to play with my study proposal, but most importantly, the fellowship earned me a course buyout which bought me time to conduct my data

collection in O'ahu. When I returned, I hosted a workshop called "Make Lei, Talk Story," which helped me to work through my initial pedagogical framework and findings with my Thinq colleagues.

By leveraging available funding resources, I was able to not only pursue an area of research that I was deeply invested in, but I was able to do so as an act of liberatory education to change the dominant narrative. I wanted to spotlight the Indigenous work and ancestral knowledge being shared with youth, and I wanted to honor the work and community outreach of INPEACE, who graciously shared their knowledge with me both through this study and when I was introduced to them early in my doctoral student journey.

Methods

Remembering my own rebel classrooms growing up, I wanted to uncover "How Kanaka ʻŌiwi educators haku (braid) Hawaiian culture, traditions, and language into their pedagogy and how INPEACE supports their teachers in their academic and professional journeys?" A theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory in Education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Radical Love (hooks, 1999) provided the foundation for the study. These frameworks situated research as a decolonial tool to interrogate how race and racism impact Kanaka individuals and how to disrupt oppressive education standards for AAPI students in the Wai'anae area. Because the Kanaka struggle is ongoing and inherently culturally oppressive, this study called for Radical Love as a revolutionary act to counter the impacts of colonial oppression and historical trauma (Belle, 2024).

For this qualitative study, I created an observation and semi-structured interview protocol guided by Kanaka methodologies and I applied Goodyear-Ka'ōpua's Methodological Ropes for Research and Resurgence: "Lāhui (collective identity and self-definition), ea (sovereignty and leadership), kuleana (positionality and obligations), and pono (harmonious relationships, justice, and healing)" (2016, p. 2) to build relationships, collaborate with participants, and use our collective knowledge to conduct research collaboratively. Qualitative data from interviews and field notes following classroom observations were transcribed verbatim by me and analyzed for themes using constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in Atlas.ti software. What emerged established the core principles of the Hānai Pedagogy framework (Brandehoff, 2023a).

Setting

Situated on the west coast of O'ahu in Nānākuli and Wai'anae is a beautiful expanse of beach, land, and mountains with the largest population of Kanaka ʻŌiwi and AAPI families today. Also in this area is INPEACE, a community non-profit with which I have had the privilege to collaborate since 2017 when I was a doctoral student. Their larger organization provides pathways for community members to explore the teaching profession through programs such as Keiki Steps, which is an early childhood education program where family members attend programs with their children. This program invites caregivers to consider additional opportunities for academic and professional learning through paraprofessional programs or community partnerships that provide cultural, STEM, financial literacy support, and so much more. One specific branch of INPEACE that this study focuses on is their homegrown teacher preparation program called Ka Lama, which partners with the major island universities and community colleges for degrees and licensures; however, Ka Lama also provides the pivotal critical mentorship needed for non-traditional Kanaka students within their community (many facing financial hardships which INPEACE also provides support) to succeed.

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Experience Guides

During the course of this study, I had the honor of learning with 22 experienced guides—individuals who were more than "participants." Following the ethical guidelines of both my Internal Review Board (interview protocols outlining the study, its implications, its potential for harm, and its purpose) and honoring Indigenous practices of asking permission, honoring experiences, and engaged listening, I strove to ensure that participants were ethically cared for and respected. These guides graciously shared their experiences and knowledge with me as we wondered through my research questions and talked story about our own cultural and educational upbringing together. Six of these individuals were administrators (one elementary, three middle school, one K-12, and one community college), six were INPEACE personnel, including the Chief Executive and Program Officers, and 10 guides were educators at various stages of their journey from Ka Lama students and education assistants to classroom teachers. Over the course of two years, I conducted 150 classroom and community observation hours and over 38 hours of interviews with these guides. I created strong relationships with several of the guides, who continued to invite me back into their classrooms and schools each time I visited the island; however, some teachers left their schools during the study, and two teachers chose not to take part in future interviews.

Analysis and Trustworthiness: *Lahui, Ea, Kuleana, Pono*

I initially used Otter.ai to transcribe these recorded interviews but quickly found that the program does not respond well to Hawaiian dialects and accents, so when I was not on the island collecting data, I was transcribing these interviews verbatim. I imported the transcripts into Atlas.ti and began coding for overarching themes that showed up across interviews and field notes after my first inquiry visit. To show *kuleana* and make it *pono* (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2016), I would bring these themes back to my guides in conversations on my future research trips to check for trustworthiness in my findings. I wanted to ensure *lahui* (2016), a collective definition of the themes I was seeing and experiencing in classrooms, and I wanted to honor the educators with *ea* (2016) as they were the ones who guided my learning and ways of knowing as we journeyed through this exploration of pedagogy together. As a result of their collective interviews and the classroom and community observations I conducted over two years, Hānai Pedagogy (Brandehoff, 2023a) emerged.

Findings

Walking into each classroom was like walking into an aunty or uncle's house. Sometimes, slippers and sneakers would be left outside the main classroom door in neat rows. Other times, there would be a cacophony of laughter and Pidgin from inside with echoes of "Kumu? Is that 'Anakē Robin?" greeting me as I walk in. In the elementary classrooms, I would be welcomed into circle time with questions and given small gifts at break time as they talked story about their teacher and their classroom in 'ōlelo, which I struggled to keep up with. Many of the middle school male students would initially side-eye me and test my solidarity by cussing or sharing lewd jokes with each other in my proximity to see if I would rat them out to their kumu (but that wasn't why I was there, and having taught middle and high school, I knew what they were up to). When they realized I wouldn't snitch, I immediately passed their test, and they would bring their papers over to me or invite me into their skits as they practiced. Some of the female students were more direct and asked

me questions right away about my job and why I was there. The high schoolers were always polite and invited me into conversations, to sit next to them, or even join them for walks on campus.

Hānai Pedagogy: A Framework to Promote Self-Sovereignty

As alluded to earlier, Hānai Pedagogy (Brandehoff, 2023a) is drawn from the familial connection of adopted kin, which is the general sense of belonging one feels when stepping into the classroom of a Ka Lama mentored educator. It is being addressed as "'Anakē" or "Aunty" by students, and seeing Kindergarteners freely lounge in their classroom as they actively work and engage with each other, clearly as comfortable in their classroom space as they would be at home. Or seeing teachers open their rooms at lunch so teachers, paras, and students from across campus can come in to eat together like a family. Hānai is also an acronym specifically representing the core values of the pedagogical framework, which include: (1) Hands-on activities, (2) Aloha, (3) Navigation, (4) Authenticity, and (5) Interrelations. What follows are findings spanning all experience guide groups, predominantly from classroom observations and post-interview field notes recorded by myself as the researcher, which best illustrate each core value in further detail. Though the findings are currently specific to the Kanaka community, these findings and pedagogy can inspire broader applicability to communities of the Global Majority.

Hands-On Activities

Every single school site and all 22 experience guides provided evidence of hands-on activities that were central to the Ka Lama-inspired curriculum and heartbeat of the schools. At one middle school in particular, murals adorn the outer walls of the school, which depict ongoing STEM activities where students are learning to garden and care for the ʻāina using traditional Kanaka methods while also employing local mythology that is specific to the area of Wai'anae. Mr. Takeshi, the principal, gave me a detailed overview of the murals and the STEM activities that lead up to the murals, which act as their culmination:

> …the idea is ʻāina-based learning, but really making sure that they (the students) understand how our cultural practices are directly connected to modern science, so that they would see the connection between culture and themselves as scholars… So, we try to make it where it's one and the same, that their heritage, so to speak, is connected in scholarly work...and we make those connections as far as to our sense of place…We're doing a mural actually right now…As a school we adopted a portion of Keawa'ula (beach). And from there we're actually doing a mural on the history of Keawa'ula, and in a sense, trying to connect it to modern day science. We've already done a mural like that already around the Ahupua'a (a subdivision of land). And that's (how) our kids are seeing that connection, (the) connection to the idea of themselves as scientists but also their responsibility as stewards of our land or stewards of the ʻāina. And so, our kids in seventh grade, and this is really like *years* of development. Our students in seventh grade. They study the impact of native plants on our ecosystem, which is, I guess, the maybe more Western science terminology. And so, they study things as far as growing the plants, but also how do they protect the native plants? Let's say from whether it's invasive species, bugs, and things like that. They look at pH as far as soil

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> and what needs to be in the land. And then from there, when we are in seventh grade, as they grow these native plants, in eighth grade, they take these plants, and they actually go and reforest portions of Keawa'ula and so those are the things that our kids do. And they take pride in the fact that they can paint a mural to reflect who we are, as far as Wai'anae, and then also they can see their impact that they're actually reforesting a portion of the land.

What makes these murals more impactful is that the handprint of every single student, teacher, and staff member is present within the body of the mural, and a new mural is added each year or so. Other examples of hands-on activities would be the Community-Based Instruction (CBI) pathway programming that the high school Special Education teacher Theodore runs. In a row of classrooms and portables, this teacher has established a series of career spaces for his students to earn experience and community skills for future employment. In one space, they have created a thrift store where items can also be purchased at a low cost. Another space is a café where students learn how to make and serve coffee, work the cash register, and interact with customers. This space is frequented by students but is especially appreciated by the faculty and staff. Other areas of work include delivery, where students can practice their community and social skills while also learning the campus, interacting with new teachers, and interfacing with students they otherwise might never meet.

These hands-on activities are central to not only Ka Lama teachers and Hānai Pedagogy but to Kanaka ʻŌiwi education and ways of knowing. As it was explained to me by a group of kūpuna I met at the local library, historically, when families lived and worked together in the community, children were raised by the village kūpuna while the parents and older siblings worked the ʻāina, hunted, gathered, cooked, made cloth, and so on. From birth to age seven, these children had the opportunity to explore and learn and gravitate toward the area of learning and work that interested them the most. When they came of age, they would apprentice with the experts in that field and hone their skills in that trade, thereby giving back to their community and teaching the next generation when it was their turn.

The STEM educator of INPEACE carries on this tradition today by using his education and role to hold regular professional development workshops for Ka Lama educators and the community. In these spaces, he crafts lessons for K12 educators to take back to their classrooms, which are purposefully hands-on in nature and tie directly to Kanaka history, culture, language, and mythology. These larger projects have been funded to showcase in community spaces around the Hawaiian Islands to educate local citizens and tourists on Kanaka methods of cloth (kapa) making and lunar cycles. Each project has hands-on components where adults and children alike can process each stage of the project in a malleable form, learn both its history and its Kanaka mythological origin story, and by the end of the lesson, apply its product to a similar artifact they might be more familiar with today.

Aloha

The word Aloha means "love" and it is a word that adorns school posters, murals, stickers, storefronts, and merchandise across Hawai'i. It is a cultural value that is embedded in Kanaka lifestyles and sayings: *Live Aloha, Aloha ʻĀina, the spirit of Aloha*, and so on. This Aloha translates across familial relationships in the sense that neighbors and family friends are often referred to as "Aunty," "Uncle," or "Cousin," as a sign of respect and emotional proximity to the family or length

of time that the family has known each other. However, this Aloha and familial bond can also transcend to teaching.

Sitting in my first observation of Theodore's class, I not only got to see students open up and share personal aspects of love and grief, but I also got to witness how Theodore works with a student who has a difficult time sitting for extended periods, which can lead to aggressive outbursts. Theodore didn't meet their level of anxiety or anger but instead countered it with love. He gave this student the space and time to calm himself outside and use the strategies they have been working on. When the student was ready, he came back into the classroom doorway and Theodore smiled and asked, "You ready come back home?" and his student smiled back and took his seat. This is Aloha.

Additionally, I also had the privilege to experience what daily lunchtime is like in Theodore's classroom during that first observation. His classroom morphed into a family room before my eyes. His own special education students chose to come back and eat in his room; staff came in from other buildings to sit with each other in a corner and charge their phones while they caught up on each other's day; and his football players came in with their friends and girlfriends to hang out, get their lunches from his large fridge, warm up their leftovers in his microwave, and talk story until the bell. Many of these football players hung out and checked in with the special education students during lunch. What especially caught my eye and ear during this observation was the number of hugs and "Love you" greetings that Theodore received and gifted to these students as they entered and left his classroom. Every single student who came in walked over and gave him a hug and told him, "I love you" or "Aloha." And every single student hugged him and told him that they loved him before they left as well. These elements of Aloha were so distinguished because prior to this, Theodore had referred to his students as his "kids" or his "babies" and now I could see why. In his interview, he talked about how his cultural identity and his teacher identity were intertwined:

> I think for me it's being that parent figure in the school system. A lot of our kids come from homes that are broken. A lot of our kids come from homes that maybe have a single parent and the parent works all the time. I love to be that "parent" in the school because, for example, at my alma mater, I am a parent to many children. I have the kids love and they give respect because I do the same for them. And an example that I can share is I had a kid with me from when he was in the ninth grade. And he's now attending Missouri Valley College. We just was on the phone this morning. So, he was checking in. But I got to know him through another student that has been close with me and so I became the parent to this child on campus. Anything he needed, anything he wanted, I would just be 'K, here we go, let's go. Let's do this.' So, I think for me, and my own cultural identity, would be placing ourselves (as teachers) as parents to children.

There is an ever-present element of Hānai relationships between how he views his students and his stance as an educator, which runs deeper than merely caring for his students—he truly loves them. At lunch, I was privileged to see how this love was reciprocated. Aloha was present not only in Theodore's classroom but in every Ka Lama educator's classroom that I observed and in every interview I held. In a community as small as Nānākuli-Wai'anae, everyone knows each other, so it was not uncommon to have interviews interrupted by children who were excited to see their kumus or parents who wanted to connect with their child's teacher. Each individual met the kumu with a hug or a kiss on the cheek and a genuine greeting with plans to catch up later. Kumus and students hugged each other with both arms wrapped around each other, rather than the "safe" one-armed

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side hug we are often taught is tolerable in mainland teacher preparation programs. This Aloha is meaningful and impactful. When we consider the children who stare down adversity yet still come to school, we realize they come to school because it is a stable and safe environment for them. When we add Aloha to this space and provide opportunities for these children to hear that they are loved and that they are referred to as their kumu's "kid," there is a bond that is created that is both malleable and permanent. It is why these Ka Lama teachers have strong records in classroom attendance, strong rapport with their students' families, and a stronger sense of the homelives of their kids—because they have Aloha for their students and use that element of their pedagogy to connect with their students that continually invites them to come back "home."

Navigation

Navigation is both a cultural and historical value of Kanaka ʻŌiwi populations as kūpuna were wayfarers, traveling vast oceans and overcoming tumult in exploration and weaving this knowledge into the tapestry of dance, cloth, stories, and art. In Hānai Pedagogy, navigation remains a central tenet to deconstructing barriers to learning that both kumus and students come up against in their journey. In the 30 years that INPEACE has been serving the Nānākuli-Waiʻanae coast, they have been navigating the barriers that Kanaka members face when going back to school to seek an education—and overcoming those barriers together. For all of the educator guides, INPEACE provided financial support to help them through their college classes and/or teacher licensure. In other instances, INPEACE provides ongoing workshops and professional development opportunities at no cost, which give these educators additional opportunities to apply for grants for their schooling or apply the professional development hours to their own learning and classroom toolkits. For administrators, INPEACE is navigating the homegrown teacher shortage crisis by mentoring and financially supporting locally grown teachers who are well-versed in the community and its needs, which then best serves the schools and its leadership. For the local community college, the Ka Lama teacher academy brings in additional enrollment, and the cycle continues.

At the administrator level, two educator guides spoke very highly of their principal and how they would not be college graduates or classroom teachers today if she had not approached them five years ago and planted the seed: "What do you think about going back to school? What if it was here?"

It was Ms. Mizuki who spent four years with a previous INPEACE staff member and multiple other stakeholders to consider the possibilities of an Education Assistant (EA) pilot program at her school site. This pilot program would give current part-time paraprofessionals an opportunity to earn their Associate's degree and additional certification to become an EA. They took it a step further to have enrolled students also earn their Bachelor's degree and a Special Education (SpEd) teaching credential or dual certification in SpEd and General Education by the time they graduated. Recognizing that her staff bore the mantel of both caregivers and breadwinners to support their families, Ms. Mizuki dedicated a classroom on campus as their learning space so students could stay in Nānākuli-Waiʻanae to get their education rather than sit in traffic for three hours to get to the university campus in town. This meant bringing professors to her campus, but it also meant that the students' children had a safe place to be after school while the students were in class, and everyone could be home by a decent hour to cook and spend time with their families. As a result of this literal familial space, "Team Hui," a student cohort of the pilot program, was formed. Megan shared just how crucial this navigation piece was for her success:

> My peers? So, the 12 of us was strong, and we call ourself 'Team Hui.' Like family, like 'ohana, but our team hui, we *MET*! So, we had classes Monday,

> Tuesday, and Thursdays, but we also met on Fridays, and we met in P1 (a portable classroom on the elementary campus). We met at Starbucks. We met at Ings (a local spot). We met at Nānākuli High School in one of their classrooms. We made sure that we all stayed on track. We all graduated together…We became a hui. 'Till this day, we still all good friends. One became a counselor, or one is on the path to become a counselor. One is becoming a nurse LPN. So, she did all the way to her Associates, and then went to LPN. And one is doing preschool. So, there's like nine or 10 of us that's gone through this special education program, but out of nine, only three of us is dual certified, because we did the extra classes.

Out of the 60+ interested participants who came to the first meetings of the pilot program, nine graduated with the Special Education credential, including Megan, who took the extra classes, allowing her to move into the general education classroom if she chooses because she is dual certified. Without Team Hui, a group that was closely mentored by Ms. Mizuki and personnel of INPEACE, as well as Ka Lama students further ahead in their programming who were not part of the pilot, Megan and Daniel admit that they would not have been as successful in their studies or as motivated to complete their program. Having this camaraderie of like-minded individuals with similar cultural and social backgrounds is an important navigational tool for educators and programs to build into their pedagogy, as learning cannot occur in a silo.

Ms. Mizuki also pushed for funding for these students, which meant that nearly their entire tuition was paid for by INPEACE and the university they earned their degree from, with opportunities to apply for scholarships and grants for their books and a local stakeholder provided laptops for all students or reimbursed them for computers up to a specified amount. Because this was a pilot, there were some "bumps in the road," as she put it, with tuition payments and due dates, particularly for Daniel, but in the end, Ms. Mizuki and INPEACE mentor personnel guided students through these barriers and kept them motivated to continue on to the next step.

After graduation, Ms. Mizuki continued to navigate the waters and barriers for these Ka Lama educators by ensuring their placement at her school site and continuing their mentorship as they continue to grow as teachers and lifelong learners. Now that they have graduated, these two guides have set their sights even higher. Daniel is planning on taking the Praxis to teach in a general education classroom in the future, and Megan has plans to enroll in a Master's program for counseling. When I first met these two, they spoke at length about how they did not feel ready to go to college until Ms. Mizuki continually encouraged them to consider the pilot program. Megan divulged with a grin:

> I never, back then, I never thought about this. Yeah. Getting my Associates or getting my Bachelor's. Yeah. Because I was so Kalohe. And I wear long sleeves because I have tattoos all over. But the kids is like, Oh, Ms. Megan, you're so fun! I'm like, 'Wait. Fun in a good way or fun in a bad way?' (laughs). So, when I first came into the classroom, Ms. K told them you guys are gonna' get a new student teacher! And they're like, 'Really? Who is it? Who is it? And who isn't it?' But they didn't know it was me because I've known them since kindergarten. Since forever. I know their parents personally. So, I wave at everyone when I first came in, I was there already, right? And they came in and I was like, 'Good morning, everyone.' And then Ms. K was like, 'So, remember I was telling you guys about the new teacher…?' They're like, 'No, way Ms. Megan, you're gonna' be a

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> teacher?!' In my head, I'm like, 'Yeah, I wasn't gonna' be a teacher…but yeah!' But I love it. I love it.

A year ago, both Daniel and Megan were anxious about their graduation approaching and whether they would even have a classroom placement (because that is not guaranteed in their district) for the following year. In a one-year follow-up interview, they are thriving as classroom teachers and making plans for the next step of their educational journey with a goal to remain at their school site under Ms. Mizuki's leadership and swapping stories about their students and class competitions that they have created between their rooms.

Authenticity

The goal of this study was to explore how Kanaka teachers use Hawaiian culture, language, and traditions in their classrooms in spite of state or federal standards and mandates for teaching. When I embarked on this wondering with Rhianna, a Ka Lama student, and EA, she responded with a powerful critical analysis of the ongoing historical oppressions impacting Hawai'i and the educational system:

> I believe that I'm a Hawaiian and although we live in the U.S., I believe that we're more of a people instead of a governed body. We believe that we're culturally rooted to the place and to the people. And not what textbooks have taught us. So, I don't believe that we were colonized. I believe that we were imperialized to where you (America) force your teachings and your values and what you *think* our culture should teach and should learn. So, when I say I believe that I'm Hawaiian, I believe that we work together as people. We're not just what society says that we are. We're very knowledgeable, we're very loving. So, that's how I identify myself as a Hawaiian because it has nothing to do with stature or status, or what you know, it's how we work together—to cultivate the things that we need to know and grow as a community.

Rhianna did not hold back, and this was within the first three minutes of our interview at Starbucks. She brought her authentic self to that meeting, and she shared her experiences, emphasized the weight of hardships, and how her INPEACE mentor helped her navigate through the never-ending barriers. She is still persevering, and though she is taking a longer path than others, her destination and graduation are in sight.

During this study, as I was recording experiences and observations in classrooms, I quickly recognized that what I was observing was not just educators navigating mainland curriculum for children raised on an island and consistently experiencing historical, social, political, and economic oppression at the hands of those also governing their education—what I was seeing was true authenticity and action in teaching. These teachers never played the power card with their students. They never changed their dialect or accent but would instead use Pidgin and talk story in the classroom to help students grasp complex ideas. Teachers would share their own experiences of growing up in Wai'anae, the struggles they faced, and how they navigated their way out of it.

Tanya, an intermediate social studies teacher, grew up in the area and moved through the Ka Lama program with Theodore. She is now finishing up her master's degree with her sights set on a doctorate. During our interview, she would launch into Pidgin when she interacted with students or parents after school, making them feel more at home. Her Career and Technical Education (CTE) class focuses on hospitality which is a driving source of economy in the islands and one where students can quickly gain promotions after graduation (without additional degrees),

especially with the experiences they are gaining from her courses. Theodore shared his own experience at the high school and how he, himself, was on an individual education plan (IEP) like his students—but now he's a teacher—which means they can do it too. These educators don't hide their tattoos or piercings and don't shy away from hard truths. They have pictures of their loved ones on their walls, they showcase their queer pride, and because the coast is so small, they'll make house visits and probably already have your mom's number on speed dial on their cell phone.

Interrelations

Interrelations is a compilation track. It rests at the intersection of relationships between families and educators and the relationships between Kanaka ancestral history and modern technology. I have written at length about the importance of relationships and Aloha between educator guides and their students, families, and the wider community. These relationships run deep, and in an area as small as Nānākuli-Wai'anae, it is easier to establish and maintain these relationships where a home visit for a student is not unusual and catching up to talk story and ask about the weekend's homework at the one grocery store on the coast is commonplace.

When COVID-19 hit and imports to the island slowed down or halted completely, these communities banded together, and it was organizations like INPEACE who supported local families with food drives and education about Kanaka techniques of sustainable farming. Since COVID, the houseless population has risen exponentially on the coast, and administrators have reported that about 10% of their student population is living on the beaches as a result. Interrelations become increasingly more important for vulnerable student populations such as these because their needs are higher, and schools can offer additional support such as community outreach, food, and resources that are otherwise limited unless one resides closer to the big cities on the other side of the island. Ka Lama educators and administrators reported in their interviews that they keep extra supplies and food in their rooms for all of their students but have increased their supplies since COVID specifically for this population, which is a testament to not just the interrelations they keep with their students and community, but three additional elements of Hānai Pedagogy (Aloha, Navigation, and Authenticity) overall.

From a curriculum standpoint, there was a unique juxtaposition between mandated curricular studies and maintaining Hawaiian history and ancestral knowledge during my observations. When observing these educators guide their students through their lessons, each teacher not only used the standardized curriculum and textbooks one might see on the mainland, but they also supplemented the material with texts and online media that were pertinent to Kanaka ways of knowing. They braided the standards with academic English terminology students might see on standardized tests with leaves of ʻōlelo Hawai'i and talk story methods to enrich students' learning and support their understanding of overall concepts. One middle school teacher really enjoyed using skits and charades with her students and would embed academic English with Kanaka historical leader biographies and vocabulary.

In Wai's Hawaiian immersion classroom, no English wording could be found (or at least I was unable to find any). Every book, poster, hand-written drawing, and example on the board was written in ʻōlelo, which, when mashed up with the photos of Hawaiian royalty and leaders, is a stark reminder of how Kanaka education *should* be. Children were still learning how to read, write, and practice mathematics, and Wai was even using Common Core practices to teach these standards, but she used Kanaka methods of talk story through ʻōlelo because it was culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2012) and appropriate. In her interview, she remarked that her students have grown up with storytelling, so when she teaches math through narratives, they immediately

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grasp number concepts and word problems because that is how they naturally learn and grow. Her classroom is a large room built of concrete blocks painted lime green, fluorescent lights running the length of the room in two rows, and hurricane shutters on both sides of the room. It is the kind of classroom I grew up in, yet in addition to the ʻōlelo texts and locally created ʻōlelo curriculum and workbooks for children to learn from, the classroom is also outfitted with a smart board, and each child has an iPad to expand their learning through the app Splash Learn and YouTube. Wai has curated Hawaiian-specific videos and programs that highlight Indigenous ways of knowing that complement their curriculum and enrich their education through culture, language, and traditions that they keep alive through hands-on activities in class, such as hula dancing, singing, and gardening while also building upon their mandated education standards using Kanaka-based practices, stories, and individuals to highlight. In Wai's classroom, the historical oppressions of America over Hawai'i are not silenced, but the cultural wealth of their island nation is amplified and celebrated through every facet of their daily learning, sharing, and experiences. Within these lime-coloredwalls and in the garden they have cultivated outside, these children experience a truly liberated Kanaka education through Wai's use of Hānai Pedagogy.

Discussion

The initial study sought to uncover how Kanaka ʻŌiwi educators haku (braid) Hawaiian culture, traditions, and language into their pedagogy and how INPEACE supported their teachers in their academic and professional journeys, but what I learned from these 22 experience guides went far beyond these research questions. Hānai Pedagogy is currently situated on the West coast of O'ahu and the AAPI community it serves. However, as a result of this study and as implications for future work and research, this framework has been implemented throughout my own course curricula, used as a foundation for a doctoral program I have co-designed, and it acts as my personal pedagogy as a female professor of color at a predominantly white institution.

Additionally, the results of this research provide supporting evidence of a globally applicable pedagogical framework that grew out of culturally responsive (Sleeter, 2012) and sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). Acts of Radical Love (hooks, 1999) have blossomed with core values including Hands-on Activities, Aloha, Navigation, Authenticity, and Interrelations. This study reflects narratives of Kanaka experiences, which are also felt by the Global South diaspora, but because of this global resonance, the findings and framework are applicable to classrooms across the diaspora, providing an opportunity to disrupt the colonial academic structures that bind learning and education for students of the Global Majority.

Hands-on Activities showed that in classes where I teach online or over Zoom, I find opportunities for Hands-on Activities where our class can come together and collaborate through video watch parties, creating digital art that represents our cultures, identities, and intersections, and opportunities to showcase our work through more than just academic papers. In-person classes afford us opportunities to gather together and create through art and theatre games, taking difficult societal issues, we face in education and reimagining their liberation through our collective experiences and wonderings via action.

Aloha showed that, as a pedagogue, I strive to show Aloha through my interactions and interrelations with students, the feedback I share in papers and discussions, and the lectures I give in classes. Because critical mentoring remains central to my research, I aim to provide ongoing mentoring to my students and advisees throughout the year and also after they graduate. Student course surveys (which remain anonymous) echo this Aloha, and my first-generation students of the

Global Majority are usually the first to provide me feedback on class, write letters on my behalf for promotion or awards, and collaborate on new curricular whims.

Navigation revealed that, as a critical mentor, it is imperative that I not only lead with Aloha but also support my students by navigating obstacles with them, just as Ms. Mizuki does for her staff. This often means joining extra committees, reaching out to leadership, and sitting with students in meetings as they work out plans with financial aid and the registrar. This also means navigating my syllabus each semester, culturally grounding (Levitan & Johnson, 2020) our learning to find balance among the authors and texts to ensure equity and inclusion of diversity, and humbling myself to ask previous and future students to review my syllabus for gaps and areas to improve upon.

Subsequently, *Authenticity* discussed how this collaborative effort and review have made me a better educator, and it allows me to be my authentic self before class even starts. I want my classes to be collaborative and to act as a mirror for every student in the room. When we ignite the night, if they don't see themselves reflected in the material, then I didn't do my job.

Finally, *Interrelations* allowed me to realize that I purposefully center relationships and wellness in my classes to counter colonial systems of academia. We build class agreements at the beginning of each semester and return to them until we are all satisfied with our agreements and honor code to each other. I draw connections between students and faculty, share academic and professional opportunities, and extend my mentoring to students long after they graduate because interrelations are key to retention and critical mentoring longevity.

As a professor, I openly share my experiences growing up and my journey through education, just as I did in this paper. I use my navigation, authenticity, and interrelations as a roadmap for others, so they won't make the same mistakes and unnecessary stops as I did. I create purposeful assignments that promote action and lead to discussion while also finding opportunities to connect students across disciplines, interests, and research areas to form hui's.

We keep it Hānai.

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Notes on Contributor

Robin Brandehoff, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Education Foundations and oversees the Justice, Equity, and Diverse Identities Ed.D. program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado, Denver. Her work and scholarship explore Hānai Pedagogy (Brandehoff, 2023) through critical liberatory mentorship, decolonized methodologies, Grow Your Own teacher programming, and community storytelling to collaborate with and educate at-promise youth, families, and the radical educators who journey in wonder with them.

ORCID

Robin Brandehoff, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3314-6722