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Indigenous Ancestral Assets: The Ecology of Native Hawaiian Education Through Youth Perspectives

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Claire Kēhaulani Ramírez

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Land Acknowledgement: I would like first to acknowledge that the ʻāina of which this study took place is a part of the larger territory recognized by Indigenous Hawaiians as our ancestral grandmother, Papahānaumoku. As a descendant whose ancestors originate from Koloa (Kauaʻi), Wāhiawa (Oʻahu), and the Ventureño Chumash territories, I am committed to seeking ways to achieve reconciliation and restore what has been taken from those native to this land. I recognize that her Majesty Queen Liliʻuokalani yielded the Hawaiian Kingdom and these territories under duress and protest to the United States to avoid the further bloodshed of her people. I acknowledge that Hawaiʻi is still an illegally occupied state of America and I am committed to improving the lives of those impacted. My gratitude lies in the fact that this land has nourished me with the gift of life, allowing me to breathe her air, drink from her waters, and be nurtured by her produce. I want to express my gratitude to my ancestors for sharing these traditions with me. I understand that my ancestors have created sustainable ways of living and that it is my responsibility to continue this for future generations.

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Throughout my life, I've been surrounded by the greatest Wonder Woman, advocate, and nurturing mom. You are simply the best in every way.

And to the best dad, whose spirit has returned home to rest amongst the stars. May these wisdom stories reach you and know that your soul lives through us daily.

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous Ancestral Assets:

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In K-12 education, student voice is not often considered when establishing curriculum, addressing school policy, or creating a climate that reflects culturally inclusive teaching practices. Across education systems serving Indigenous communities within the United States, the voices of youth as a form of contribution are silenced, which echoes further attempts towards the erasure of the existence of these communities. The context of the study highlighted various strengths through their traditions, languages, and cultural teachings. While Indigenous communities exist globally, this study centered on Indigenous communities from the North American continent, specifically those Native to the Hawaiian Islands. To learn about the lived experiences of Indigenous youth's strengths embedded in cultural assets, the following research questions guided this qualitative study: 1) What wisdom and cultural practices do Indigenous youth carry with them into schools? and 2) In what ways can educators support youth voice through culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogical practices? This research leveraged Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework and McCarty and Lee's (2014) Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy to highlight diverse forms of capital embedded within Indigenous youth. Analysis revealed significant themes related to various forms of cultural wisdom and knowledge in that embody the circle of reciprocity, community, Indigenous

forms of artistry, and advocacy. Recommendations for integrating culturally sustainable and revitalizing pedagogical practices are provided for school administrators and educators.

Keywords: multiculturalism, ancestral wisdom, youth voice, sovereignty, kinship

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the United States becomes more diverse, the need to invest in the education of students of color, particularly Indigenous students, grows. Historically, narratives describing the United States as a nation of immigrants have served to erase Indigenous history and their creation stories—stories that affirm that Indigenous peoples are not, in fact, immigrants but Native to this land (Calderon, 2014b, as cited in Calderón & Urrieta, 2019). Some have referred to this as colonial amnesia or colonial blindness (Al-Barghouti, 2013; Behdad, 2005; Bourdieu, 2018; Calderon, 2016). Bigotry has resulted in the historical erasures of ancestral wisdom, and across generations, some Indigenous communities have lost ties to their cultural identity. Ceremonial practices, language acquisition, decolonization of food preparation, and storytelling are a few sources of Indigenous wisdom that have been eradicated over time, including within most mainstream school curricula.

Understanding the magnitude of these erasures' impact on Indigenous populations across the United States is important. It is also important to recognize the impact on communities that may not be readily identified as Indigenous. Data gathered in 2020 by the United States Census Bureau reflect that the American Indian and Alaska Native population grew by 27.1% when counted as a single racial identity, and the American Indian and Alaska Native population grew by 160% since 2010 when counted in combination with another racial category. Additionally, the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander populations grew by 27.8% (United States Census Bureau, 2021). As the Indigenous population has grown nationally, Indigenous communities have continued to suffer disproportionate educational inequalities.

Indigenous cultures offer a wealth of knowledge relevant to student learning from elementary through graduate levels of education. Although underrepresented in mainstream curricula, Indigenous knowledge can be applied in the arts, mathematics, sciences, language acquisition, and physical education. Research findings have urged educators to "look beyond schools and classrooms as sites of deep learning and powerfully reject binaries that devalue 'out-of-school' or non-academic knowledge" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 221). Paris and Alim (2017) called for a reframing of Indigenous knowledge as something living—a fountain of culturally sustaining, revitalizing, and humanizing pedagogies that can be used in education (p. 104). This included creating sacred spaces for children and youth to develop critical consciousness. One example of looking beyond classrooms for richness in ancestral knowledge was the case of Pasifika dance, where families and community members have opportunities to draw from the cultural capital and funds of knowledge of the community to strengthen home-school partnerships (Taeao & Averill, 2021, p. 133). Another example was exhibited through a public charter school, Hālau Kū Māna, that was intentionally designed to embrace Indigenous cultural practices in educational spaces. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013) described how the founders of this charter school were inspired to make cultural practices, needs, and resources specific to the local community the foundation of the school curriculum (p. 103). The founders and community members of Hālau Kū Māna recognized that reestablishing their kuleana (responsibility) to the community involved reintegrating Indigenous practices such as storytelling, restoration, and cultivating deep relationships between students and their land. In practice, the kumus (teachers) intentionally designed forms of multidisciplinary learning to include conversing in their Native tongue, actively communicating through ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language), and reenacting

traditional forms of mo‘olelo (stories, myths, legends, literature) with their students (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, 2013, pp. 144-145). The school established a foundation for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural inquiry by incorporating Indigenous Hawaiian cultural knowledge across disciplines while also meeting state standards. Valuing Indigenous knowledge helps foster authentic spaces of equity and create environments that are both deeply responsive to student needs and strengths and rooted in a critical, historical analysis of educational and social inequity (Vossoughi et al., 2013, p. 1).

Furthermore, to meet the needs of Indigenous students, scholar-practitioners are called to design educational programs rooted in asset-oriented perspectives. One way to do so is to include the voices from the communities where teaching and learning are happening. This allows educators to ‘build on [the] funds of knowledge’ of diverse students (Rahm, 2016, p. 73) and to promote existing youth capital, persistence, and success.

Problem of Practice

Presently, even in spaces where Indigenous populations are concentrated, it is common for schools to exclude Indigenous languages, peoples, or concerns in the formal curriculum. This invisibility accelerates the powerful settler-colonial project and contributes to the erasure of Indigenous communities in different sectors of society. An example of this erasure is the *Dawes Act* or *General Allotment Act* (1887), proposed as the solution to the “Indian problem.” The act permitted the federal government to break up communally held reservation land into individual parcels or allotments. In accordance with the act, individual tribal members would each receive a parcel of land to farm with “surplus” lands opened for sale to White settlers. Though primarily viewed as the central mechanism for land dispossession, the *Dawes*

*Ac*t also broadly affected tribal organization, family and kinship structures, gender relations, spiritual practices, and the legal status of individual Indians (Koslow & Salett, 2015). Such elimination strategies were codified through federal policies organized around the perceived humanitarian principle of Captain Richard Henry Pratt in 1879 referred to as "kill the Indian and save the man" (Churchill, 2004. p. 14). In addition to Native American communities being targeted, historically, Latina/o youth have been excluded from free and equal opportunities for learning, which led to court cases of discrimination beginning as early as 1946. Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (2006) wrote, "Latina/o students also experienced huge disparities in their education. *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) detailed the ways that brown children were (and continue to be) excluded from equitable and high-quality education" (p. 6). Subsequent studies identify similar patterns of existing inequities. Paris (2012), for example, suggested:

> Deficit approaches to teaching and learning, firmly in place prior to and during the 1960s and 1970s, viewed languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling. (p. 93)

Like Latina/o communities, Native American communities have experienced injustice in the education system. Ladson-Billings (1995) reminded us:

> The history of American Indian education began with mission schools to convert and use Indian labor to further the cause of the church. Boarding schools were developed as General George Pratt asserted the need 'to kill the Indian in order to save the man. (p. 5)

Generations of Native American and other Indigenous communities across North America and the Pacific were subject to forced assimilation, loss of language and culture, and loss of life. These acts of cultural erasure are a form of institutionalized ethnocide. Institutionalized ethnocide is defined as the deliberate cultural destruction of a group's way of life, particularly that of Indigenous and people of color in the Americas (Pitner, 2021). It is important to note that cultural genocide and ethnocide can be used interchangeably to refer to the intentional destruction, or prevention of use, of the group's language in daily social intercourse, as well as in schools, museums, libraries, historical monuments, and places of worship (Hinton, 2002). The erosion of cultural practices and language has resulted in the significant loss of traditional teachings and languages. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the absence of such teachings from academic curricula. Cited in Ladson-Billings (2006), Native American educator Cornel Pewewardy (1993) asserted that one of the reasons Native children have trouble in schools is due to educators traditionally having attempted to insert culture into the education instead of inserting education into the culture (p. 159). Pewewardy (1993) argued:

> This climate and the policies and teaching practices resulting from it has the explicit goal of creating a monolingual society based on White, middle-class norms of language and cultural being. Within such resistances, students will continue the age-old American saga of being asked to lose their heritage and community ways in language, literacy, and culture to achieve in U.S. schools. (p. 159)

Scholars have outlined the origins and evolution of what has become known as *deficit thinking*, a mindset foundational to the project of racism and colonialism (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). In

sum, Indigenous languages, history, and people have been excluded from the formal education curriculum over decades.

Purpose of the Study

Despite institutionalized ethnocide, resilient traditions of language and cultural teachings persist within pockets of Native communities. These traditions serve as sources of strength and healing. Progressive educators—and sometimes whole schools—heed the call to integrate the voices and realities of Indigenous youth into formal schooling as restorative acts of faith, social justice, and curricular representation. By doing so, educators promote equity and inclusionary practices for marginalized communities. It is important to focus on Indigenous youth in particular because of their unique experiences of enduring historical injustices, as well as their strong ties to their community members. These ties create potential for organizing and activism linked to relational ways of being through an understanding of life through spirituality, symbolism, and a greater integration with nature, or *comunalidad* (Sanchez, 2018). In addition, previous research among Indigenous groups of people living in the United States has shown the importance of social ties that bind Indigenous people to a common community of origin (Sanchez, 2018). Furthermore, Stephen (2009) argued that indigenous cultural practices are instrumental for indigenous immigrant youth to achieve some level of civic integration in their schools and community.

This study aimed to, first, identify lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths Indigenous youth carry with them into school and, second, understand how educators support youth voice through culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogical practices in their classroom. Arenas of impact from the study included, among others, teacher preparation,

curriculum development, ethnic studies, maternal language instruction, federal civil rights entitlement programs, charter school law, and tribal education sovereignty programs.

Research Questions

To develop insight into Indigenous youth cultural assets, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What wisdom and cultural practices do Indigenous youth carry with them into schools?
2. In what ways can educators support youth voice through culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogical practices?

Relationship to Social Justice

Loyola Marymount University (LMU) aims to provide a holistic education that fosters personal growth, intellectual excellence, and a commitment to social justice. As a university, LMU promotes the development of intercultural community and the formation of individual character, values, meaning, and purpose. Committed to promoting LMU's mission, this study fosters the inclusivity of diverse cultural traditions and promotes justice in additional educational learning spaces (Loyola Marymount University, n.d.). As a researcher, I was deeply influenced by the Jesuit teachings of the university and felt a strong need to remain grounded in acts of social justice and to foster a study of reconciliation with a focus on disrupting historical and ongoing systems of injustice. The study was an extension of the university's ongoing efforts to provide internal support services for Indigenous students, to decolonize the curriculum, and to establish partnerships that promote healthy outcomes for Indigenous students and their families.

The study went beyond the university's campus to reach communities directly impacted by colonization.

As progressive leaders in education, we are called to address and remove barriers to education. We should be held as a standard to continuously improve teaching practices to meet the needs of our students. To ensure safety for all students, educational learning spaces must recognize the reciprocal relational dynamics between educator and student. This requires educators to evolve curriculum and teaching practices to foster an inclusive classroom that is open to Indigenous wisdom, languages, and cultural practices. In doing so, scholar-practitioners utilize the community's strengths to create culturally sustaining and revitalizing practices for educating youth.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two conceptual frameworks guide this research and upset deficit views of Indigenous students and families. These concepts are Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP). CCW outlines a collection of knowledge, skills, abilities, and networks utilized by communities of color to resist oppression (hooks, 2015). Rejecting deficit views, CCW shifts the focus away from the cultural disadvantages of poverty and toward the forms of knowledge students bring into the classroom from their homes and cultural communities. CCW values home and community knowledge as strengths. Stemming from Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw, 1995), CCW encourages educators to draw from the strengths of communities of color to move toward social and racial justice (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Unlike definitions of *wealth* shaped by White middle-class notions of monetary value, CCW understands *wealth* as cultural assets gained over time through the resources, histories, and life

experiences of communities of color. Over time, these assets build upon one another, strengthen individuals, and support the larger community's resistance to oppression. Chapter 2 will demonstrate the six forms of capital built within CCW in greater detail.

When examining CCW, it is crucial to acknowledge that the community's strengths are at the center of attention, as it empowers communities of color to transform educational spaces. Although CCW began by examining how African American communities mobilize community efforts in educational spaces, the framework can also apply to Indigenous communities that are working to resist the Western narrative of cultural deficits, particularly in academia. As Yosso (2005) explained,

> Forms of capital are not conceptualized for the purpose of finding new ways to exploit the strengths of communities of color. Instead, it involves a commitment to conduct research, teach, and develop schools that serve a larger purpose of struggling toward social and racial justice. (p. 82)

Defying a deficit view, progressive educators leverage individual students' cultural wealth, including past experiences and acquired knowledge, to maximize the richness they represent (Yosso, 2005).

Similarly, Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) values and affirms communities of color and requires school curricula to support students in maintaining their linguistic and cultural identities. CSRP is the culmination of decades of scholarship on equitable approaches to teaching culturally diverse youth. This section will provide a brief outline of the many scholars and their work that eventually paved the way for the development of CSRP. Originating in the early 1990s by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), *culturally relevant pedagogy*

(CRP) was defined as a "pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural and historical references to convey knowledge, to impart skills, and to change attitudes" (p. 13). Over time, Geneva Gay (2000) built upon Ladson-Billings' (1995) CRP to develop what she identified as *culturally responsive teaching* (CRT), defined as the use of cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to, and effective for them (p. 31). Building upon this framework, Hollie (2017) defined what came to be known as *cultural and linguistic responsiveness* (CLR), which is "the validation and affirmation of the home (Indigenous) culture and home language for building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academic and mainstream society" (p. 23). Scholars recognized the importance of incorporating cultural knowledge, specifically language, to meet diverse students' needs. Paris and Alim (2014) expanded the concepts of CRT, CRP, and CLR and developed what is now known as *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (CSP). CSP requires that educators "support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 14). The central role of language and culture in sustaining selfhood is unique to Paris and Alim's approach. In their model, language and culture must be integrated into all levels of education, including curriculum, classroom and culture, and any other learning environment a student encounters (Paris & Alim, 2017). This means that students take on the responsibility of using their cultural knowledge to co-construct classroom spaces and curricula with their teacher. This co-construction is central to their educational development. Not only do students contribute their cultural knowledge to the co-construction of classroom spaces and curricula, but they hold

responsibility for their educational development. The more students deeply connect to their language and cultural identity, the more positive educational outcomes (test scores, student engagement, school graduation rates, self-efficacy and inclusion) will be apparent (Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023).

Research Design and Methodology

The study was a qualitative case study that employed a deductive thematic narrative design. I gathered data through individual interviews, classroom observation activities, and a storytelling focus group to unearth traditional practices and forms of knowledge specific to participants' cultural identities. I chose this design to highlight the participants' voices while finding common themes among Indigenous youth's cultural forms of wisdom.

Data was analyzed using a deductive thematic approach, a form of analysis that is explicitly researcher-driven, allowing the researcher to analyze the data in relation to their theoretical interest in the issues being investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The deductive analysis approach assumes that the data will align with the tenets of CCW and CSRP. In semi-structured interviews, participants were invited to reflect on their experience in the study and offer recommendations on how schools can incorporate forms of Indigenous wisdom and cultural teachings within the mainstream curricula to expand inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for students. Lastly, data gathered through classroom observation were used to understand ways of integrating, sustaining, and culturally revitalizing practices. Details surrounding the protocol for the classroom and further details on the methodology for the study are outlined in Chapter 3.

Positionality

My interest in exploring Indigenous knowledge is rooted in my desire to create educational spaces for Indigenous communities in which students' cultural strengths and traditions are centered and in which, therefore, students feel a sense of belonging and pride in their heritage.

My ancestors are Native to the Hawaiian Islands, Philippines, China, Guanajuato, Azores, and Barbareño/Ventureño Chumash territory. Without doubt, my positionality is directly influenced by my family's experience of losing aspects of our culture through generations of assimilation, geographical relocation, and religious teachings. I grew up in Southern California, and my education was influenced by the teachings of Jesuit Catholicism, my family's religious community. Although my family's cultural identity had always been an integral part of my upbringing, it wasn't until high school that I realized it was being erased from the textbooks. In my home and community, I was immersed in my family's culture: dances, foods, stories, and songs. However, these teachings were nowhere to be found in the classroom and curriculum that shaped my understanding of the world. Kinship—the sense of connection and shared identity within my school community—was lost. As an Indigenous woman of color, I have had to figure out how to navigate educational politics without losing my cultural identity. That is what makes this study personal.

My interest in this topic also stems from my experience as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker working in mental health clinics and K-12 school-based mental health settings. In this capacity, I have witnessed the long-term psychological effects of intergenerational trauma, economic barriers, and a lack of belonging. Although settler colonization has caused pain in

many communities, it is essential to note that hope, restoration, and healing are possible. In my professional roles supporting students and their families in K-12 settings, I have been immersed in micro, mezzo, and macro levels of mental health and program development. This work pulled the curtain back for me, revealing the complexities of the political and socioeconomic barriers to equity.

Ultimately, the trajectory that has led me to educational leadership originates in the values I learned from family teachings and lived experiences. Jesuit teachings and the principles of servant leadership have always guided my life. The spirit of *kuleana* (responsibility), instilled by my parents, has been to serve and care for those who have been "othered" by Western society. The intersections of my multicultural identity and lived experiences influenced me to become not just an educational leader but a scholar-activist.

My personal experience as an Indigenous woman greatly influences my positionality. It is essential to recognize how these experiences have shaped my career trajectory and commitment to foster reconciliation for others and intervene in ongoing and historical systems of injustice. I am committed to creating a community of kinship and culturally sustaining schools. My goal is to help students discover their personal worth and embrace their unique qualities to foster a sense of belonging and emotional safety. I approached the study with an asset-based lens, an open heart, and the intent to learn from Indigenous community members. In doing so, I hoped to help develop restoration paths and honor their truth and teachings. I strongly believe in promoting young people's voices and cultural knowledge and evaluating school policies based on how well they support Indigenous youth. Socially just policies can help restore and protect communities that have been affected by generations of settler colonialism, a harmful ideology that is deeply

embedded in American history and mainstream school curricula (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Smallwood, 2019). Schools can be at the forefront of change by prioritizing kinship and community strengths and listening to Indigenous voices. Indigenous communities themselves must take an active role in reclaiming, revitalizing, and sustaining what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization.

Assumptions

My commitment to social justice required me to use an asset-based lens in my work with Indigenous youth. Unlike prevailing deficit models of thinking, an asset-based lens allowed me to recognize the strengths of Indigenous youth, their families, and their community and the power of their traditions and cultural practices. By including youth's voices and stories of experience, narrative research captures their life experiences and may improve reader engagement (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Acknowledging Indigenous student voices and providing a learning space where they are seen, heard, and reflected in school curricula is important. The erasure of true history and cultural wisdom from mainstream curricula has had a significant impact on many Indigenous communities. Furthermore, Paris and Alim (2017) suggested, "We cannot understand our students nor nurture their voices if the layered contingencies of their lives are invisible or erased" (p. 22). Lastly, aspects of this work were an extension of the advocacy work and liberation for community members whose voices have historically been disregarded. I entered this research with the following assumptions:

1. Examining Indigenous youth's narratives with an asset-oriented lens will allow me to see their strengths and knowledge, which, in turn, can provide insight into cultural revitalization within school communities.

2. Semi-structured interviews will allow flexibility for participants to express meaning and value that reflects their own cultural experiences. Shared cultural and family values will provide an avenue of peer-to-peer connection to create a sense of belonging and pride in their heritage.
3. The data will inform recommendations for future work to improve Indigenous youths' educational experiences and academic outcomes.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions applied to this research:

Colonial violence: Actions that benefit the expansion of European settlers at the expense of harming Native communities using racism, power, violence, sex or labor exploitation, and physical or psychological abuse (Shulist & Pedri-Spade, 2022).

Community-based learning (CBL): A pedagogical tool in which the community becomes a partner in the learning process and requires students to both learn from and contribute to the world outside classroom walls (Garoutte, 2018).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP): An explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in theory and practice for students and teachers. CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster sustainable linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic schooling project (Paris, 2012).

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP)*:* An educational approach that emphasizes Indigenous education sovereignty, recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization, and recognizes the need for community-based accountability (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Culturicide: The destruction of cultural aspects of particular social groups deemed dangerous or unworthy of existence by another group (Gellman, 2023).

Indigenous: Individuals who exercised powers of self-governance prior to colonization and incorporation into the modern world (Grande et al., 2015). Indigenous is capitalized because, as a term, it indicates a particular social and political status. It also identifies the power connected with claiming to be Indigenous (Freeland, 2015). The term Indigenous and Native will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. Indigenous will also refer to the participants of the study who are Native Hawaiians.

Institutionalized ethnocide: The deliberate cultural destruction of a group's, particularly Indigenous and people of color, way of life in the Americas. Cultural genocide and ethnocide can be used synonymously and refer to the intentional destruction or prevention of use of the language of the group in daily intercourse, in schools, or in museums, libraries, historical monuments, and places of worship (Hinton, 2002; Pitner, 2021).

Kuleana: The Hawaiian word describing the responsibility, accountability, rights, privileges, and *ability to respond and support community* that an individual holds (Ahia, 2020).

Multicultural education: An ongoing process that calls for curricular changes as well as ideological changes, targeting schools and educational systems with the intent of transforming them to the point that social class, gender, ethnicity, and languages do not pose a hindrance to any child from attaining their best potential in schools (Dom Nwachukwu, 2018).

Mālama: To care for (Santana et al., 2023)

Ōlelo: language or speech (Kahaunaele, 2020)

Oli: Chants that are not meant to be danced to but that call upon our ancestors to feel their spiritual presence protecting those who enter the spaces; an act of acknowledging the space and seeking permission to be in the presence of those within (Aiwohi-Kim, 2021).

White Middle-Class Norms: Customs and beliefs that serve as the standard against which all other racial and ethnic groups are compared, perpetuating institutional and structural racism (Schooley et al., 2019)

Sacred truth space: Places within schools for students to be vocal, active, and reflective in countering inequality in their communities;, through sharing their realities and experiences in these spaces, , students can challenge and/or correct the standardized knowledge that leads to painful silencing experiences in schools (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Settler colonialism: A settler nation is defined by the acquisition of Indigenous lands from Indigenous peoples through various acts of extermination (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Settler colonialism in the U.S. includes the destruction or acquisition of Indigenous peoples' land and is identified as a form of capital for trade, labor, and disposal (Smallwood, 2019).

Organization of the Dissertation Chapters

This research study explored how Indigenous youth carry their knowledge, lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths into school. A secondary purpose of this study was to understand how their voices can contribute to the decolonization of education curricula. Chapter 1 presented the introduction to my research. Background information about the purpose and its significance was provided. In this chapter, I highlighted the strengths that exist in cultural practices and traditional teachings and argued that this study can contribute to an understanding

of how student knowledge and voice can play a central role in developing culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogy. I described my positionality as a researcher and the worldview that underpinnned the study. Chapter 2 presents a literature review related to my research focus, and Chapter 3 offers a detailed description of the research methods chosen for the study. Chapter 4 discusses participant summaries and evolving themes that emerge from the various forms of data, as they relate to the selected theoretical framework. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and future recommendations.

Chapter Summary

This study contributes to the ongoing discussion about possible futures for Indigenous youth. It achieves this by bringing together different perspectives, such as ancestral forms of wisdom, the need for Hawaiian educational sovereignty, student and educator voice, CCW, and CSRP. Through this analysis, the study examined how cultural strengths deliberately integrated into curricula enhance student learning. Motivated by the need to disrupt deficit views and uplift the strengths and cultural wisdom carried by Indigenous communities and students, this study leaned in to embrace the power in student voice and need for cultural revitalization in schools.

Woven through the data were students' own acounts of their culture, their strengths, and the aspects of their educational setting that reflect who they are and encourage their engagement. CSRP practices—most notably, tapping into students' gifts and wisdom—can both enhance student learning and promote educational sovereignty. Additionally, I intentionally included family and other caregivers' ancestral wisdom to highlight forms of community engagement and cultural values embedded within the community. Given previously surveyed research on CCW

and CSRP, we saw how centralizing a community's strengths and cultural practices supports communities of color in transforming educational spaces.

My study centered on the experiences and voices of Indigenous youth who have limited opportunities to share cultural aspects of their lives as they take shape in educational spaces. For many students and educators, the long-term impacts have led to various forms of erasure. This study included the perspectives of Indigenous students and educators, providing insight into the richness of their culture and identity. The study highlighted educational sovereignty as a precondition for Indigenous cultural sustenance and revitalization. The individuals' heartfelt participation underscored how indispensable their voices are in these important conversations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

K-12 educators do not often consider student voice when designing curriculum, crafting school policy and climate, and developing culturally inclusive teaching practices (Caetano et al., 2020; Younger, 2020). United States education systems serving Indigenous communities often silence the voices of youth and disregard their potential contributions, furthering the erasure of these communities (Cook-Sather, 2020; Younger, 2020). Indigenous communities experience challenges that relate to socioeconomic issues of equity and access to proper healthcare, housing, income inequality, and education (Empey et al., 2021). A study conducted by the Institutional Research Board found that students who are of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and Native Hawaiian descent are over 200% more likely to drop out of school due in large part to experiencing racial microaggressions (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2020). Racial aggressions, according to Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) were identified as the "brief and common place daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (p. 35). In this study, Native youth and elders narrated concerns regarding the impact of discrimination occurring at school events and through school disciplinary actions which contributed towards assumptions of deficiency and pathology (Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2017, p. 40). Also concerning is Native cultures' loss of their language, cultural knowledge, and traditional practices. It is important to acknowledge the disparities within the education system for Indigenous youth, and research findings from Johnston-Goodstar and VeLure Roholt (2017) validated the need for culturally based education as a way to increase

student achievement. Therefore, one subset of educational opportunities to be expanded for Indigenous youth includes immersion in cultural teachings, ceremonial practices, and language.

It is time for scholar-practitioners, policymakers, and educators to recognize that including student voices and uplifting their cultural traditions, practices, and historical knowledge can enhance equity, inclusivity, and the overall well-being of Indigenous students (Empey et al., 2021; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2020; Machado et al., 2020; Cook-Sather, 2020; Younger, 2020). Younger (2020) pointed to a gap in current empirical understanding of the experiences of Indigenous youth and their potential contributions to a more equitable learning environment with improved outcomes. Following Younger's assertion, this study's primary purpose was to identify the lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths that Indigenous youth carry with them into school, and a secondary purpose was to examine ways educators can include and uplift youth voice through culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogical practices.

This review of literature provides a background of what is currently known within existing empirical literature about the historical impact of colonialism on those native to the Hawaiian Islands and how two conceptual frameworks—Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP)—have been implemented in schools. In addition, this chapter will explore the value of healing through community, strengths-based perspectives on Indigenous communities, educational sovereignty, the Hawaiian charter school movement, and community-based learning models. This literature review highlights the gap in existing knowledge, which supports the need for this study and serves as a basis for contextualizing this study's findings.

Background and Historical Context: The Indigenous Experience

While Indigenous communities exist globally, this study centered Indigenous communities from the North American continent, specifically those native to the Hawaiian Islands. As diversity increases across North America, it is important to acknowledge that collaborative partners within the study are also not confined to one specific area in North America. This study focused on a charter school in Hawai‘i. However, it is important to note that Indigenous communities across North America are unique amongst one another, varying in their traditions, languages and dialects, spiritual practices, and cultural teachings. I refer to the concepts of *inclusive education* and *Indigenous relationality* (Lamoureux & Katz, 2020; Wildcat & Voth, 2023) to honor and highlight the differences in the intellectual legacies of Indigenous communities and in their understandings of the world. After all, indigeneity is not only a politicized form of intellectual resistance but an affirmation of the power of Indigenous intellectual traditions to offer counter-readings of schooling and education (Crow, 2022; Dei & Jaimungal, 2020; Kauanui, 2021). According to the 2020 United States Census Bureau, 3.7 million people identify as American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN). There are 324 federally recognized American Indian reservations and 574 federally recognized tribes across North America (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Also included in the representation of Indigenous peoples are those whose ancestors come from the Pacific and reside in states such as Hawai‘i. Between 2021 and 2023, 619,855 people identified as solely Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 1.6 million people identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander in combination with other races (United States Census Bureau, 2021). It is worth noting that in the early 2000s, Pacific Islander data were often conflated through the aggregation of Asian

American data, misrepresenting Pacific Islanders in higher education (Kauanui, 2008). While there have been many attempts to define the Indigenous population, scholars have pushed back against one fixed definition as this aligns with a Eurocentric lens (Bowden, 2021; Crow, 2022; Dei & Jaimungal, 2020; Wildcat & Voth, 2023). Wildcat and Voth (2023) suggested a three-part framework for more accurately understanding Indigenous relationality as a fundamental aspect of global indigeneity, as emergent from specific nations, and as apparent through Indigenous community connections, urging scholars to consider how community is defined more critically, and the aspects and values that contribute to adaptive, equitable communities.

As an agent of settler colonialism, the United States government committed violence and genocide, destroying Tribal nations and other Indigenous communities across North America and the Pacific Ocean (Arvin et al., 2020; Edwards, 2020; McKay et al., 2020). After centuries of violence, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2018) stepped in to recognize the need for Indigenous self-determination, the protection of freedoms and human rights, the right of Indigenous people to revitalize their cultural traditions, and Indigenous families' and communities' right and responsibility to raise and educate their own children in a way that promotes their well-being (Nichols, 2020). The United Nations also declared that public initiatives and education systems must reflect Indigenous communities' right to retain the dignity and diversity of their respective cultures, traditions, and aspirations (Nichols, 2020). International organizations such as the United Nations and United Nations Economic and Social Council worked to establish the UNDRIP (2018) to emphasize the autonomous rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures, identities, and rights to education, health, employment, and language. The declaration intended to honor

Indigenous communities as citizens of new nations rather than being labeled as “Indian peoples.” Although widely accepted across countries, the United States was one of four to initially vote against this declaration. UNDRIP, along with the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, opened the door for Indigenous communities to change their relationship with the government (Conn, 2023). As such, Indigenous leaders from Native villages and Tribal Nations began to assert themselves into spaces to advocate for education needs, policy, and land ownership that is rightfully theirs. As Ruhanen and Whitford (2019) described, before the UN confirmed the importance of reclaiming Indigenous cultural heritage, the World Archaeological Congress’s 2nd Indigenous Intercongress emphasized the importance of cultural heritage artifacts—including sites, places, objects, and human remains—rightfully belongs to them as cultural property in 2005. Thus, this property should be returned, reclaimed, and used to provide culturally related education for their children and sustain and revitalize traditions and teachings specific to their people. To better understand the relationship between this study's collaborators and the historical impacts of colonization, the following section will explore how this impacted the Native Hawaiian community.

Kānaka Maoli: The Native Hawaiians

Because this study was conducted in a charter school in Hawai‘i, contextualizing the study requires historical background on the Hawaiian Indigenous community and the colonization and erasure of the community. Just as colonization has resulted in the widespread erasure of cultural elements of Indigenous populations across the Americas, so too has colonization resulted in the erasure of a considerable amount of the Native Hawaiian community’s cultural history (Darrah-Okike, 2020; Nicholls, 2021; Sasa & Yellow Horse, 2021).

For instance, Sasa and Yellow Horse (2021) presented data drawn from a critical review of the systemic erasure of cultural representation through Hawaiian census data reported by the United States Census Bureau by classifying Native Hawaiians under the category of "Asian or Pacific Islander" (p. 343). The authors also found that this misclassification impeded self-determination and self-identification for parts of Oceania (e.g., Hawai'i, Sāmoa, Fiji, Guam) due to United States colonization. Such erasure demonstrates a continued misclassification of Indigenous Peoples through race and exposes the lack of cultural awareness and conscious and/or subconscious failure by government agencies to recognize and represent Indigenous populations and the characteristics, values, beliefs, practices, and traditions that distinguish such Indigenous populations. Consequently, leading progressive scholars in cultural studies and sociology have initiated efforts to re-signify and recognize Native cultural elements and representation through the re-institution of policies, programs, and initiatives that work to mobilize Native autonomy and sovereignty in Hawai'i (Nicholls, 2021). An evaluation of modern education and media has also revealed the erasure of Native Hawaiian culture and practices (Kauanui, 2018; Yim, 2020). For instance, colonial values have been dominant in modern-day Hawai'i's public education literature curricula (Yim, 2020).

Colonial Legacies and Erasures

The impact of colonialism on Hawaiian Indigenous populations, including the illegal occupation of the Native Hawaiian kingdom and Census misclassification (Sasa & Yellow Horse, 2021) has resulted in the erasure of multiple Indigenous cultural elements, including but not limited to language and cultural practices, land loss, vitality, natural resources, and the loss of Indigenous laws and community regulation practices. Furthermore, colonial settlers'

occupation of Indigenous lands resulted in the introduction of foreign diseases, which compromised the health of Indigenous populations. Occupation also economically marginalized the Indigenous population through the institution of military bases, corporate industry, and tourism and through the forced assimilation into Eurocentric values (Darrah-Okike, 2020; Nasser, 2020; Sasa & Yellow Horse, 2021).

Darrah-Okike (2020) suggested that the United States' conception of race can be traced to a colonial framework within which Eurocentric values dominate and systemically, yet often invisibly, infiltrate social, economic, religious, and even health-related practices. Regarding the impact of colonialism and Eurocentricity on Hawaiian Indigenous culture, Darrah-Okike theorized that, despite the socio-political and socio-economic harms of colonialist sociology, its pervasiveness nonetheless illuminates the persistence, resilience, and complex creativity of Indigenous agency and resistance. The endurance of cultural elements such as the development of self-identity, Native crafts, and the recognition of elders, despite otherwise rampant erasure, demonstrates a fundamental resilience of an Indigenous culture. When recognized and re-mobilized, this resilience may contribute positively to building educational and social equity (Darrah-Okike, 2020; Nasser, 2020; Sasa & Yellow Horse, 2021).

The destructive and illegal occupation of the Indigenous peoples' Hawaiian kingdom began in 1778 following Captain Cook's arrival to the islands. Since then, Native islanders have struggled to preserve their identity (Nasser, 2020). During the early 1800s, resistance towards the assimilation caused by settler-colonialism encouraged the unification of the Hawaiian islands which resulted in the contruction of the temple known as Pu'ukoholā Heiau (Suster, 2020).

Pu'ukoholā Heiau remains a foundational site in Hawaiian social, religious, cultural, and political history and continues to serve as a beacon of unification where hundreds of Hawaiian practitioners gather regularly to honor Kamehameha and their ancestors in traditional rituals and protocol to perpetuate these sacred practices (Suster, 2020, p. 157). In 1893, the United States overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy and imposed legislation that privileged Eurocentric values and the economic gain of American settlers through the extraction of Hawaiian natural resources and the widespread settlement of land. The land settlement caused Native Hawaiian populations to be constrained to restricted land areas and forsake many of their previous practices upon which their livelihood and identity depended (Nasser, 2021; Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty, 2018).

As noted, the widespread erasure of Native cultural elements resulted from illegal occupation and colonialism. As the homogenization of religion and language was pushed by settler occupation, cultural assimilation was forced and Native languages and dialects were spoken less frequently (Huyser & Locklear, 2021; Kawano, 2023; Serme, 2021; Stuckey, 2023; Wright, 2022). Hence, existing practices, including storytelling, were minimized. The land was lost, and Natives were no longer able to live in tandem with the land, climate, and resources as they had for thousands of years. This loss, combined with the introduction of foreign pathogens, had destructive consequences for Natives' health. Cultural practices, such as hula, spiritual practices, ʻōlelo (language), moʻolelo (stories/history), ʻike (cultural wisdom), and traditional tool construction, were suppressed. Additionally, natural resources, such as sugar, sandalwood, and pineapple, were extracted unsustainably resulting in land degradation (Huyser & Locklear,

2021; Kawano, 2023; Serme, 2021; Stuckey, 2023; Wright, 2022). Unfortunately, early settlers did not recognize, prioritize, value, or address these detrimental consequences—consequences that would impact generations. Rather, the institution of military bases and corporate economics ensued to the detriment of Native knowledge and wisdom.

While this study aimed to highlight the wisdom taught and carried by Indigenous youth and their communities, it is important to acknowledge how colonialism negatively impacts Tribal Nations and other Indigenous communities on whose land we reside. Trauma has been woven through generations (Bakó & Zana, 2020). We still see the ripple effects of colonization which includes genocide, forced removal of children, medical experimentation, sexual trauma, residential boarding schools, and stealing of land (Schafte & Bruna, 2023; Walker & Devereaux, 2021). Scholars have also found that the impact of cultural trauma, caused by 128 years of continued occupation, led to desecration, settler colonialism, language erasure, and the disruption of kinship ties and relations to sacred lands (Ahia, 2020, p. 610). As scholar-practitioners, it is important to recognize that each Indigenous community has its own distinct history, language, and teachings. However, there are challenges in ensuring that younger generations have access to these stories and knowledge. Salazar and Crowe-Salazar (2020) spoke to the impacts of colonial traumas, such as the Canadian residential school system and the Sixties Scoop, wherein children were forcibly removed from their families and communities and placed in foster homes, often adopted by White families. This led to the loss of ethnic identity and ancestral property rights to common land and, rather than improving living conditions, social exclusion (Partridge, 2021). The forced attempts to assimilate Indigenous communities into

Western society were an extension of the racist policies of both the Canadian and United States governments. In being separated from family and community, Indigenous children were denied the sacred mythic wisdom learned only by living with their families (Watson, 2022). Not only did this culturally and physically displace children from their homelands, but they were deprived of the sacred teachings of their communities and the history of their lived experiences passed down through their ancestors (Mussi, 2021). Residential schools largely impacted the Indigenous teachings from North America's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities (Mussi, 2021). What has come to be known as the fourth wave of colonization has been identified as the "psycholonization" of Indigenous peoples. This reflects the intergenerational psychological wounds of those who survived residential schools—wounds that have been passed down through generations (Pe-Pua, n.d.). Bird-Naytowhow et al. (2017) argued that, to recover from the era of displacement, ancient knowledge rooted in spiritual power is needed for Indigenous communities to find healing and to reconnect with cultural practices (p. 127). A study examining the impact of trauma on children whose parents were exposed to and/or being treated for war trauma revealed that these students demonstrated lower mean test scores and overall academic achievement (Bager et al., 2021). While the children were not directly exposed to the trauma from war, it is important to understand how psychological wounds can be passed down from grandparent to parent and parent to child. This intergenerational trauma shapes many parents' and caregivers' decisions to enroll their children in a charter school setting as a result of the negative school experiences endured, often involving physical and emotional abuse (Bakó & Zana, 2020).

Atallah (2023) noted that traumatic experiences can affect youth learning, behavior, and relationships at school, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

(2014) noted that youth who experience traumatic stress are more likely to have lower grades, more suspensions and expulsions, greater need of mental health services, increased involvement with juvenile justice, and long-term health problems. To highlight educators' role in mitigating these impacts, Walker et al. (2022) identified schools that contribute to youth development by helping children gain educational, social, and emotional skills needed to live independent and successful lives. In summary, trauma, without proper and consistent intervention, can be detrimental to a student's academic performance and erasure can weaken one's connection to their culture. The history of Indigenous populations' encounters with settler colonialism contextualizes their cultural erasure and loss of educational sovereignty. The next section will explore the frameworks guiding this study.

Theoretical Frameworks

Given both the historical and current realities of Indigenous students in the United States, the theoretical frameworks of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) and Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) provide appropriate lenses and tools for integrating Indigenous cultural practices and wisdom in schools. The following two subsections describe each theory's assumptions and relevance to this study. Additionally, each subsection describes the theory's recent application in contexts similar to the contexts of this study.

Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)

Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework emphasizes identifying and utilizing assets, or capital, as a catalyst to success in education. This framework challenges common perceptions of wealth and success, shifting away from a materialistic emphasis and toward a strength-based approach. Through an inventory of personal cultural wealth, students

and educators can lean on each student's skills, past experiences, and acquired knowledge to maximize the richness they hold within, rather than focusing on deficits (Yosso, 2020). The tenets of this theoretical framework can be reviewed in Table 1.

CCW challenges traditional definitions and constructs of wealth by placing value in culturally found assets, or strengths, which marginalized communities carry into the educational setting and their educational experience. The CCW framework posits that, because marginalized communities (and, in this study's context, Indigenous people) bring culturally rooted assets into broader societal educational settings, these individuals have the potential to make important and unique contributions to equity and to social, political, and/or economic advancement. Hence, *wealth* is conceptualized as more than fiscal assets; it includes strengths such as social, cultural, familial, aspirational, linguistic, and navigational capital (Acevedo & Solorzano, 2021; Denton et al., 2020; Yosso, 2020; Zoch & He, 2020).

Table 1

The Six Forms of Capital as Described Through Community Cultural Wealth

Community Cultural Wealth	Definition
Aspirational capital	The ability to persist or to maintain hope for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers contributing to inequality
Linguistic capital	The intellectual and social skills attained through communication in multiple languages and/or language styles (including communication through visual art, poetry, and dance)
Familial capital	The cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin), or extended family, that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition
Social capital	A form of network of people and community resources
Navigational capital	The skills in maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this implies the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind.
Resistant capital	The skills a person develops while being part of a community that actively challenges inequality and oppression

Note. Adapted from "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth" by T. J. Yosso, 2005, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91, copyright 2005 by Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Cultural capital refers to the knowledge, capacities, and skills individuals of a particular culture bring to a community context. This may include language, traditions, rituals, practices, and customs (Acevedo & Solorzano, 2021; Denton et al., 2020; Yosso, 2020). Social capital refers to the nature of support systems, the structure of social networks, and the quality of relationships within a particular cultural system, which may be advantageous to the progression and equity of current contexts, and the well-being of Indigenous populations in which they are rooted (Habig et al., 2021). Family capital refers to the importance of and role of the family in individuals' personal and educational development, suggesting that generationally passed family values, knowledge, wisdom, and support are integral to healthy individual and community

development. Aspirational capital refers to the hopes and dreams of communities, while linguistic capital recognizes language as a skill within the community and highlights the practices and nuanced ontological frameworks evolving alongside a particular language (Zoch & He, 2020).

Historically, scholars indicated that the Community Cultural Wealth framework was inspired by and emerged from Critical Race Theory (CRT), and thereafter, evolved as a result of various intellectual and social movements (Acevedo & Solorzano, 2021; Denton et al., 2020; Yosso 2020). As Yosso (2020) incorporated knowledge concerning the experiences of Indigenous and marginalized communities taken from qualitative and quantitative research, the CCW framework evolved to incorporate a broader understanding and recognition of various non-monetary assets and culturally based strengths and has been applied in various industries including education (Denton et al., 2020; Habig et al., 2021; Zoch & He, 2020). CRT originated in the 1970s and 1980s as a theoretical framework challenging prior Eurocentric and traditional concepts of race, legislation, and racism. CRT sought and continues to seek to understand how racial hierarchies evolving from implicit bias and systemic racism are erected and maintained. Hence, the CCW framework extends CRT, operating as a solutions-driven framework that conceptualizes how communities, organizations, and individuals may respond to the inequities uncovered through CRT. Thus, CCW highlights Indigenous and marginalized populations' value to broader society by emphasizing counter-narratives and building upon the cultural capital theory of 1970s. Yosso (2005) originally introduced the concept of Community Cultural Wealth in the early 2000s through a series of impactful publications, one of which was titled, "Whose

Culture Has Capital?" Yosso's early publications popularized CRT in modern educational contexts (Acevedo & Solorzano, 2021; Yosso, 2005, 2020).

Since the framework's introduction and origination, the Community Cultural Wealth framework has been applied in contexts similar to the context of this study. Specifically, the framework has been applied in education settings as a guiding, predictive theoretical model suggesting that Indigenous cultural values and practices can serve as strengths bolstering the equity, inclusivity, and overall psychological and social health of a community—including classroom communities (Denton et al., 2020; Habig et al., 2021; Zoch & He, 2020).

Zoch and He (2020) applied the Community Cultural Wealth framework in a study exploring teacher understanding of and experiences with diverse students in linguistically diverse settings. They explained and predicted that as teachers better understood student skills, strengths, and diversity-based assets and engaged with students and their families, instructional methods would become more effective. Zoch and He's (2020) findings supported the relevance and applicability of the framework. A systematic review seeking to understand how CCW has been applied in STEM subjects across educational contexts found that the framework has been most widely applied in higher education settings and called for further application in K-12 settings (Denton et al., 2020) as this study intended to do. Habig and colleagues (2021) indicated that informal, community-based learning organizations fail to adequately recognize the assets youth contribute to these organizations' success and the continuance of STEM programs in academia. The authors used CCW concepts to explain the prediction of three STEM students' success and future outlook based on their engagement in long-term, community learning organizations. The framework effectively explained how the three participants leveraged personal capital to help

foster their academic success. Moreover, a recent exploratory study used CCW with the purpose of understanding how Black undergraduate men were supported in engineering education pathways at predominantly White institutions (Tolbert Smith, 2022). The study characterized the diverse forms of support that Black families and extended family members provided alongside the participants (undergraduate Black men), and the findings suggested that Black parents are engaged in the engineering learning and development of Black males, which opposes the deficit framing of Black parental engagement (Tolbert Smith, 2022, p.750). Finally, a qualitative study exploring the concepts of counter-space and CCW in a program for underrepresented neuroscientist students indicated that certain counter-space processes (involving supportive community spaces) were closely related (Margherio et al., 2023). In this study, counterspaces were theorized as supportive, identity-affirming community spaces, in which individuals belonging to systemically marginalized groups have their experiences and skills validated, thus challenging deficit model narratives (Carter, 2007; Yosso et al., 2009; Case & Hunter, 2012, as cited in Margherio et al., 2023). Margherio et al. (2023) found the framework's assumptions to be validated and supported by the concept of counterpaces, implying that student strengths can support fostering healthy, dynamic, and inclusive community spaces. Taken together, recent research supports the validity of the CCW framework as one that can be effectively applied across educational contexts to explain how a strengths-based approach leveraging marginalized student experiences and knowledge can bolster community health and academic success (Denton et al., 2020; Habig et al., 2021; Margherio et al., 2023; Tolbert Smith, 2022; Zoch & He, 2020).

A review of recent applications of the Community Cultural Wealth framework (Denton et al., 2020; Habig et al., 2021; Margherio et al., 2023; Tolbert Smith, 2022; Zoch & He, 2020)

highlighted CCW's applicability to this study. CCW is fundamentally a strengths-based framework. As such, it can facilitate examination of the lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths that Indigenous youth carry with them to school, the primary purpose of this study. More specifically, because this study sought to understand how student voices can contribute to the decolonization of education systems and expand culturally diverse and enriched school practices, it required a theoretical framework that explains how student voices (and the knowledge and experiences expressed through those voices) are as an asset that can positively contribute to education systems. Hence, the CCW framework supports decolonized and equitable communities will be fostered as students' voices, experiences, and knowledge are explored, encouraged, and incorporated into curricula and school practices.

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP)

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) developed from the foundation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy research that values and affirms communities of color and furthered these concepts by asserting that education systems share in the responsibility of maintaining these communities' cultural identity. CSRP is grounded in recognizing and reversing the negative impacts of settler colonization on the education of Indigenous communities. Disparities in the educational achievement for Native American students are evident, and CSRP integrates Native culture into education systems to eliminate these disparities. CSRP challenges educators to develop pedagogies that encompass cultural and linguistic competence for students in their communities of origin while ensuring equal access to mastery of the dominant culture (Paris, 2012, p. 93). In this model of cultural sustainment, language and culture must be integrated into all aspects of education, including curriculum, classroom culture, and any other

learning environment with which student interfaces (Paris & Alim, 2017). The more students deeply connect to their language and cultural identity, the more positive educational outcomes will be. Still, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy advocates for a view of the language and cultural practices of racialized students not as a bridge to be used to move them to closer approximation of white-middle class ways of doing and being, but as valuable in their own right" (Mizell, 2022). Like CCW, CSRP is an asset-based framework that emphasizes equality in access to opportunity for all racial and ethnic communities and challenging dominant power structures.

The original tenets of the culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) framework were established by Paris (2012) and Paris and Alim (2014). Scholars introduced a revised set of tenets in 2014 (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Lee, 2021; Subagyo, 2023). The current framework positions CSRP as a set of educational practices that respond to the need for greater cultural sensitivity and inclusion through pedagogy, instructional methods, and teaching practices (Lee, 2021; Paris, 2021). In comparison to CSP, McCarty and Lee (2014) argued that given the current linguistic, cultural, and educational realities of Native American communities, CSP, in these settings, must also be understood as culturally revitalizing pedagogy (p. 101). Historically, the theory was inspired by the need for increased cultural sensitivity in education settings during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021; Paris, 2012; Werito & Nez, 2022). In the 1980s and 1990s, the multicultural education movement highlighted the importance of recognizing cultural diversity in school environments, spearheaded by scholars such as Sonia Nieto and James Banks (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021; Werito & Nez, 2022). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, alongside Ladson-Billing's (1995) introduction of the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework and the re-emphasis of Critical Race Theory (CRT), researchers were drawn to focus

on the experiences of students of color (Paris, 2021). Though introduced earlier, the culturally sustaining pedagogy framework has gained increased recognition during the past decade and has evolved to include a greater focus not only on people of color and revitalizing the cultural values, practices, and assets of Indigenous students (Subagyo, 2023).

The CSRP's successful application through educational research in recent years supports the framework's validity (Lee, 2021; McCarty & Brayboy, 2021; Subagyo, 2023; Werito & Nez, 2022). For instance, Lee (2021) applied CSRP as a model to explain how pedagogy can be improved by incorporating culturally relevant and sensitive practices and components. Similarly, McCarty and Brayboy (2021) applied CSRP as a guiding framework in exploring how Indigenous learning practices are assets that ultimately improve student capacity and motivation, thereby contributing to a more equitable education environment. The researchers found a variety of Indigenously inspired approaches to pedagogy that were found to support more equitable environments, such as deep listening, the recognition of diversity, and the amending of curriculum content (especially history) to incorporate multicultural perspectives rather than relying on Eurocentric storylines and narratives (McCarty & Brayboy, 2021). Research has also indicated that integrating CSRP may foster educators' critical thinking to recognize and connect with the learning style needs of diverse student bodies more successfully (Werito & Nez, 2022). In a global context, CSRP offers a guiding framework that may aid educators in dismantling the injustices perpetuated by colonization and thus incorporate diverse perspectives in developing solutions to modern-day crises such as climate change (Paris, 2021). McCarty and Lee (2014) described the following as the three components of CSRP:

> CSRP attends directly to asymmetrical power relations and the goal of transforming the legacies of colonization. CSRP recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what colonization has disrupted and displaced (focusing on language education policy and practice). CSRP recognizes the need for community-based accountability. (p.103)

CSRP is a fitting theoretical framework for this study because it explains how incorporating culturally relevant content into curricula can help teachers better attend to the needs of diverse learners, thereby improving prospects and outcomes for today's diverse student populations (Lee, 2021; McCarty & Brayboy, 2021; Paris, 2021; Subagyo, 2023; Werito & Nez, 2022). This study sought to understand how diverse student assets can contribute to the decolonization of education curricula and the revitalization of culturally enriched school practices. Therefore, CSRP was well-suited to this study because it provided a framework for combining effective pedagogy with student assets to create more equitable—and thus decolonizing—educational experiences for all students. What is unique to Indigenous communities is their commitment to one another and the strength embedded within them to heal together in kinship. The subsequent portion of the literature review explores the power of healing as one community.

Healing Through Community

Current literature on healing aspects of the community is relevant to this study, which seeks to understand how Indigenous knowledge and practice mobilized in school community settings may contribute to the sustainment and revitalization of culture. This body of literature illuminates how community may contribute to intergenerational healing, including the healing of trauma resulting from colonialism, Indigenous oppression, and marginalization (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Hübl & Avritt, 2020; Morales et al., 2023; Rivera et al., 2022). In this context, it

is useful to understand the concepts of *intergenerational wounds* and *intergenerational healing*. *Intergenerational wounds* refer to the negative impacts and traumatic consequences of oppression and colonialism that are often carried and passed from generation to generation of Indigenous populations. Such wounds may manifest in the form of substance use disorders, psychological pathologies, such as anxiety, hypervigilance, depression and other mental health issues, and generational poverty (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Hübl & Avritt, 2020; Morales et al., 2023; Rivera et al., 2022). For instance, maladaptive behavioral patterns such as violence, abuse, substance abuse, and/or depression resulting from felt oppression may be observed and mimicked by younger generations and thus continued until *intergenerational healing* occurs (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Hübl & Avritt, 2020). *Intergenerational healing* refers to the process of addressing intergenerational wounds and trauma and reclaiming agency, autonomy, identity, and psychological well-being through resilience, adaptive coping, and the dismantling of systemic racism and implicit bias (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Hübl & Avritt, 2020). Research has suggested that community plays an integral role in facilitating more effective intergenerational healing (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Hübl & Avritt, 2020; Morales et al., 2023; Rivera et al., 2022), given that community is the backbone of most traditional Indigenous values, including the ‘Ohana and aloha values of Hawaiian culture (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Darrah-Okike, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2020).

Among the many aspects of community-based healing, the literature reviewed emphasizes the consulting and elevation of elders or wisdom keepers, the focus on connection to the land, the use of storytelling and intergenerational dialogue, and the practice of art and

creative expression (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Darrah-Okike, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2020; Rivera et al., 2022). Additionally, the literature frequently described using trauma-informed care and approaches to intercultural healing that foster intergenerational healing and reparation (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Hübl & Avritt, 2020). *Elders* and *wisdom keepers* may refer to members of a Native community who are esteemed, respected, and consulted in times of conflict or change. Wisdom keepers have differing names depending upon the cultural context, but the literature suggests that re-prioritizing their roles in community settings may aid in intergenerational healing through the passing of wisdom and the fostering of support and psychological guidance or counsel (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Darrah-Okike, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2020; Morales et al., 2023). Moreover, connection to nature and the land is an important component of intergenerational healing, as natural resources and land elements not only represent important aspects of continuity and livelihood but also correspond to a variety of spiritually significant practices or values that may ground a sense of identity, meaning, connection, significance, and purpose among Indigenous populations (Henderson et al., 2021). Finally, intergenerational dialogue and creative or artistic expressions may be mobilized in community settings to facilitate healing. Storytelling and dialogue can foster a remembrance that may anchor a younger generation's sense of identity, belonging, meaning, and self-determination (Morales et al., 2023), while culturally relevant and rooted artistic practices may provide healthy outlets of emotional expression, allowing for reflection and healing (Rivera et al., 2022). In conclusion, it is apparent in the literature that Indigenous communities find healing through the arts, kinship, and one another. Students and families can find hope by utilizing the strengths embedded within their cultural traditions and communities.

Reframing Deficit Views Through Strengths-Based Perspectives

To further contextualize this study, I reviewed current empirical literature on asset- or strengths-based approaches to healing through community. This literature offers an account of the lived experiences of Native Hawaiians and how their Indigenous knowledge may contribute to a more equitable social climate and education system. Holistic strengths-based approaches to restorative justice and healing are gaining global recognition and popularity in research and practice (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Dudgeon et al., 2020; Ritland et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2021; Darrah-Okike, 2020). Recent research highlights the importance of cultural continuity and self-determination as foundational components of effective community healing (Dudgeon et al., 2020). A study conducted by Dudgeon et al. (2020) and colleagues suggested that Aboriginal communities that prioritize the continuation of their cultural practices and have a shared understanding of their heritage have a higher level of cultural resilience. This fosters a sense of autonomy and motivation among individuals to claim their Native identity. Furthermore, Ritland and colleagues (2020) discussed the importance of taking a holistic approach to intergenerational healing in community contexts, specifically underscoring the usefulness of a holistic approach in healing many of the physiological and psychological complications that Indigenous populations endure. For example, the authors' analytical review found that strengths-based interventions aimed at fostering self-determination, family connection, the continuance of cultural values, and trauma-informed therapeutic approaches significantly minimize the frequency and severity of substance abuse among marginalized Indigenous populations. Similarly, research has suggested strengths-based approaches that encourage Indigenous populations to leverage Native practices,

connections, and values rather than relying predominantly on Eurocentric therapeutic approaches may more significantly minimize the risk of teen suicide among underserved and underrecognized Indigenous populations (Allen et al., 2021).

Curricular and pedagogical approaches that highlight the resilience of Indigenous Hawaiian culture honor Indigenous wisdom, practices, and agency (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Darrah-Okike, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2020). Hawaiian cultural assets include, among others, ‘Ohana (family) values, the concept of the aloha spirit, resilience, gathering spaces, land stewardship, traditional crafts and practices, storytelling, dance and music, and diplomatic, community-based decision making (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Darrah-Okike, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2020). These assets can be mobilized to foster resilience, healing, and equity within local communities. Strengths-based research documenting traditional Indigenous Hawaiian cultural elements and practices highlights the notion that the aloha spirit embodies values of compassion, respect, equity, and unity—all of which may be leveraged in healing community settings to reconceptualize equity in today’s modern climate. Similarly, ‘Ohana values prioritize family connection, which may be revisited and explored through a strengths-based approach to create a sense of belonging and support among today’s marginalized Indigenous populations, thereby contributing to psychological resilience, a sense of identity, and well-being. Finally, Indigenous gatherings and practices, including Native crafts, song, storytelling, dance, and more, may be explored and revitalized to rediscover Indigenous knowledge and wisdom related to sustainable natural resource use. Such knowledge may contribute to more sustainable, equitable socioeconomic and sociopolitical climates, policies, and industry (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021;

Darrah-Okike, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2020). The strengths embedded within the Native Hawaiian culture help bridge the community's desire and understanding to reach educational sovereignty and self-determination. To break away from various acts of oppression, both are needed to reach their independence and educational freedom.

Educational Sovereignty

Culturally diverse educational spaces must recognize the various forms of Indigenous knowledge. While mainstream curricula do not often provide an educational learning space and Indigenous knowledge to coexist, educators must support Indigenous students as whole persons (Empey et al., 2021; Johnston-Goodstar & VeLure Roholt, 2020; Caetano et al., 2020; Sather, 2020; Younger, 2020). Indigenous knowledge both includes and reflects Indigenous worldviews which serves as political, economic, social, or religious objectives (Ali et al., 2021). Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013) documented the impact of haole (White) missionaries and settlers who taught literacy in hopes of converting Native Hawaiians to Christianity (p. 15). Ultimately, this encroachment spurred a movement for Kānaka (Native Hawaiians) to combat the idea that Hawaiian language and knowledge were inferior to English and led to the advent of the charter school movement in the illegally occupied state. To celebrate Indigenous students and the strengths embedded within their communities, Pepion (2020) explored how schools can acknowledge and accept the spiritual significance of Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing by creating space for the sacred. According to Pepion, creating space for the sacred is important because Indigenous peoples have learned the need to survive through care and protection of their land through observation and cultural patterns prior to being impacted by

settler-colonialism. There is a cyclical relationship among Indigenous communities to teach older children oral traditions and ways of protecting their younger relatives in daily activities and play (Pepion, 2020). Eventually, adults teach youth the skills necessary for survival, who continue to pass these down through generations. This system optimizes the natural human desire to learn outside the classroom walls while contributing to their culture's sustainability and revitalization. Bird-Naytowhow et al. (2017) explored ways in which Indigenous societies use these experiences to teach important survival and cultural skills to not only increase youth engagement, but to signify how ceremonies of relationship between youth, parents, and elders contribute to sacred character knowledge. Additionally, Indigenous knowledge is viewed as being holistic, functional, and adaptive to changes in both social and natural environments (Ford, 2020; Machado et al., 2020; Sather, 2020; Younger, 2020). In essence, there is a fluidity to the development of knowledge that is built upon and reciprocated within the community.

The mission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is to promote international cooperation in education, science, culture, communication, and information to achieve peace and security. UNESCO aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas to foster mutual understanding and deepen our comprehension of diverse cultures. UNESCO's *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), a document focused on promoting cultural diversity for the cause of world peace, contains two paragraphs referring to the need to respect and protect Indigenous knowledge. Paragraph 13 of the Action Plan of Article 12 discusses the need to create policies that preserve Indigenous cultural and natural heritage. This heritage includes oral histories, storytelling, and, notably, Indigenous

knowledge, which has contributed to broader global efforts to protect the environment and sustainably manage Indigenous resources (Rarai et al., 2022). Recognizing the contributions of Indigenous people to the fields of ecological sustainability and health is a first step toward both social equity and environmental improvement (Rarai et al., 2022).

While attempts to further erase Indigenous communities from the classroom are present, there are existing practices that help to combat further forms of erasure. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) recognizes that Indigenous populations have the right to practice and maintain their respective cultural customs and values. Following in 2007, UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions echoes earlier documents in affirming that cultural diversity in educational spaces increases the choices available to individuals, thereby bolstering and supporting human economic and educational capacities and values (Tramontana, 2023). Hence, cultural diversity can be considered a fundamental component of sustainable community development. In addition to UNESCO's support, the *Native American Languages Act* (NALA) of 1990 recognized that the status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and supported the notion that Native Americans were entitled to use their own languages. NALA argued that the United States has the responsibility to collaborate with Native Americans to ensure the survival of their culture and language (Lillie, 2023). NALA also included provisions to encourage states to remove teacher certification obstacles for qualified instructors of Native languages (e.g., tribal elders), to support Native American languages in pedagogical instruction (Lillie, 2023). The *Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act* (2006) was established to assist with funding for a range of language and culture initiatives: Native American language nests,

language survival schools, restoration programs, Native American language immersion programs, and Native American language and culture camps (Dorzheeva, 2021). Additionally, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) of 2015 articulated provisions aiming to support Native American students imbued with knowledge of their Native communities, customs, practices, languages, histories, and traditions (Dorzheeva, 2021). Furthermore, the establishment of language immersion programs in recent years has been aimed at supporting the educational and cultural needs of Native American children and, in some cases, even incorporates qualified Native elders and teachers into the curriculum or extracurricular content (Dorzheeva, 2021; Lillie, 2023). Across school types, most (77%-95%) Grade 8 AI/AN students reported having at least some knowledge of their AI/AN history, traditions, and current issues (Rampay et al., 2021). Across grades, school types, and topics, AI/AN students consistently identified family members as the most common sources of cultural knowledge. Family members were identified as the people who instructed students the most about AI/AN history, with 45% of Grade 4 students and 60% of Grade 8 students so reporting (Rampay et al., 2021). On the other end of the spectrum, AI/AN students' nonparticipation in AI/AN cultural events is also somewhat common. Almost half (45%) of Grade 4 students reported having “never” gone to an AI/AN ceremony or gathering, and 38-42% of Grade 8 students reported having “never” participated in ceremonies, gatherings, or other AI/AN activities, regardless of whether the event was held by their own tribe (Rampay et al., 2021). The steady decline in youth participation is alarming; however, the benefits of integrating a multicultural learning environment for students outweigh the negative. As youth become separated from their cultural assets, they lose touch with their sense of community, self, and the sacred. Despite these challenges, the resistance led by Kānaka (Native

Hawaiians) influenced educational leaders within the community to no longer abide to the state to meet the needs of their students. From there, Hawaiian Immersion and charter schools were established.

Hawaiian Charter Schools: Intentionality and Innovative Teaching

Because this study explored the experiences of participants at a Hawaiian charter school, contextualizing the study requires understanding the role of charter schools in fostering cultural equity and diversity through innovative teaching practices. Charter schools have transformed the public-school sector by giving families more educational choices. These independent schools of choice can design programs that meet the needs of today's families (Manno et al., 2000, p. 474). Charter schools create critical opportunities for reform; they can be treated as potential sites for cultivating school climates of respect for local identity and the negotiations of bicultural knowledge (Belgarde, 2004; Buchanan & Fox, 2003). Anthony-Stevens (2013) emphasized the potential educational flexibility of charter schools but also highlighted the challenges posed by accountability measures that limit the educational approaches that can be implemented, creating barriers to implementation of non-traditional approaches (p. 40). Research has suggested that charter schools have the opportunity to leverage a strengths-based approach, including supporting intergenerational healing through the creation of equitable, diverse student and staff bodies and, hence, communities (Burns, 2020; Cohodes & Parham, 2021; Huang & White, 2023; Larbi-Cherif & Saroja, 2022). An intentional strength-based approach can be incorporated into teaching practices and pedagogy, cultural enrichment programs, extracurricular activities highlighting Indigenous knowledge or practices, and, even more importantly, the required

curricula. The incorporation of Indigenous practices and knowledge into mainstream charter curricula may provide both Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students with the opportunity to co-create unique solutions to modern social, political, economic, or environmental problems, thereby creating the conditions that normalize shared values, mutual respect, and collaboration among diverse young people (Burns, 2020; Cohodes & Parham, 2021). Such actions may serve to dismantle longstanding implicit bias and oppression (Galloway et. al., 2019; Gay, 2000, & Tevis et al., 2022). Research and theory alike have suggested that charter schools may cultivate diversity and support intergenerational healing through novel, innovative pedagogy (Burns, 2020; Cohodes & Parham, 2021; Huang & White, 2023; Larbi-Cherif & Saroja, 2022). Charter schools that are designed to meet the needs of specific communities have been recently called *ethnocentric niche* charter schools (Fox et al., 2012). Fox and colleagues (2012) used the term *ethnocentric niche* charter schools

> to describe charters specifically established to foster an understanding of, provide instruction from the point of view of, or help preserve a specific culture such as Native Hawaiian, Native American, or East African; ethnicity such as Latino or Somali; or language such as Mandarin, Yu'pik, Towa, or Hawaiian. (p. 35-36)

Moreover, educators have previously leveraged charter schools as a context within which to navigate the flexibility of intentionally diverse schools and innovative teaching models through customized curricula and emphasis on inclusivity. For instance, charter schools have long deviated from public school systems' curricular emphasis, thereby presenting a context free of the bureaucracy that inhibits instructional innovation. In this context, Indigenous practices and knowledge may be more easily incorporated. In Indigenous communities, charter schools have been the preferred alternative to mainstream public school options. The push for charter schools

has been shaped by a combination of cultural and political factors. For example, Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (2013) shared how Indigenous Hawaiian culture-based charter schools intersected two movements: the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century Hawaiian nationalist movement and the U.S. charter school movement (p. 48). Likewise, charter schools have often demonstrated an emphasis on project-based teaching, which allows for a more natural formation of community, shared values and goals, and intercultural dialogue (Cohodes & Parham, 2021; Huang & White, 2023; Larbi-Cherif & Saroja, 2022). Meyer (2014) provided insight into the power of charter schools and their ability to incorporate Native Hawaiian teachings and lessons. For example, she connected ways of how a larger chain of gardens, communities, and creative ideas surfacing in Hawaii's food sovereignty and Indigenous education movement incorporated Native Hawaiian teachings (Meyer, 2014, p. 100). In further support, Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (2013) shared ways in which many Hawaiian charter schools, including Hālau Kū Māna, use chants and ceremony to honor specific places and ancestral figures, tell particular stories, or serve certain cultural functions, such as showing that the student is ready to enter into a space of learning (p. 55). Through the power of charter schools, parents and caregivers could choose a learning environment that not only is unique to the Hālau Kū Māna but also allows the sovereignty and freedom to work within the community as well.

Benefits of Community-Based Learning

Community-based learning can allow students to gain adaptable skills that allow them to live better in the community. Schooling and educating involve negotiating between local and mainstream approaches on community terms. The movement for community-based learning

contends that children learn to *do* school successfully only when schools engage their culture (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). Anthony-Stevens (2013) argued that community-based education has the socio-political effect of reframing power relationships between communities and schools. Restructuring these relationships challenges the popular emphasis on academic achievement as the most important outcome of schooling. In community-based educational models, relationships and competencies in communities of practice are central tenets of education (p. 33). Some researchers have noted that when students leave schools that follow such models, they can more successfully integrate into and connect with members of their community because they have gained exposure to the community in the school setting (Hochstetler et al., 2024). Baker (2019) and Veyvoda and Van Cleave (2020) reported consistent findings that students gain intercultural understanding as well as essential values enabling them to associate well with people from different cultural backgrounds. Creating intentional spaces that center Indigenous cultures is necessary to increase Indigenous student success in higher education. Goodyear- Kaʻōpua (2013) described such spaces as cultural kīpuka, or Indigenous strands of growth. Zeydani and colleagues (2021) found that community-based learning can provide networking opportunities in which students meet professionals who can assist them in their career paths. In accordance with these findings, Bang and Medin (2010) asserted within David-Chavez et. al. (2020) that "cultural practices and their connections with Native ways of knowing must be the foundation of a community-based science curriculum" (p.228).

Students gain adaptability skills through community-based learning, and these skills can be evaluated through multiple means, including practical experience. Veiga et al. (2023) found that community-based learning allowed students develop practical skills by learning from

expertise in the community. Meyers (2014) provided additional examples to support the value of community-based learning as a way to both enhance students' academic ability and build cultural community ties. Meyers (2014) wrote that the charter school Kaiao Garden

> is a link in a larger chain of gardens, communities, and creative ideas surfacing in Hawaii's food sovereignty and indigenous education movement. Kaiao is dedicated to the perpetuation of Hawaiian values and knowledge and brings this passion to daily use and practice. Kaiao is inspired by the values and impact of the Hawaiian Charter School movement, numerous cultural community initiatives and MA'OFarm. MA'O–Mala 'AiOpio is the nourishing of youth through food production. (p.100)

Similar findings regarding the adaptability of skills to students were reported by Zeydani et al. (2021), indicating that community-based learning is a tool that increased practical knowledge and skills of students. Other researchers such as Pagatpatan et al. (2020) have established that students developed positive attitudes toward their community resulting from heir active role in assisting in addressing community problems. An historical antecedent to this finding is ancient Hawaiians' development of the ahupua'a system of resource management, a means to live sustainably in an island ecosystem. This system recognized the interconnection between the mountains and the ocean, and the roles fresh water, rain, and ocean played in linking the two (Meyer, 2014, p. 99). Taken together, the findings presented here suggest that community-based learning is vital in helping students acquire adaptability skills and resilience.

Students can better themselves through community-based learning. Students can meet with potential employers, which increases their employability (Rooney & Dymond, 2022). They can also meet with experts in various fields who mentor and guide them toward realizing their careers (Pagatpatan et al., 2020). Hafeez (2021) observed that community-based learning helps

students acquire the critical thinking skills need to solve community problems. Discovering the relevance of academic content in the real world motivates students to learn. (Adhikari & Kunwar, 2023). In line with Adhikari and Kunwar's (2023) findings, Dilbaz (2023) noted that community-based learning creates opportunities for students to use their creativity to address community challenges.

Through the connection of mentorship, Vaughn and Ambo (2022) described a concept identified as trans-Indigenous education that accentuates the significance of Indigenous spatial relationships in postsecondary institutions that (1) foreground relationalities between Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, (2) emphasize reciprocity between Indigenous students and communities that strengthens nation-building, and (3) (re)center place and land-based protocols that recognize the local tribal nations where participants are physically located (p. 509). Specifically addressing the Hawaiian community, the concept of trans-Indigenous education sought out schooling, including higher education, because they wanted to learn about external systems—education, government, and economies—in order to defend their self-determination from imperialism and assert their sovereignty on the global stage (Vaughn & Ambo, 2022, p. 512). Emphasizing the importance of ongoing mentorship as a potential access point to higher education, Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (2013) and Vaughn and Ambo (2022) highlighted the need to create intentional spaces that center Indigenous cultures in higher education. These spaces can intentionally foster cultural kipuka, or Indigenous cultural growth. As defined by Vaughn et al. (2021). Cultural kipuka is equated to social-cultural spaces within educational institutions that can facilitate and nurter Pacific Islander educational success (p. 32). Ultimately,

students can better themselves through community-based learning by increasing their awareness and ability to address existing problems in the community.

Community-based learning enables students to collaborate with community members. Michael (2023) showed that community-based learning helps to promote engagement and participation in the community, resulting in strong collaboration. Similar findings were reported by Cress and Stokamer (2020) indicating, that when students engage in civic activities, such as educating community members about their rights, they develop a sense of civic and social responsibility. Coss et al.'s (2021) findings echoed Cress and Stokamer's (2020) findings. They found that working to help address real community problems deepens students' commitment to community service. Community-based learning, then, promotes community stability, as students become motivated to contribute actively and positively to community growth (Doustmohammadian et al., 2022). By engaging with the community in this way, students also reconnect with their identity and gain a deeper understanding of responsibility and care. An example of this can be found through an organizer's words from Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana (PKO). He stated:

> Alona ʻāina embodied several layers of responsibility. At one level, it meant protecting the physical sustainability of Hawaiian lands and natural resources. At another level, it meant organizing and rallying for Hawaiian Native rights and sovereignty to achieve political standing necessary to protect the ʻāina. At the deepest level, it meant a spiritual dedication to honor and worship the gods who were the spiritual life of these forces of nature. (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, p. 54)

Rogers (2021) observed that the ongoing community collaboration that is a hallmark of community-based learning increases students' sense of belonging. It is essential to understand how relational aspects between the student and the community influence positive outcomes for

learning as well as a sense of responsibility to both self and others. In conclusion, community-based learning promotes engagement and deeper care between students and their community.

Relationship to Self and Community

Identity is an integral part of a student's social and emotional well-being (Cui et al., 2021). Knowing who one is as an individual supports one's development of personal values, self-worth, and an overall sense of belonging and security within the community. Research has found that when a sense of cultural identity is lost, or there is a feeling of disconnection, loneliness, anxiety, and a feeling of emptiness can ensue (Cui et al., 2021). Children can dissociate from their cultural identities when cultural meanings are ignored in the classroom, when they experience microaggressions, and when their cultural knowledge is devalued in favor of the dominant culture's knowledge (Krüger, 2020). However, embracing student culture in classroom settings can have a positive impact on student performance. Several studies have found that student engagement leads to higher levels of academic achievement, degree completion, school pride, and overall well-being of the person (Anokye Effah & Nkwantabisa, 2021; Suldo & Parker, 2022; Sun & Liu, 2023). By understanding one's cultural identity, Indigenous students may also be in tune with forms of wisdom that could include a holistic approach to the world through physical, spiritual, or traditional practices passed down from their ancestral teachings. Indigenous students may identify this portion of their cultural identity as sacred knowledge. Bird-Naytowhow et al. (2017) described the concept of sacred knowledge and the foundation of forming ethical relationships and responsible practices of engagement with their community. Many Indigenous communities nurture children with an emphasis on respectful relationships.

Inuit society ensures the success of developing respectful relationships for a child by creating connections through naming, birth blessings, kinship affiliations, childhood friendships, and hunting partnerships (Tagalik, 2020, p. 140). In Western academia, the notion of children creating collective well-being aligns with the development of social-emotional learning. Helping students understand what happens in the brain and body during stressful experiences can liberate them from associated triggers, interrupt patterns of thought and behavior, and contribute to positive social relationships. In turn, students' bodies and brains feel safe, and they are better positioned to learn (Kazanjian, 2024, p.235).

A related concept is self-actualization. While self-identity and self-actualization are similar, *self-actualization* refers specifically to students' belief in their ability to reach their full potential. Schools play a key role in this development by supporting students' personal growth and development. Many educational programs and initiatives in the United States, in both official school settings and afterschool programs, focus on cultivating positive well-being, social and emotional development, growth-promoting relationships, and self-actualization processes for youth (Kazanjian, 2021; Mak, 2020; Tipping & Dennis, 2022). When students are not engaged with the community, research has shown that there is a higher incidence of teen pregnancy, antisocial behavior, violence, use of substances, and dropping out of school (Kazanjian, 2021 Mak, 2020; Tipping & Dennis, 2022).

Self-actualization can be achieved by individuals who have a strong sense of self-identity and emotional well-being, leading to thriving, success, and contributions. (Kiang et al., 2020; Morton, 2022; Rehman et al., 2021). These findings suggest that intentional communities

focused on intergenerational healing can foster self-identity, belonging, and psycho-emotional well-being and, ultimately, help students self-actualize. Students who are self-actualized, in turn, can make broader socioeconomic and political contributions. For example, Morton (2022) highlighted how trauma-informed instructional practices in school settings can contribute to positive, cohesive, inclusive, and collaborative school cultures that encourage social and academic performance. Morton's (2022) research pointed to ways in which charter schools can leverage trauma-informed practices in tandem with a strength-based approach to community-building and Indigenous cultural inclusion. Additionally, Rehman and colleagues (2021) demonstrated the connection between mindfulness practices implemented in university settings and students' improved psychological health, specifically as indexed by social connection and self-esteem. Ultimately, Rehman and colleagues' research indicated that social community-building, when combined with intentional mindfulness practices, can have the positive effect of fostering emotional well-being. Research has suggested that emotional well-being is an important prerequisite of individual resilience and intergenerational healing (Dudgeon et al., 2020; Ritland et al., 2020). This underscores the importance of such community-based, mindfulness practices in diverse student environments. Finally, Kiang et al. (2020) called identity formation crucial to the healthy development of a sense of purpose and existential meaning, implying that a sense of self-identity is essential to emotional well-being and self-actualization. Kiang et al.'s (2020) conclusions were drawn from data concerning student behavior in classroom environments.

Chapter Summary

Leaders from Indigenous communities, alongside educators and education researchers, have worked to foreground the integration of cultural practices in schools. They have done so by collaborating with U.S. government organizations, such as the Office of Indian Education and the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators. These efforts have highlighted the responsibility to meet the unique educational and cultural academic needs of Indigenous students to ensure that they gain knowledge and understanding of their communities, languages, tribal histories, and cultures. While legislation differs from state to state, their efforts aim to ensure that school leaders who serve this population can provide culturally appropriate and effective instruction. Such instruction can serve as an entry point for social justice-oriented scholar-practitioners in educational leadership to collaborate with Indigenous youth and their home communities to ensure culturally relevant academic needs are met.

Unfortunately, the loss of cultural practices among Indigenous youth continues to be a risk. While the existing research highlights a need to incorporate Indigenous teachings and wisdom passed from generation to generation, there is limited documentation of such integration in practice outside public charter and/or immersion schools. As such, a comprehensive examination uplifting the cultural wisdom that youth voice contributes to education stands to shed light on the formation of self-determination and self-identity while helping to create a community founded upon social and cultural support. To this end, Community Cultural Wealth and Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy are promising models to follow. These combined theoretical frameworks closely align to foundational practices naturally embedded within Indigenous teachings. It stands to reason, therefore, that research highlighting the

teachings of Indigenous communities can inform the practice of socially just and culturally inclusive education spaces that aim to meet the specific needs of Indigenous students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study identified the lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths that Indigenous youth carried into school, and explored how their voices helped decolonize curricula and sustain and revitalize culturally enriched school practices. As illustrated in the review of the literature, research has highlighted how Indigenous teachings can shape socially just and culturally inclusive educational spaces that meet the needs of Indigenous students.

School program evaluation was outside the scope of this study. The data collected directly referenced Indigenous students' cultural assets and embodied strengths. This study extended existing work on Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy by focusing on the experiences and voices of Indigenous youth and educators. Research capturing the voices of Indigenous youth, especially Hawaiian youth, was limited. As CSRP has been proven to positively impact student self-efficacy and academic performance, this study demonstrates the ways in which student narratives can enhance the quality of their education through culturally relevant methods of learning. The purpose of this research was to identify lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths that Indigenous youth carried with them into school. A secondary purpose of this study was to understand how their student voices contributed to the decolonization of education curricula to enrich school practices. The research design, setting, data collection, and analysis used for this study are outlined in this chapter.

Research Questions

To learn more about the lived experiences of Indigenous youth strengths emerging from cultural assets and wisdom and expressed through their narratives, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What wisdom and cultural practices do Indigenous youth carry with them into schools?
2. In what ways can educators support youth voice through culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogical practices?

Research Design

The appropriate method for the research study was a qualitative case study that adopted a thematic narrative design, as Lainson et al. (2020) suggested. The primary focus of the study was to highlight the knowledge of Indigenous youth, and this approach involved documenting the youth's own words and their real-life experiences. A qualitative approach was the most suitable method to gather this information, as it uncovered the meanings people ascribed to various activities, situations, events, and artifacts, as described by Lainson et al. This qualitative approach best fit the purposes of this study, as observations of cultural traditions and ceremonial practices—conducted through immersion and community engagement—could not have been possible with a quantitative approach.

Overview of the Education Setting

The unit of study for this research project was a charter school, Hālau Kū Māna, that served students in Grades 6-12 on the island of Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi. The educational program was unique in design as their focus of studies was on Indigenous-rooted pedagogy and cultural education practices, and the values taught to students were rooted in ancestral knowledge and

practices. The academy's educational model is unique to the school. It is designed around what school administrators referred to as *aloha 'āina education*. Aloha 'āina education has laid the foundation for all Hālau Kū Māna students to participate in place-based learning projects and curriculum. The purpose of the model is to build the students' sense of identity and responsibility to love and care for the land, as Native cultural practitioners. Beginning in elementary school, foundational skills of land management systems and understanding the relationship between human life with land and sea, cultural values, and language laid the groundwork for aloha 'āina education. To better understand the integration of cultural teachings that were woven throughout Hālau Kū Māna, it was important to distinguish that in the aloha 'āina education model, each grade level had a specific focus for the school year that built upon their skill level, preparing them for the following school year. The educational focus per grade level was outlined in Table 2.

Figure 1

School Entrance

Note. Images portrayed were taken by researcher. Own work.

Figure 2

Student Classrooms

Figure 3

Student Art and Entrance Into Classrooms

Table 2

Aloha ʻĀina Education Models by Grade Level

Kula Waena (Middle School)	
Grade 6: Papa Ahupuaʻa	Students learn about the ahupuaʻa (Hawaiian land management systems from mountains to the ocean) and how changes in that system over time have impacted the people and culture of Hawaiʻi. They begin to understand the relationship between the land, ocean, and people and what their responsibility is in this relationship. Finally, they practice values integral to aloha ʻāina, including the study of kilo (observation), kuamoʻo (pathway to ancestry), ʻoihana (business), and hōʻike (demonstration of knowledge), which continue throughout all grade levels.
Grade 7: Ko Kula Kai	For Indigenous communities, and kanaka Hawaiʻi, building relationships with the natural world is essential. The 7th grade Ko Kula Kai project helps students develop an understanding of the Indigenous relationship between humans and the sea. Over the year, students will spend time along Oʻahu coastlines to learn about seasonal cycles, ocean resources available within those seasons, and how to take care of and utilize ancestral wisdom to maintain those resources in perpetuity.
Grade 8: Ko Kula Uka	After building knowledge of ocean resources in the 7th grade, the 8th grade Ko Kula Uka project deepens learning within the ahupuaʻa system (geologic divisions of the ridgeline of the mountain into the ocean) by developing an understanding of the uplands. Through observation of seasonal cycles in relation to plants and places around Oʻahu, students learn how to practice sustainable living to protect, maintain, and generate upland resources and build food sovereignty in the community.

Table 2 (Continued)

Aloha ʻĀina Education Models by Grade Level

Kula Kiʻekiʻe (High School)	
Grade 9: Papa Waʻa	The study of traditional and modern sailing and voyaging can impart valuable life lessons on and off the canoe. In 9th grade, students learn these lessons via the Hawaiian double-hull sailing canoe, Kānehūnāmoku. Through studying voyaging history and gaining skills to travel along our ocean pathways, foundational values are set within the students to understand their individual role in a larger community and how they can contribute in positive ways. These foundational values and behaviors set the tone for how people interact with each other as well as the environment and world around them.
Grade 10: Papa Hana Noʻeau	Following the building of their sense of self and community on the ocean in the 9th grade, 10th grade students continue to mālama (care for and protect) the land and natural resources. The Hana Noʻeau project looks at sense of place and sustainability through the lens of conservation for the purpose of maintaining Indigenous arts, craftsmanship, and cultural practices. These practices will be learned through loea (skilled) expert practitioners, which will perpetuate Native ways of creating textiles, dyes, implements, and tools. Students will learn that there is an inherent need to maintain and protect the resources necessary to practice these arts while also adjusting practice to utilize invasive plants as part of the eradication and conservation process.
Grade 11: Papa Loʻi	This ʻāina-based experience combines knowledge of Indigenous land-use practices with current political applications and the skills necessary to advocate for sovereignty and balance for place, people, and culture. Through their work at ʻAihualama Loʻi and huakaʻi (journey/mission) to other sites, haumana (students) build a sense of responsibility and continue the school program with the content, values, and skills necessary to become leaders in their homes, communities, and the world.

Table 2 (Continued)

Aloha ʻĀina Education Models by Grade Level

Kula Kiʻekiʻe (High School)	
Grade 12: Papa Nowelo	In the 12th grade, students dive deep to discover who they are, explore their passions, and investigate their community and world. Nowelo means "to delve and seek knowledge." Students apply their learning experiences to lead efforts toward positive, systemic change and healing for themselves, their ʻohana, the kaiāulu, the ʻāina, and for the lāhui. By collaborating with experts, students work toward solutions and gain valuable experience that can guide their next steps for their future. The graduates of the school will enter the world, and the hope is that they continue to build their individual skills, contribute to the communities, and thrive.

Collaborators

As the primary researcher, I used the term *collaborator* to describe participants in the study, as I felt the engagement between the students, educators, and myself needed to be relational and collaborative. By altering the choice of words when referencing study participants, I intended to eliminate hierarchical dynamics to encourage contributors to engage authentically. Additionally, using the term *collaborators* recognizes their involvement in the design of the study, (Gregory et al., 2018).

The study's collaborators consisted primarily of junior high and high school students. However, adult educators were also invited to participate to provide insight into the strengths they saw within their students. I intentionally recruited youth and educators who attended or worked at Hālau Kū Māna. I aimed to meet with approximately ten students and three adult participants. While the main purpose of the study was to uplift youth voices, the decision to incorporate adult educators into the participant pool came from a desire to expand the

understanding of the wisdom and strengths that students may not have identified within themselves. The adult educators who shared similar cultural backgrounds with the students had the common goal of broadening the teaching of Indigenous practices to youth. They hoped to achieve this by sharing insights gained from their own life experiences. Other demographic characteristics such as gender and grade level were measured, but ultimately did not play a role in the selection process (see Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3

Student (Haumāna) Demographics

Name	Gender	Grade	Ethnicity
Mireya	Female	10	African American, Irish, Mexican, Native American
Leilani	Female	10	Palauan
Mahina	Female	10	Filipino, Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan
Keahi	Male	8	Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Native American
Kekoa	Male	8	Filipino, Hawaiian, Irish, Samoan
Kalea	Female	8	Hawaiian, Portuguese
Māhealani	Female	8	Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian Japanese, Irish, Russian
Ailani	Female	8	Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan
Anuhea	Female	8	Filipino, Hawaiian, Samoan

Note. (N = 9) Participants were assigned pseudonyms; however, they were asked to self-identify their gender and ethnic identities. Grade levels were reflective of their enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year.

Table 4

Educator (Kumu) Demographics

Name	Gender	Grade	Ethnicity
Malia	Female	10	Hawaiian, Slavic, Lithuanian, Irish, Native American
Kainoa	Male	10	Hawaiian, Puerto Rican, Filipino
Kahealani	Female	8	Hawaiian, Chinese

Note. (N = 3) Participants were assigned pseudonyms; however, they were asked to self-identify their gender and ethnic identities. Grade levels were reflective of their teaching assignments.

Procedures

The study relied on three primary forms of qualitative data collection: semi-structured individual interviews, a storytelling/focus group, and classroom observation of community-based project lessons. Collaborators were invited to be audio-recorded, and these recordings were only used for transcription and analysis. If a participant had not wanted to be audio recorded, I would have respected this request and offered to take detailed field notes instead. However, handwritten field notes were ultimately unnecessary, as all collaborators agreed to be audio-recorded and photographed.

Recruitment

I assisted school administrators in the process of recruiting both students and adult educators. The study was opened to all students and educators who were directly associated with Hālau Kū Māna and who self-identified as Indigenous and/or of Native Hawaiian descent. The collaborators' heritage was relevant because the study focused on learning from ancestral wisdom and teachings specific to Indigenous communities. Student participants had to be between 12 and 18 years old and enrolled at Hālau Kū Māna Public Charter School. Educators from the same charter school were older than 18 years.

Convenience sampling was employed to recruit six to ten student collaborators and three to five adult educators. This sampling strategy was considered the most appropriate for the study for two reasons. Firstly, the participants had to satisfy race, ethnicity, and employment requirements to align with the study's intent. Secondly, those who volunteered to participate had to attend or teach within a school that focused on cultural-based education models stemming from ancestral knowledge and teachings. As the primary researcher, I utilized phone, email, and Zoom (www.zoom.us) to contact school administrators directly, as these educators were active leaders at the forefront of Indigenous education. In order to inform the families about my presence on campus, the school administrator emailed a flyer (see Appendix B) to all enrolled families. The flyer included my contact information and virtual business card for those interested in participating in the study. The school administrator agreed to collaborate with me and allowed me to meet with the families of Hālau Kū Māna starting in September 2023, during back-to-school and community volunteer events held on the school campus. This provided an avenue to establish a relationship with students, families, and educators and explain the interest in highlighting the strengths of their ancestral wisdom and utilizing these assets as models for effective methods of learning and teaching. Upon initial contact, I provided informed consent, parent consent, and child assent forms to those who expressed interest in participating in a qualitative study about their experiences as Indigenous youth and educators. I shared during this time that the study included a semi-structured interview that would last about 30 minutes. Collaborators also received an invitation to participate in a 45- to 60-minute storytelling circle (focus group) to further discuss experiences as Indigenous students. I informed them of my intention to audio record the interview for transcription purposes only and emphasized that their

identities would remain confidential and that pseudonym names would be used in the final report. The technique of member checking (Caretta, 2016) in the transcription was utilized to develop trust and credibility and enhance validation of the accuracy of the information shared by the collaborators. The use of member checking, by reading transcripts and listening to their audio recordings, helped to ensure the proper use of language and spelling was used. Lastly, collaborators were informed that photographs may be taken of school activities, but any identifying factors such as faces or names of students or educators would be excluded to maintain confidential.

Interviews

The study included semi-structured individual interviews (see Appendix A) and I interviewed each collaborator separately. In-person interviews were conducted throughout the school day (Monday-Friday) at non-instructional times, such as morning break, lunch, or after school. These timeframes were intentionally chosen so that students and educators would not miss instructional time during the school day. Zoom interviews were available for both student and adult collaborators if they requested to meet after school hours or on weekends when I may not have been able to meet them in person. Semi-structured individual interviews allowed me to ask questions that directly address the research questions while also reserving space for the "participants to offer new meaning to the study" (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p. 24). The method used was suitable for uncovering the real-life experiences of Indigenous students who attend a school that aims to preserve culturally significant teachings and practices. With the approval of the collaborators and their parents or guardians, interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded for transcription. The internal transcription feature provided a written transcript of the

interview, which was made available through the Zoom Cloud. In-person interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder on a tablet. Following the interview, audio recordings were automatically uploaded to Otter AI (www.otter.ai), an online transcription tool that was password protected and secure. The individual interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Culturally Relevant Focus Group (Storytelling Circle)

To respect and preserve Indigenous knowledge, I used youth storytelling as the primary method for gathering data. Storytelling played a vital role in Indigenous forms of communication, bonding, and social gathering, making it relevant to this study. For Indigenous communities, storytelling was a sacred time for the community to come together, share knowledge amongst leaders, and organize. Denzin and Salvo (2020) describe the importance and the art of storytelling, where collaboration and cross-cultural learning opportunities can lead to making connections (p. 72). Similarly, other scholars have found that traditional storytelling allows for inclusion, trust, respect, collaboration, understanding, and acceptance of the strengths in both Western and Indigenous worldviews (Denzin & Salvo, 2020, p. 73). The use of a storytelling circle with participants was a natural process embedded within their culture. It provided a familiar space for learning from one another that was relevant to the study. The storytelling circle consisted of students and one adult educator, as requested by the school administrator. The intention behind having an adult educator from the school site participate in the storytelling circle was to create a sense of familiarity for students. The adult educators also helped students recall school projects and lessons that tied back to cultural and historical teachings. Collaborators within the study were asked to share their perceived spiritual, cultural, and community wisdom they brought from home to their schooling environments.

In this study, I utilized semi-structured focus groups to gain insight into how decolonizing educational experiences helped participants build a sense of self-identity and a leadership purpose within their community. Semi-structured focus groups allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my collaborators' perspectives while also reflecting on the art of storytelling. This oral tradition is commonly practiced in Indigenous communities to pass down knowledge through generations. As Lainson et al. (2020) explained, "[U]sing people's own words, not only to illustrate themes but to build a develop the analysis by examining the very specific features of how people talk about things is integral to the validity of qualitative inquiry" (p. 89). The focus group was audio-recorded solely for transcription and coding purposes. Although I offered the option to take handwritten notes instead of recording, it was not necessary as each participant agreed to be audio recorded.

Classroom Observation (Community-Based Project)

I collaborated with the educators and students at Hālau Kū Māna over the course of two weeks. Unique to this charter school, all students participated in community-based projects and curricula to build their sense of cultural identity and responsibility as Native cultural practitioners to care for the relational space between Native peoples, the land, and ocean. Each grade level was exposed to what was referred to as ʻāina-based experiences, a combination of knowledge of Indigenous land use practices with current political applications and the skills necessary to advocate for the sovereignty necessary to become leaders in their homes, communities, and the global world. For the purpose of this study, I participated in several observations of classroom activities that included the creation of Indigenous arts, harvesting of a kukui nut tree, meat preparation, and cultural practices that strengthened Hawaiian immersion

language development, song, and dance. Additional pictures and an audio clip can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 4

Students Harvesting Kukui Nuts

Figure 5

Roasting Kukui Nuts

Figure 6

Pōhaku Rocks Used As Tool for Deshelling Kukui Nuts

Figure 7

Students Deshelling Roasted Kukui Nuts

Figure 8

Smoked Meat Students Prepared

Figure 9

Students Learn Weaving Practices and Carving of Canoes

Analytical Plan

I analyzed interview data and organized it into themes using a secure and cloud-based Dedoose system. The analysis was informed by the theoretical framework Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), developed by Yosso (2005), which focused on the forms of wisdom and cultural practices that Indigenous youth brought into schools and how educators could learn from them to decolonize curricula. On a practical level, using CCW as a framework provided a sensible guide that supported the cultural foundation of the school site. The interview responses and classroom observations were then analyzed using an inductive coding process to identify emergent themes. I chose to use an inductive coding process as I wanted to allow common themes to emerge organically from the data. After I identified the emergent themes, I reviewed the data set to

ensure accurate representations of the data were made. Analysis revealed significant themes related to various forms of cultural wisdom and knowledge in that embody the circle of reciprocity, community, Indigenous forms of artistry, and advocacy.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the reliance on participant memory and self-awareness, which may have been contingent on maturity and age. Additionally, time constraints and limited funding for travel prevented me from expanding the data set, which impacted the participant sample size and the generalizability of the findings. As an outsider to the school community, I did not have built-in connections and familiarity with students and adult educators, and this may have also contributed to the study's limited sample size.

Another potential limitation of the study was its timing. The data collection process had been unexpectedly postponed until after the school's summer vacation, which may have hindered the recruitment process. Nonetheless, the study collected data from a reasonable sample size of nine students, three educators, and multiple full days of project-based classroom observation. This sample size was appropriate for phenomenological research, according to Creswell & Cresswell (2013).

Delimitations

I set out to conduct a qualitative study to investigate the Indigenous knowledge that young people possessed. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for the participants to share their perspectives and to honor their cultural teachings through storytelling and traditions. The initial plan was to recruit ten high school students and five adult educators who taught in schools that incorporated culturally relevant practices. However, due to accessibility and time

constraints, the participant/collaborator pool had to be adjusted. The data collection process was expected to take several weeks, and the primary researcher had to travel across the United States to meet with the participants at their schools. The study involved data collection from a public charter school that served the Indigenous community on the island of Oʻahu. However, this may have limited the exploration of cultural knowledge as the sample size was not representative of a larger population.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were made before the research began and only when the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Loyola Marymount University approved the principal investigator to move forward with the study. Guidelines and recommendations established by the IRB were adhered to protect collaborators from potential harm.

The primary researcher ensured that all collaborators within the study were provided with consent and assent forms before the interviews. Written consent and assent were obtained from participants before they contributed to the study. The researcher also informed participants and parents of minors that they would have full access to the study's outcome. Additionally, member checking allowed collaborators to review transcripts of their responses.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Background

The primary purpose of this study is to identify lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths that Indigenous youth carry with them into school, and a secondary purpose of this study is to understand how their student voices can decolonize curricula and sustain and revitalize culturally enriched school practices. Underlying these purposes is the broader goal of helping educators learn from their students to decolonize curricula. Despite colonial attempts to eradicate cultural teachings and practices of Indigenous communities, the resilient traditions of language and cultural teachings endure within pockets of Native communities. It is within these communities that these teachings and practices serve as a source of strength and healing. Progressive educators are called to integrate the voices and realities of Indigenous youth into formal schooling towards restorative acts of faith, social justice, and curricular representation. Although program evaluation was not within the scope of this study, the data collected were helpful in identifying areas of continuous improvement strategies in the areas of community partnership and collaboration and curriculum development.

Research Questions

To learn about the lived experiences, cultural wisdom, and strengths that Indigenous youth carry with them into school, as well as to understand how their student voices can contribute to the decolonization of education curricula, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What wisdom and cultural practices do Indigenous youth carry with them into schools?
2. In what ways can educators support youth voice through culturally sustaining and revitalizing pedagogical practices?

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part will provide descriptions of each collaborating party who participated in the study, including their family backgrounds, stories connected to wisdom and cultural practices, and perspectives on the cultural strengths they bring to school. In each narrative, I address forms of capital mapped to Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework. Additionally, I describe lessons I observed that reflect Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy. Finally, I provide findings related to the three prominent themes: circle of reciprocity, artistry, and advocacy.

Narratives

For this study, I conducted a total of seven individual interviews with students, three individual interviews with educators from the school, one storytelling focus group, and two full-day classroom observations centered around community-based learning projects. Two individual interviews took place via Zoom, while the remaining interviews, storytelling focus group, and classroom observations were completed in person.

Haumāna (Student) Narratives

Mireya

Mireya attended Hālau Kū Māna since the sixth grade and was a 10th-grade student who participated in a storytelling focus group. Originally from Chicago, Illinois, Mireya moved to the island of O'ahu as a child, and her cultural ancestry is African American, Irish, Mexican, and

Native American. Although her ancestry is not native to the Hawaiian Islands, she identified several ways in which her own Indigeneity aligns in similar ways. Mireya reflected on the values pertaining to family and community that she carries closely to her and is able to celebrate in school. These values were passed down from her grandfather's Indigenous roots in Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico and are tied to a developing love for learning language, writing music, playing instruments, and singing. Mireya's background story and experience as an Indigenous student illustrated several forms of capital described by Yosso (2005). In particular to both navigational and social forms capital Mireya shared,

> I'm a part of Mana Maoli which is a nonprofit organization that involves music, entrepreneurship, and helps students aim for economic self-sufficiency. There's a youth collective where we play music together and sometimes, we go to gigs in the community. I'm a singer, but it's really cool because we get to work with all kinds of famous musicians who volunteer and introduce us to pathways in the music field that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to be a part of before.

In addition to her love for music, Mireya shared that she and her family have adopted several aspects of the Hawaiian culture into their daily lives after moving to the islands. This has included ʻōlelo Hawai'i, Chinese dragon dancing, and the value of treating others like family. She shared her experience with her peers of bringing a demonstration of Chinese dragon dancing to Hālau Kū Māna. Mireya also shared how she has performed as a singer at different events at school. She recognizes her cultural differences but identified ways in which she holds the value of community and relationality.

> I'm not Hawaiian, but the value of respecting others, the land we live on, and working together in community is important to my family and it's important in the Hawaiian culture too. Especially in my household, they really want the best for us, but I was raised to want the best for others and so I share in that responsibility to care for others. Their struggles are my struggles and vice versa- we're all family even if we're from different lands.

Yosso's (2005) notion of linguistic capital is evident throughout Mireya's testimony. Despite English being the primary language spoken within her home, she has developed ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in and outside of school and reports a strong desire to learn the Spanish language as a way of connecting with her heritage. While she posed an interest in pursuing a degree in Hawaiian studies, she learned more about the possibilities of studying Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies to learn more about her family's cultural history.

Leilani

Leilani, a 10th-grade student at the time of the study, attended Hālau Kū Māna since the 6th grade and participated in a storytelling focus group. As a Native of the Hawaiian Islands, specifically O'ahu, she has embraced the love and philosophy of the aloha-ʻāina spirit throughout her upbringing. Although Leilani grew up on the island of O'ahu, she shared her wisdom of embracing her Palauan ethnic identity. A daughter of immigrants, Leilani shared cultural and family values that were instilled by her parents and aligned her purpose for her plans in the future as a leader. Leilani shared,

> I've learned the value of being a good leader whether that's helping from the front or the back on projects. I feel a deeper connection with the ʻāina and with communities that the

> school can access when I can help. I also like to wear traditional Palauan clothing at school, and it just builds up who I am and affirms my identity and my family's too. I can teach them about where my family comes from and that's really cool because we're all different.

Humbled by others, Leilani was described by both peers and educators as embracing her Palauan virtues and being from a matriarchal and matrilineal society. Leilani educated us through stories on the history of Palauan women and their role in the community holding positions of power. A peer described her as being "humble and someone the class looks up to." An educator described her as "our Palauan goddess, she's quiet, and she's a leader in every way. It was in her DNA, and she brings that gift of leadership." This particular educator continued to describe Leilani's gifts of wisdom that she brings to the school community:

> Historically, the Palauan women are the center for kinship, and they hold the power when it comes to money, economics, leadership. She is all those things and has strengths beyond her years. She gets that from her family in the way that she was raised. She is a nurturer and cares for others here; she will come to school in her traditional dress, brings Palauan food to share, and teaches cultural practices specific to Palau.

In line with the qualities others shared about her, Leilani demonstrated interest in the areas of advocacy and social justice. She stated,

> Even though I don't have Hawaiian blood, I was still born and raised here and share some of the same struggles that the Native Hawaiians have. When the ʻāina and our water is poisoned, we become sick. So it's important to me to still march and stand up for what is right because we're all one community. This is our home.

Leilani shined light upon a source of ongoing outrage among Hawai‘i residents: U.S. military activities that have degraded the water quality and land, referred to as the Red Hill water crisis. Leilani described an environmental disaster and public health crisis resulting from leaked fuel by the U.S. Navy impacting over 93,000 residents' health and denying their right to clean water and undamaged land. Leilani's leadership and desire to fight injustices that harm Hawai‘i residents are two examples of Yosso's (2005) social and resistance capital. These two forms of capital spoke directly to a network of people and community resources as well as the skills a person develops while being a part of a community that actively challenges inequality and oppression (Yosso, 2005). Leilani also embodied Yosso's notion of aspirational capital, sharing that a goal of hers is to "have a job that helps people that have been harmed." Although unsure of her future career path, Leilani expressed a desire to help others facing injustices in the community.

Mahina

Mahina, a 10th-grade student, was also a Native to the island of O'ahu. When asked to describe her cultural identity, she laughed and said, "Aunty—I'm a mixed plate." Mahina continued to share that her ancestral lineage stems from multiple Indigenous communities including those from Hawai‘i, Philippines, Samoa, and Tonga. Unique to her peers, she has had several family members who have attended Hālau Kū Māna, including her mom and a brother. Mahina reflected on her experience as a student and the importance for her and her family to attend a school where she could continue learning Indigenous practices reinforced at home. When reflecting on cultural wisdoms inherited by her family, Mahina shared several that aligned with Yosso's (2005) linguistic capital such as the practice of ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language), ōlelo Tonga (Tongan language), hula, and oli (chanting). Mahina stated,

> As a family every morning we oli together before leaving the house. It's more of a spiritual practice for my family that sets the intention of the day and so that we don't bring any pilikia (trouble/distress). It's also a protection for us when we oli together before bed- in a way it's a prayer that we offer. So I get to practice that at home, and we also chant at school every day to ask permission to enter the classroom before learning. I think it's important because we should always ask permission before entering someone's space. It also helps me a lot with my language development when we hula.

As Mahina discussed cultural values, it became clear that the meaning she ascribed to language extended beyond the ability to communicate and connected to a deeper sense of spirituality and respect of relational space. She continued to highlight her sense of pride in the linguistical art of learning to oli with her family at community events that benefit restoration practices of the land. Mahina shared,

> It helps bring me closer to our people because me and my mom on Saturdays and Sundays volunteer out in Waimanalo to restore the Pā at Pāhonu and limu. We'll offer oli alongside community and it makes my family and the kūpuna proud to see that this is still a practice kids can do.

When asked to share the importance behind sustaining linguistical and cultural practices, Mahina responded, "We have to practice so we can teach our keiki and they teach their keiki and so on. As long as our cultural practices exist, we as kānaka will continue to exist. It's our responsibility." Another aspect of wisdom that Mahina shared included the benefits of intergenerational living. Specifically, she cited the benefit of living with her 93-year-old great-grandmother who is a weaver. Mahina articulated the benefits of learning to weave as a young

girl and shared how the art of weaving is a family tradition that has helped with community gatherings, fundraisers, and has become a skill she uses to self-soothe and has taught others at school for projects. She shared, “It’s a skill that has been passed down through generations. We weave for fun and it’s a gift that we share with our lāhui. It makes me proud to know my history and to share this skill to show how we’re all connected.” In addition to sharing this skill with her peers, it has inspired her to continue her schooling to work as an artist. While this would make her the first child in her family to attend college, Mahina shared that the desire to continue her education and return to the community to practice as a weaver and artist inspires her to “provide for my family more and doing something I’m good at.” As Mahina reflected on this developed wisdom, specifically the art of weaving, it was evident that Yosso’s (2005) familial and aspirational forms of capital has been exhibited throughout her lifetime. Mahina's weaving skills were passed down to her from her family, showcasing their familial capital. This knowledge helped her aspire to be the first in her family to attend college, thus developing her aspirational capital.

Keahi

Keahi, an eighth-grade student, attended Hālau Kū Māna since the beginning of his sixth-grade school year. He self-identified as kānaka maoli (Native Hawaiian), as well as a descendent of ancestors from China, the Philippines, and a First Nations tribe located in Canada. Born and raised on O'ahu, Keahi jumped right into the pride he finds in his family’s legacy. He shared,

> My family’s legacy is that we’re musicians and waterman. On my dad's side, everyone's a musician. My grandpa was a famous musician on the Big Island and then all of my uncles, they're the Cruz brothers and they all play in popular bands and they all tour

> around the world. On my mom's side, my grandpa and great grandpa are both in the Hawaiian Waterman Hall of Fame and they broke many world records. Oh! And my great grandpa was one of the founders of a surfboard called the hot curl, which allowed surfers to go faster and turn better.

Keahi shared that he has loved the water and being a craftsman since a young age: "I love to work hands-on and that's something I bring to this school. I'm not a great musician, but I've learned woodwork and carving since I was little." Unique to Keahi's story is that his grandfather helped to build the foundation of Hālau Kū Māna. He shared, "I want to be an architect like my grandpa who built this school. I want to carry the legacy and honor him and just raise my keiki the way I was raised. Just to love community, be family, work in the 'āina, and live aloha." One of Keahi's teachers described him as "very humble, patient, and kind." They shared that, at school, he is a natural leader and helped others during community-based learning projects and, at times, has taught educators at the school Hawaiian stories of the creation of their islands and of sacred locations on the island. While the examples of cultural wisdom above align with Yosso's (2005) familial and navigational capital, Keahi highlighted additional forms of community cultural wealth. Keahi's linguistic capital, for example, was apparent in his love to oli with his family and at school, as well as in his overall adoration of ōlelo Hawai'i. Keahi reflected on his Hawaiian language development over the last 12 years at home and seven years in formal schooling:

> It's hard to remember it all if you don't practice it so that's why I appreciate using it at home and at school. A lot of words don't directly translate into English, but there's value and power in our ōlelo Hawai'i. So a few buddies of mine we'll try to just speak

> Hawaiian when we're out having fun. It's in our blood. So, yeah- it's a shared kuleana, even as kids, to keep the language alive. If not us, then who?

In alignment with his understanding of kuleana (responsibility) to the Native Hawaiians, Keahi touched upon the responsibility to care for and protect the ʻāina and those living in Hawaiʻi. He reflected on his experiences with family to engage in protests and marches as a means not only be a leader in the community, but his school community as well. Yosso's (2005) form of resistance capital was exhibited through his recollection of kuleana to protect others:

> As a family (and school) I've been a part of marching to protect Mauna Kea when the telescopes were being put up. Recently we have had conflicts with the Navy letting jet fuel into our water source and land on Red Hill. There's a lot of people in our school that have come out of Hālau Kū Māna who are respected Hawaiian practitioners and stand with us in protest. Whenever we do any activism to protect our people, it puts into perspective, like, we're like, actually fighting for something important—our lives, our ʻāina, the Sacred Mauna. I feel like with these activities, it just reinforced the connections between us. And it really just, like, shows me that. Like, we're kids, but we're not alone.

Keahi's recollection of activist movements mirrored that of his peers who also described a sense of responsibility to protect the land and the people residing in Hawaiʻi.

Kekoa

Kekoa, an eighth-grade student, reported his ancestral lineage can be traced back to the Philippines, Hawaiʻi, Ireland, and Samoa. A Native to the island of Oʻahu, Kekoa reported Ilocano (a dialect in Tagalog), Hawaiian, and English as the three languages commonly spoken

in his home. When asked about the cultural knowledges he carried within him, he spoke to the importance of language. Kekoa stated,

> Back in ancient times Hawaiian language was banned and that was really bad. But King Kalākaua resurrected the use of the language and hula, which is beautiful. I was raised speaking different languages, but being a student at this school gives a better understanding of the need to practice our values and to speak ōlelo Hawai‘i, to dance and to just keep living Hawaiian.

While Kekoa's narrative highlighted Yosso's (2005) linguistic and cultural forms of capital, his recalling of family traditions involving food preparation also represented an additional layer revealing familial capital. Kekoa shared his admiration for his father for working hard to provide for his family and teaching him the importance of food sustainability from the land they reside on from an early age. Kekoa recalled, "I learned everything from him- how to plant our vegetables, harvest and care the land, even go fishing with spears and prepare traditional meals." As he expanded upon learning from his father how to practice sustainable living to protect, maintain, and build food sovereignty for his family and community, it was evident how these developed skills were an extension of Yosso's (2005) concept of familial capital.

In addition to the wisdom described above, Kekoa echoed the importance of collaborating with his community to not only give back but also learn from others—a value his family taught him. For example, Kekoa shared how his family often volunteers to participate in community initiatives to improve the environment around them. Kekoa reflected qualities of both social and navigational forms of capital by stating,

> My family and school do a lot of projects outside and inside of school that where we're going out into the community. We're always trying to make connections with communities around us to share resources and sometimes it ends up that we get opportunities to be a part of programs to help us navigate school or think about future jobs.

Although there are several years until Kekoa reaches adulthood, he discussed how learning of the importance of caring for the environment from his father has shaped his desire to pursue a degree in environmental engineering or agriculture. In Kekoa's words, "My family didn't go to college, but I want to help make money to provide. It's important for me to live and work on the islands and to maintain the land." Kekoa's desire to obtain a higher degree in the future is a clear representation of Yosso's (2005) form of wealth described as aspirational capital.

Kalea

Kalea was an eighth-grade student who identified as Hawaiian and Portuguese. Although a Native to the island of Oʻahu, her family's lineage primarily is traced to community called Pāhoa on the Big Island. Kalea's description of the Indigenous wisdom she carried aligns with Yosso's (2005) notions of familial, linguistic, and social capital.

Kalea shared that her love of artistry stems from her family's knowledge of dancing hula, speaking ōlelo Hawaiʻi at home, and through weaving leis. She explained that all three overlap, and that, while there are seven methods to weaving leis, she felt that she has mastered the Haku, Hili, and Wili styles. Kalea shared,

> I use these styles a lot in my hālau where I dance, but I learned mostly from my family. The Haku style you can braid almost any type of flower or leaves to match your

> traditional wear, the Hili style is a solid braid made with vines or ferns and looks like a rope, and the Wili style is more of a twisting method.

Kalea continued by sharing that, at school, she has taught alternative forms of weaving and "techniques I learned from my tutu [grandmother]" to students and teachers who are not are not as familiar with them. Kalea explained that she also brings the wisdom and knowledge displayed through the art of dancing hula. Kalea shared that she and her family have been active members in a hula group called Hālau Hula ʻO Hokulani where she practices the art of dance, oli, ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, and weaving together in one learning space. She reported,

> Practicing the language is most important to me because of our Hawaiian history of trying to be erased and still, even, illegally occupied. It's important because there's a lot of meaning and ike (knowledge) in the words and most of our ancestors were banned from speaking our own tongue and the language kind of died. So parts of history and parts of us as kānaka were lost. So through dance I'm able tell the stories of our land and of our people. When we dance, chant, or hula together I feel complete. And at school I like practicing with my class because maybe it makes my friends feel complete too.

Kalea's story and the mastery of language, dance, and weaving were only a few examples in which Yosso's (2005) various forms of capital were reflected. In addition to the examples provided above, Kalea also spoke of her ability to network with groups of people and tap into community resources that benefit her family. She explained that she can network with adults and peers within Hālau Hula ʻO Hokulani, as well as within her Christian church community, through volunteer opportunities and community projects, including feeding the homeless, land restoration, and trash clean ups.

Māhealani

Māhealani, an eighth-grade student whose ancestral lineage came from the Hawaiian Islands, China, Philippines, Japan, Ireland, and Russia. As a Native to the island of Oʻahu, she described the benefits of having a multi-ethnic background. Māhealani believed that due to the majority of her family being born and raised in Hawaiʻi, she identifies most closely with cultural traditions stemming from the Hawaiian islands and the Philippines. Māhealani reflected throughout her interview aspects of what Yosso (2005) would categorize as a form of social and familial capital. She stated,

> I think what people miss out on about the people from Hawaii is that we're much more than just a community and we are so strongly rooted together, rooted in our culture, and it just simplifies life for me because I know where to go if I need help. Because everyone knows each other in the community and there's a network of support. We treat everyone like family here and that's how we get through it.

Māhealani described the value she has learned from her immediate family through acts of volunteering at both community fundraisers and through sponsored events hosted by her place of worship, St. Johnʻs Catholic Church. She described ways in which she has learned to be social with others and "just talk story with everyone—make them feel welcomed and be kind because that's how we were raised to treat everyone like family." She continued to reflect on forms of social capital:

> The school has a lot of connections and pilina [relationship or connection] in the community as well. A lot of people know Hālau Kū Māna and what they do in the community so in a way it's like an offering or exchange. So it's uplifting when we can go

> out to the public and actually show that we perpetuate and live these values like cultural values and importance as well. That's how my parents raised me so it's nice to have the same values shared when I'm at school too.

The last form of capital described by Māhealani is linguisitic capital. Although English is primarily spoken at her home, she discussed ways in which her family also speaks ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi and Tagalog throughout the day at home. She reflected on the benefits of speaking both languages at home and also this culutural practice being reinforced at school. She discussed the benefit of being multilingual in that she's able to "pick up on language" easier and practice while at school.

Ailani

Ailani was an eighth-grade student whose ancestry traced back from a town called Papakōlea on the Big Island. Although a resident of O'ahu, her ancestors are Natives of the Hawaiian Islands, Samoa, and Tonga. Growing up on O'ahu, she has primarily identified as Polynesian, but loves the variety of cultural practices and differences within her own home. "We mostly speak English, but my parents speak to us in and out with Samoan and Tongan as well. I can understand Samoan and Tongan better than speaking it." In addition to linguistic capital, Ailani shared ways in which familial capital also exist within her home. For example, she described her mother's talent as a lei maker and shared that she herself has learned to weave leis with her mom. She stated,

> I grew up with weaving, lei making, paddling, etc. So I guess that's how I made my contribution to our lāhui. So like, you know, how all of us are trying to find a place, like, especially within our culture, how we can help our people and our culture.

Ailani shared that at school she has been asked several times by her educators to teach the class ways of weaving that differ between the Hawaiian, Samoan, and Tongan styles, relaying, "It makes me feel good when I can share something I know how to do, and it makes me feel a sense of pride. My school grades have improved a lot since transferring here." Ailani shared that feeling valued at school and proud of her cultural practices helped her improve her grades. She went on to say, "My mental health overall is better too. I'm just able to be me and it feels good to feel cared about here. I'm close to my kumus here where I have permission to call them Aunty and Uncle. The school makes me feel a lot happier."

Ailani continued to described ways in which forms of aspirational capital were relevant to her life. When asked if she has considered personal goals for after she graduates high school, she stated,

> I'm still trying to think about what I want to do, but I know that I enjoy art and drawing so I'm thinking of being an artist in this community and helping kids like me who struggled to embrace who they are and give them something to believe in. I've had kind of a hard life but our kumus here talk a lot about going to college so maybe I could do that.

She shared that, although her family members have not completed college, she holds the desire to finish a college degree, at minimum, to "keep the lāhui proud."

Anuhea

Anuhea's ancestry came from the Hawaiian Islands, Philippines, and Samoa. Enrolled in the eighth grade at the time of the study, she shared her perceptions of being enrolled for the third year at Hālau Kū Māna: "My great-grandmother, aunties, cousins, and my mom have all

been weavers, so I think that's where I got it from. Weaving from my mom and cooking from my dad." Anuhea shared cultural traditions of her family that she has found to be admirable and in alignment with Yosso's (2005) familial and social forms of capital. She described herself as "both Indigenous and Polynesian" and shared that some of the treasured characteristics of her family's cultural practices include weaving leis, dancing hula and taualuga, and cooking traditional meals from produce local to the Hawaiian Islands. Anuhea shared,

> I was just always around our Samoan and our Hawaiian community, and it just became a part of our lifestyle. In school I've help my class how to weave in different ways and it makes me happy because I feel like I'm contributing something here. I think that's a gift from my family that I bring here. Also, not a lot of students know how to dance taualuga which is the traditional style of dancing in Samoa so sometimes that's fun to teach others about my family's history.

Anuhea shared that her family for multiple generations have helped to sustain land and take care of the ʻāina (land) and wai (water), as well as help to work in community gardens near her home. She spoke to her family preparing traditional meals together, one of which is called Palusami. She described this Samoan dish as using ingredients from ʻāina, such as taro leaves, banana leaves, onion, coconut cream, and beef that is steamed. Although many recipes use similar ingredients in Hawaiʻi, Anuhea explained that, due to the vast range of differences amongst Polynesian cultures, many recipes share similar ingredients but taste and are presented differently.

Lastly, Anuhea briefly shared that, with love for the ʻāina and wai, her family has had to learn to be advocates and protectors of Native lands, which are the source of their food. She

touched upon learning from her family the value of advocacy against injustice, and she was vocal about the need to protect people, land, and sea. She provided examples of recent events that have impacted her family (jet fuel leak into O‘ahu’s water source and thirty meter telescopes being developed on their sacred Mauna Kea located on the Big Island), and she expressed appreciation for the school’s support of advocacy movements related to these events. Anuhea shared that peaceful protest and resistance is new to some of her peers, but, for her and her family, it was a regular activity. She reflected,

> We are the unexpected Natives of this land that nobody expected to rise in community and love. The Western world sees us as just kids but as kānaka we are raised to stand with our kūpuna in celebration and when in pain. If you are on this land, drink from our waters, eat the food that is grown here then you should care.

Kumu (Teacher) Narratives

Malia

Malia was a veteran educator at Hālau Kū Māna with a wealth of educational experience and over 10 years of teaching. As a Native to the island of O‘ahu, she was an educator for both the Hawai‘i State Department of Education public school system and public charter schools, such as Hālau Kū Māna. Her ancestral lineage stemmed from the Hawaiian Islands, a Native American tribal nation on the mainland, Ireland, and Lithuania. Additionally, she identified as having Slavic heritage. Malia is closely tied to her Hawaiian culture, as her immediate family members were active cultural practitioners for the Hawaiian Kingdom prior to the illegal overthrow of their lāhui (people/Nation). When reflecting on the strengths of her students, she identified several aspects of the wisdom they carry and described learning from this wisdom and

integrating it into her teaching curricula. These aspects included ōlelo Hawaii, different styles of hula, and the use of plants for medicinal and harvesting purposes. Malia explained that while many students grew up with similar backgrounds as she, her students, at times, bring a different mo'olelo (history, myth, tradition) to her classroom. She reflected,

> Every student brings a gift—tokens of wisdom from their family and the lands where their ancestors came from. As Native people our keiki learn from the first days that we come from many lands, but we're all one family to learn together. For example, my lesson tomorrow is on taxonomy and classification. So I'm like, okay, which animals do you recognize being native to Hawaii? Which hoofed animals can you think of from the lands your ancestors lived on? What are the relational stories between the people of our lands and the animals? I try to get a variety of their histories in the lessons so that they can teach and feel pride that they have the opportunity to to lead.

She continued to share ways in which she has learned to decolonize curricula through the influence of her students. Malia shared a science lesson, specifically on caring for and replanting kalo (taro plant), in which she provided opportunities for students to share multiple forms of wisdom taught to them by their families. For example,

> It's a science lesson, but I'll have them tie it into something with deeper meaning from their family. Are there special songs or prayers your family does while harvesting kalo? Does your family have any recipes around kalo or other traditional starches? Do you have traditional stories from your culture around growing native foods? These are examples of how I try to get their critical lens

> back on, and also I want to make sure they see themselves in the lessons. That's important to me—we need to be seen.

Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of intentionally incorporating students in the process as the culturally rich histories of Indigenous communities are not often represented in what she referred to as "DOE [Department of Education] schools." Malia spoke to the relevance of students seeing their histories and stories in curriculum so they feel valued and invested in their education. Lastly, Malia described intentionally listening to student voices in times of injustice as a means to show honor and care for the community. Malia articulated how students demonstrate their leadership skills and help facilitate marches and peaceful forms of protest when they see harm to the land or people being done and how they support one another in the process. She explained,

> Their activism and leadership inside and outside the school is a reason our keiki stand beside us, not behind us. They are learning to stand in kapu aloha. In protest, but a peaceful ceremonial manner with our prayers, with our chants, with our dances, with our integrity and every value that we can stand from in our kanaka way of being. Hawaiian abolition is directly tied to its sovereignty. The keiki are our pillars, and they are strong and more importantly, sacred.

Malia continued to describe how her students' strength in unity as they stood together in critical times has taught her to be more self-aware and conscious of the world around her. She also shared ways in which teaching at Hālau Kū Māna provided an avenue for innovating instructional practices to meet her students' needs and decolonizing the curriculum she develops.

Kainoa

Kainoa has been an educator for over 10 years, and his ancestral lineage can be traced to the Hawaiian Islands, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Born and raised on the island of O‘ahu, he is also a high school graduate of Hālau Kū Māna. When reflecting on his journey as a student throughout his adult life as an educator, he recognized several forms of capital that Yosso (2005) would identify as navigational, resistant, and familial forms of capital. Kainoa reflected on his admiration of the spiritual teachings, ancestral languages, and family morals that his students carry with them to the classroom. For example,

> The beauty is we have students whose families come from all over the Pacific, Polynesia, South Seas, and the mainland. I've learned a lot from our students and their families, like carving, wayfinding, ōlelo, art, history, legends, and myths of how the islands formed, weaving styles, music, and even different ways to prepare traditional meals. Also, I watch how they protect and care for each other, and it's cool to see how that relational understanding of community and ‘ohana have become a part of them. That starts at home.

Kainoa continued to share that many of his students' strengths align with a strong presence of family involvement at school and within the community and the need to "include the families on every decision-making level at school." He recalled moments throughout his teaching career when he invited students, parents, and extended family members who were musicians and cultural practitioners within the community to assist teaching students a particular skill or to share their wisdom per his teaching lesson. In return, these moments helped to reinforce his desire to work in the land, grow his own vegetables, and to live sustainably through fishing. He shared, "Students of mine have taught me ways their parents and grandparents have

raised them to harvest vegetables or to use certain foods in recipes to nourish our bodies. I've known a lot of sustainable ways of living but learning new ways through their family's traditions is great." Throughout Kainoa's account of his experience as an educator, he returned to when he was a student at Hālau Kū Māna. His reflection on his personal journey as an Indigenous student aligned to what Yosso (2005) would describe as aspirational capital:

> Like many students, my family didn't have much, but our parents and kūpuna fought for so much that I made it my responsibility to make sure that culture is active in our education system. I decided to go to college with the intention of becoming a teacher at this school so that I could help future generations learn the ike, know the stories, and know who we are as a people.

Kainoa's reflection as both a graduate of and educator for Hālau Kū Māna highlighted the importance of the relational experience in educational spaces. By inviting the wisdom of his students and their families into his classroom, he cultivated a space of continuous learning.

Kahealani

Kahealani has been an educator for over 20 years. Born and raised in Mānoa, Hawai‘i she was a high school graduate of the Kamehameha Schools and held a Ph.D. in English from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. With ancestry stemming from Ni'ihau and Kekaha, Kaua‘i and Guangdong, China, Kahealani described the importance of ongoing education for Hawaiian youth. Kahealani stated,

> We need more Hawaiians to go through and complete their education through undergrad years and beyond. I tell them that because I believe in them the same way my teachers

> believed in me. I tell them to bring their ike kūpuna (knowledge from elders) with them every day and it's so important to invite these teachings into our classroom.

She described cultural diversity as a "blessing" because students share wisdom from different Indigenous backgrounds—not only from Polynesia, but from around the world. During Kahealani's interview, she touched upon the relational aspect of learning and stated that to be an educator is to commit to being a lifelong learner, even if these lessons are taught by students. Throughout her reflection, she exemplified multiple forms of Yosso's (2005) capital wealth, including familial capital, linguistic capital, and aspirational capital. When asked to elaborate on the importance of students bringing their shared cultural knowledge into her English classroom, Kahealani shared the following:

> The word *ike* embodies the Hawaiian knowledge not just about acquiring facts, but about developing a deeper understanding of the world and one's place in it. It encourages us to be curious, open-minded, and willing to learn from our surroundings. The Hawaiian people deeply value the accumulation of knowledge, and *ike* is a fundamental aspect of developing their cultural identity.

As an educator, Kahealani emphasized the value of accumulating knowledge and recognized that most individuals are of a mixed race and ethnicity living within the illegally occupied state of Hawai‘i. She emphasized the differences between students' cultural values at Hālau Kū Māna. Although Kahealani holds a PhD, she was adamant about embracing the cultural wisdoms shared through her students and acknowledged that many of her students continue to teach *her* new lessons every day. For example:

> The majority of our students are very good with the Hawaiian language, hula, cultural dances from other cultures, lei making, and they teach me new things or help me refine my own skills. I want to make the work relevant to their learning styles and sometimes I'll have a particular student help me teach part of a lesson when I know their family's background or if they have a particular skill set that I know will relate.

When asked if any form of knowledge came to mind, Kahealani identified that her students teach her the value of 'ohana through how they treat their classmates. She shared how her students not only embody the word that translates to *family* but also demonstrate equal love and care for everyone in their school community. Kahealani explained,

> For many of our students, life is not easy, and some have a lot of barriers outside of school life. So when we step into this school, the students' nurturing one of another remind me to love them like they are our own and teach them the lessons and values we would teach our own keiki. I see them checking in on each other, which humbles me. It's important to me that the students I have feel cared for when they're on this campus because that's when students become invested in their future.

Kahealani continued to share that many students from whom she finds herself learning life lessons or cultural practices have been raised by parents who are pillars of the community and cultural practitioners. In addition, she recognized the value of her students living intergenerationally with grandparents and parents who are morally strong, responsible, and aligned to the values of Hawai'i. In her own words, "Family is everything—and our students remind us of that when they bring aspects of their family into the school."

Classroom Observations (Community-Based Project)

As a regular feature of Hālau Kū Māna each grade level participates in community-based learning projects throughout the school year. Within the range of the study, the primary researcher observed the eighth-grade class whose focus of the year was referenced as “Ko Kula Uka.” The focus of Ko Kula Uka builds upon knowledge gained regarding the ocean resources that were previously learned during their seventh-grade school year. The eighth-grade students’ community-based learning project deepened learning within the ahupua‘a (geologic divisions of the mountain's ridgeline into the ocean) system by developing an understanding of the uplands. Through observation of seasonal cycles concerning plants and places around O‘ahu, students learned how to practice sustainable living to protect, maintain, and generate upland resources and build food sovereignty in the community. For two weeks, the primary researcher observed classroom lessons that integrated Native Hawaiian cultural teachings, including, Indigenous arts, harvesting of the kukui nut trees, smoked meat preparation, and cultural practices that strengthen Hawaiian immersion language development through mele (song) and hula. The subsections below connect observational data with three components of Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) described by McCarty and Lee (2014). These three components are comprised of the following:

1. CSRP attends directly to asymmetrical power relations and the goal of transforming the legacies of colonization.
2. CSRP recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization (focusing on language education policy and practice).
3. Indigenous CSRP recognizes the need for community-based accountability.

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) is an integral part of the daily school routine at Hālau Kū Māna. As a language historically banned and at risk of erasure, integrating and practicing Hawaiian in schools is crucial. At the start of the school day, students and educators all gather to sing a traditional oli (chant) in a ceremony preceding school updates and the sharing of the intention of the day. Upon arriving to their homeroom classroom, students form two distinguishable lines (female and male) and oli (chant) together priore entering their classroom. As students and educators shared throughout the study, the daily practice of oli (chant) was not only a ho‘okupu (offering) but a traditional practice to ask permission to enter a sacred space. One student, Ailani, expressed, “to oli together is more than just asking for permission. It’s spiritual in a way and sets a tone saying that we’re ready to learn and honor this space.” Another student, Keahi, shared, “When we ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, it helps me practice speaking. I studied language in school the majorit of my life, but mostly learned at home. I like to help other students learn to speak it. Practicing every it gets easier.” Although the courses were taught in English, the use of Hawaiian language was integrated throughout the day via oral exchange.

Kukui Nut Harvesting

As a class, the eighth-grade students traveled to Kalihi Valley and harvested kukui nuts that could be used at a later for medicinal purposes, food, jewelry, hair/skin oils, and oil to burn light in lamps. This opportunity to work on a community-based learning project was made possible through the collaboration of Hālau Kū Māna and the Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services,‘Āina Education Program. The primary researcher assisted the students with collecting the fallen kukui nuts from the trees, purifying them in water, roasting

them over the wooden fire, and husked them to get out of the hard shell. To husk the kukui nuts, the use of a pōhaku (stone or rock) was used by hand to gently extract the nut from the shell in whole gently. The teachers emphasized during this lesson that the pōhaku has been used throughout Hawai‘i and Polynesia. Students shared with their classmates different ways in which their family utilizes pōhaku and common ways included: heated to steam traditional meals in an imu (underground oven), to be used as foundations when building a home or structure, and as a cooking instrument to pound traditional foods such as kalo (taro root), pa`i`ai (undiluted poi), and poi (taro root). For example, Ailani, shared with the class how her family has used the oily dry kernals of the older kukui nuts mixed with the "dry flaky parts" from the fire to create a black dye that can be used in art projects. One teacher explained to the class that Ailani was referring to the carbon particles produced by the incomplete burning process of the kukui nuts being roasted. Another student, Anuhea, shared a way in which her father has taught her to make a food condiment called ‘inamona with the roasted kukui nuts. Anuhea explained to the class how her family uses the pōhaku to grind the roasted kukui nuts with limu, shoyu (soy sauce), and alaea (unrefined sea salt mixed with volcanic clay) to gently mix with raw fish as a meal. As class ended, the students collected the cracked shells left behind, which would be composted to improve the health and nutrients in the soil for future harvesting.

Food Preparation

In addition to harvesting kukui nuts through the community-based learning project, the primary researcher, educators, and eighth-grade students prepared over fifty pounds of meat to be marinated and smoked. Students shared various ways their family prepares food, including hunting animals throughout the year to provide the meat to last through seasons. As the students

shared their tokens of knowledge, they learned that the meat they would prepare would be smoked over multiple days and sold at a community farmer‘s market on the weekend as a fundraiser to maintain the availability of cultural programs to students across the island. A science lesson was integrated and students learned about the different plants and roots grown on the 100 acres of land. These included ginger, garlic, kalo roots, kalo leaves, and various spices and salts Native to the ‘āina on which it grew. As students learned more about the plants in the mountainous areas, it was common for them to share ways in which their family harvests their crops or prepares their meals using a variety of produce. As both a participant and observer in the community-based project, the primary researcher witnessed the spirit of community spirit amongst the class as some helped prepare the spices, others marinated the meat and prepared the fire in the smokehouse.

Hula

During the classroom observation, the researcher noted that the art of hula was equally important as other aspects of the lesson. It offered a traditional form of dance for students to learn, and also helped them to express their knowledge in music and the Hawaiian language. Students collaborated with each other to create a mele (song) and choreographed a hula that represented the meaning behind the words. Together, they utilized their cultural and linguistic knowledge developed both at home and at school. Students who were more familiar with the Hawaiian language helped their peers to develop the mele, while others who shared a background in hula dancing assisted with the choreography to complement the story.

Summary

When analyzing the backgrounds of 12 participants, it becomes evident that they share various forms of cultural wisdom. Apart from Mireya, who moved to the island of Oʻahu as a child, all collaborating participants were born and raised in Hawaiʻi. While the 12 collaborators identified ancestry from Indigenous communities around the world, several identified as being Native Hawaiian descent. It is, however, worth noting that each participant shared forms of cultural knowledge that embodied multiple forms of capital weath established by Yosso (2005). A key observation of the community-based project was that the ability to integrate CSRP is possible when educators remain intentional in curricula design and integrate community partnership in the learning process.

In the next subsection of this chapter, I present three emerging themes of the data analysis pattern. The three emerging themes are (1) Circle of Reciprocity (2) Artistry (3) Advocacy. Through these narratives, collaborators provided a glimpse of the forms of capital at play in their lives and throughout their school journey at Hālau Kū Māna.

Wisdom Carried

As discussed in Chapter 2, a number of factors shape the lived experiences of Indigenous youth, particular impacting their educational journey. In the interviews and classroom observation, the collaborators within the study described personal strengths, family traditions, and culturally sustaining and revitalizing practices experienced throughout their school day. Looking across all the interviews, three primary themes emerged in the pattern analysis of data: (1) Circle of Reciprocity; (2) Artistry; and (3) Advocacy.

First, the notion regarding the importance to care for one another, including for those outside of their school community, was highlighted. Both students and educators touched upon the concept of mālama (to care for) as a reciprocal process. Next, students shared forms of knowledge which the primary researcher has categorized as artistry. These forms of artistry encompass ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian language), weaving and woodwork, music, dance, and sustainable living practices to maintain upland resources and food sovereignty in the community. Finally, an understanding of the extent to which students and educators collaborate with one another to address injustices directly impact their communities will be explored. These narratives of standing against injustices will be reflected under the third theme, advocacy.

Theme 1: Reciprocity of Care

Mālama: ʻĀina (Land) and Wai (Water)

Throughout each interview, the concept of mālama (to care for and protect) was a central factor in the participant lives. A deeper dive into understanding the concept oof mālama unearthed the importance extending beyond human-to-human relationships and carried through participants' understanding of the relationship between the land, ocean, and people. While the data highlighted several examples of this dynamic, the ones included here are representative examples that emerged from the data under this theme. This understanding included what their kuleana (responsibility) is in this relationship. As Kahealani described from an educator standpoint,

> I know they like being outdoors and being one with each other outside while learning. You can see it on their faces and the māna (spiritual energy) is just so pure when we move the lessons into the ʻāina for them to better understand. They

> know that nobody is above one another- we all play a role in sustaining this land, protecting one another, and I hope they never forget that. They're protectors of this land and learning what it means to be cultural practitioners. When our kupuna are gone- when I am gone, it's them.

Kahealani's sharing is a reflection of how the Aloha ʻĀina Education Models (see Table 2) build upon helping students understand the relationship dynamic and the importance of caring not only for one another, but for the land and water as well. The concept of education being reciprocal between educator and student was a concept which Kahealani emphasized while speaking to the concept of mālama. She discussed how while working together in the ʻāina students have shown her ways of harvesting and tending to plant life thatt "are similar but different from the way I learned growing up." Kahealani discussed how her students inspire her to keep learning "ancient ways" to integrate sustainable practices that were used by their ancestors prior to the illegal occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom. To further support her statement, Kekoa shared,

> I went to a private Hawaiian school before this, but it's very DOE based in the curriculum and just a Western narrative. And so I came here, and they teach us all the values, they show us what it means to be Hawaiian, what it means to care for each other. They let us work in the land like our ancestors did and they let us grow and learn about who we are and what role we play in sustaining this land.

Other students confided in similar experiences prior to enrolling at Hālau Kū Māna. For example, Ailani's courage of sharing how her previous school impacted her mental health negatively represented a disconnection from the student to the curriculum and inclusivity, thus, negatively impacting her school performance. At the same time, Ailani spoke to understanding

the reciprocal relationship between the health of the land, the health of the people, and the value of educational activities to themselves to one each other. She expressed,

> When we're out caring for the land, we're caring for each other. When we mālama the streams or tend to the ahupua'a (Hawaiian land management systems from mountains to the ocean) then reconnection happens. It's hard to describe it in the same way it feels, but the mana (spiritual energy) is real and when we are out there hands deep the water, the plants, just everything- my mental health feels whole and that's when I'm at my best.

These narratives reflect ways in which intentional time spent caring for the land and water, students develop a deeper understanding and learn the importance of the values of aloha 'āina education, mālama, and leadership.

Mālama: Community

Collaborators within the study also shared the importance to mālama their home and school community. In Mahina's narrative, she shared how she and her mom volunteer out in Waimanalo to restore the Pā at Pāhonu and limu. In addition, Kahea and Māhealani discussed opportunities in which they volunteer at their Christian churches.

In addition, Keahi shared about a unique time near wintertime, in Hawai'i, called Makahiki. This is a time where community members acknowledge the changing of seasons to prepare for the new year. It is meant to be a time of celebration, but also of rest with one another. Keahi described how the charter schools and other immersion schools gather to celebrate and honor traditions and ceremonial practices together. He shared,

> During Makahiki we play games that are from ancient times and we all compete with one another, but it‘s for fun. It‘s almost like a big party where we bring our own food and the schools get together and they play ancient games. But, during Makahiki, hālau hula get together and they do something where they like wash off in the oicean together. It's similar to a cleansing and then they do hula for us before going up into the mountains. Makahiki is my favorite time of the whole year because then you get to meet a lot of other kids from other schools and just get to build connection with each other.

Students and teachers supported Keahi‘s admiration to celebrate Makahiki. Malia, and educator, shared the importance of caring for community as family and giving back when it‘s possible. As a leader of the school, she is often responsible for helping to organize school and community partnerships. She stated, “Sometimes, like, even for myself, I gotta be reminded that it's not about me. Here (in Hawai‘i) we emphasize the generational importance of living. You're doing this for your keiki and their keiki. You're not doing the community work for yourself and if you are, you're in the wrong place.” Malia shared her admiration and gratitude towards working with her students as they often “teach by doing.” An example of this is watching her students care for one another and look after students who may be new to the school. She reflected on student abilities to tap into their emotional intelligence in order to care for another student or school staff on campus. She stated, “Their humility and care for one another teaches me a lot every day. There’s a piece that’s often missing in schools and that’s humanizing one another. I am so grateful for the reminder when I see them mālama each other on and off campus.” Lastly, Leilani discussed ways she sees her leadership skills as aligning with caring for the community. As a 10th grade student, Leilani discussed the importance of their current aloha ‘āina education

model, Papa Hana No‘eau, which focuses on the development of their sense of self and community to protect natural resources. She discussed ways in which she has utilized her natural gift as a leader to help with the conservation of Indigenous arts and craftsmanship. Leilani stated, “we all have responsibility to mālama the land and resources. We have to care for and protect because we are all related. If we do not protect each other there will be no sustainability of culture or of the āina.” It should be noted that for the sustainability and revitalization of Indigenous cultures to occur, it cannot happen without the care for and protection of both community and land.

Theme 2:

Artistry

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i

The art of revitalizing language within Hālau Kū Māna through daily integration is not only admirable, but it is necessary. As shared in Chapter 2, presently, especially in spaces where Indigenous populations are concentrated, it is common for schools to silence Indigenous languages, knowledges, peoples, or concerns in the formal curriculum, thus, contributing to continued systemic inequities in education (Anthony-Stevens, 2014). This invisibility only exacerbates the steady and powerful settler/colonial project contributing to the erasure of Indigenous communities in different sectors of society. Refusing this form of invisibility to continue, Hālau Kū Māna integrates the use of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i throughout the school day. Through the narratives of the students, it appeared that each student valued the meaning and privilege to be able to practice the Hawaiian language throughout the day. When reflecting on her linguistic captial wealth, Kalea shared,

> Oli, or chanting, is something we do everyday at home and school. At school we are learning hula and so we revitalized those artistic parts of our culture. Both oli and hula. Also we ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi—so conversing throughout the day with our classes and so we keep the Native tongue alive. It really helps with practicing, and it helps when you go out to the community to connect.

Similar to Kalea, Keahi provided his experience of learning Hawaiian over the formal education course for five consecutive years at his previous school. He acknowledged that although he and his family are unable to speak fluently in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, they practice every day with one another at home to maintain the language as it is an important value to both he and his family. Similarly, Māhina shared,

> My mom speaks a little ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, but it's just like small phrases and things like that. Then, my dad, when whenever we have family gatherings, my dad converses in Tongan to the whole family. I had formal training in school, but Iʻm not fluent because the language died off a little on my mom's side over sadly.

The experience of losing fluency in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi is common across both educator and student experiences. Kahealani shared, "the irony as a kānaka maoli is that I hold a Ph.D. in English, but cannot speak fluently ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. I didnʻt start the formal training of learning the language until I was in my 20s." She reflected that although her mastery of the language has developed significantly since her adulthood, she has learned a lot by practicing with her students daily. Following Kahealani's experience, Kainoa also shared his educator perspective regarding revitalization of the Hawaiian language. Kainoa states,

> I think in recent years there's been this push for revitalization of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in schools and people are getting into this kind of teaching. Even like, private schools are trying to mimic what we're doing here because they see the value of maintaining cultural practices and steering away from only Westernized curriculum. There's a lot more interest into education programs that honor our history, language development, teachings, and values. Schools are seeing that students perform better because they are seeing themselves in the curriculum. We're an extension of learning from their home which is why integrating ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi multiple times a day both as a class and as a school are so important.

As a fellow graduate of Hālau Kū Māna, Kainoaʻs mastery of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi began earlier in his lifetime while he was a student attending the school. Although it may be challenging to find those who have mastered fluency the language, many words and phrases are seamlessly woven into everyday life. In addition, students are recognizing that larger corporations are beginning to value Indigenous traditions. Kalea reflected on her older sister working at a Starbucks location and being paid extra as her language development is proficient enough to maintain conversations. She shared, "You can order Starbucks in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi now and that is pretty cool. So maybe if Starbucks is seeing our value then other larger corporations will too by the time I can work." It is paramount to acknowledge the significance of developing the linguistic art of the Hawaiian language, and to appreciate the desire and admiration of both students and educators for the expansion of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi.

Weaving and Woodwork

The art of weaving and woodwood were commonly identified amongst the students as common forms of knowledge carried with them into school. Several students shared that the art

of weaving was taught to them intergenerationally and used for a variety of purposes. Many of these weaving purposes included creating ulana (woven mats), lauhala hats, ropes, and baskets to carry or store household items. Mahina and Anuhea shared that common materials to weave with have included ʻieʻie (aerial root) and lau hala leaves. Mahina shared, "I prefer to make flower leis, but my grandmother says I'm better with weaving the roots and leaves. I've taught both at school, and I do enjoy it." Anuhea shared, "I don't know if I'm a great teacher, but I like weaving and I couldn't imagine my life without weaving. I like how it relaxes me and I think weaving helps my classmates calm down too." Similar to her classmates, Kalea shared how her mastry of weaving has been used to primary create a variety of flower leis and parts her traditional dress when dancing the tradition of hula. Kalea shared,

> I practice consistently throughout the week whether it is weaving, lei making, hula, or paddling. My family keeps me busy, but we do it together so it's not just about learning. It's intentional time together.

She continued to share the value in the creative process and being able to "highlight the natural beauty" that stems from the ʻāina.

Woodworking was a common theme amongst the male students. Keahi's story of his family's legacy highlighted the importance of hands-on crafts. He spoke to the art of woodworking not only to make outrigger canoes, but also surfboards. Keahi shared, "I love working on hands on projects. My uncles helped teach me to use traditional tools to

carve koa wood and it made me think of ways to honor my grandfather. I want to be an architect like him." Additionally, Kekoa spoke the art of outrigger building with his family. "We're big into fishing and almost all of us are paddlers so being familiar with the crafting of the canoes and outriggers is priority." He continued to share that without being able to build the outrigger canoes, his ancestors from Samoa may have never made it to the Hawaiian Islands and vice versa. He stated,

> Wayfinding is in our DNA. We cannot navigate the stars without knowing the ocean and without knowing how to make what carries us to ne lands. Carving our boats that help sustain our living here is a priority for my family, so I started working with my dad and uncles pretty young.

As an educator, Kainoa shared his perspective of how Hawaiian culture and how art history showed up across Hawaiian and other Polynesians cultures. His reflection as both a graduate and educator of Hālau Kū Māna revealed,

> It turned for me to think about how we can teach our students now and how they teach us. In this generation, our true history and way of living is coming back to fruition. Our parents and grandparents and great parents fought for so much so it's our responsibility to make sure that culture isn't just sustained but it's revitalized and actively used in our education system. That was a common mindset that our founders had too. In regular government DOE schools you won't see that.

Kainoa expressed gratitude in the cultural diversity of the school as he has seen the benefits of bringing in family members of his students to help teach. One of these teachings has been to learn of the different traditional carving tools and materials used that was used to carve wood.

This would advance both his and his students learning to other parts of the world and steers away from Westernized curricula in the area of woodshop.

Music and Dance (Chinese Lion Dance, Hula, Taualuga)

The artistry of music and dance as a form of capital was common across the majority of the stories shared. For example, Mireya, shared her interest in bringing the Chinese Lion Dance with a few friends to the school. Within the last year she and a few others performed what they have learned through a dance theatre they were connected to in the community. In addition to this form of art, Mireya also shared about her involvement with a nonprofit organization called Mana Maoli which is also interconnected with Hālau Kū Māna. As a singer in the non-profit, she shared how their mission involves three words: Hoʻokumu (build grounding foundation), Hoʻokele (forging direction and connection), and Hoʻomana (providing sustenance and empowerment). She summarized that these forms of art have helped shape a community of healing and empowerment for Indigenous students as they also focus on building upon student strengths to help the greater community.

Malia shared that while she identifies as multicultural, she was raised very rooted in the Hawaiian culture as this is the part of the family who care for her. She shared,

> My grandmother was a kumu hula and musician. She spoke Hawaiian and also used to service the Kingdom through her songs, so we had kind of a deep relationship with the with the nation. I currently reside on a property that was given to my great, great grandfather, who used to work for the Kingdom before being overthrown because they, the Americans, were afraid. They said that he was

> too powerful but let my family stay on the land that was given to us by the Kingdom for my family's contribution to hula and mele.

Malia shared that her family's legacy of musical talent is not uncommon. She expressed ways in which she has her students bring instruments to class and asks them to share either a mele (song) from their family's history or a mele that they have been working on. This welcoming of musical talent is also opened to her students who dance. Malia reflected that by gathering together in class and learning together is a form of decolonization in itself when she is asking students to bring instruments from their ancestry. She explained, "Gathering in circle in community together is of itself a form of decolonization. We sit together and talk story about what we learned from one another whether it from a dance or mele, but it is decolonized learning."

Other students who have mastered the art of hula dancing, whether it be from their family tradition or a hālau hula organization, included Mahina, Kekoa, Kalea, Anuhea, Malia, and Keahi. One student stated a summary conclusion to the importance of music and dance during a classroom observation where hula and mele were the focus of the day. They shared,

> We are living out our kūpuna's prayers through our chanting, when we dance, when we celebrate with another and eat the food that we grew and nurtured together. Even when we march together and stand against harm to our community, we are carrying them with us. It's a reminder for us of how to live together and to share in the way our ancestors did.

This student's reflection is powerful in that it captures the deep understanding of connection to one's culture and ancestry extending beyond the physical world as we know it. An innate gift of wisdom was visibly woven between the students and their understanding of the relationship

between the land, ocean, and self. Music and dance played an integral role to aloha ʻāina education, including the study of kilo (observation), kuamoʻo (pathway to ancestry), and hōʻike (demonstration of knowledge).

Sustainable Living Practices: Food Sovereignty

As a part of the students' eighth-grade Aloha ʻĀina Education model, a key focus is learning how to practice sustainable living practices in order to protect, maintain, and generate upland resources and build food sovereignty in the community. As the data revealed, this is an important concern amongst Indigenous youth.

Kekoa expressed during his interview the challenges of living healthy lifestyles as his understanding is that majority of the food shipped into the state of Hawaiʻi. As a family who comes from farming, he shared that it's difficult for local farmers to compete with larger companies. However, he said believes in the concept of food sovereignty. Kekoa shared,

> My family have worked in the farms so it's nice to already know a little bit about what we learning this year. Food sovereignty to my family has meant growing our own produce Native to these lands not just to stay healthy but to keep the older ways of maintaining systems alive.

Kekoa continued to by providing examples of spearhead and deep sea fishing as a common practice to gather protein with his father to contribute to family meals. As he expanded upon learning from his father on how to practice sustainable living to protect, maintain, and build food sovereignty for his family and community, it was evident how these developed skills were an extension of Yosso's (2005) concept of familial capital. In

addition to Kekoa's family integrating food sovereignty, Anuhea's family also reproduced ways of sustainable living. Anuhea shared ways in which her father has taught her to grow produce, use salts, and other parts of the natural land to create spices to season their meat. Earlier in this chapter, Anuhea described how her father to make a specific condiment called inamona, which is also an example of students contributing to food sustainability practices. Her classmate, Keahi, shared about his experience of growing up with a grandmother who he reports is full Hawaiian. He reflected,

> She's your typical Hawaiian grandma. She's well into her 80s and every day is working in the land, teaching us the old school ways of irrigation and growing our own food. The way I understand it now is that there's no separation between us, our food, and water. If we don't nourish what we put in our body that impacts us as a people.

He continued to share about his concern for the future as this class has learned more about climate change and the impacts this has on the environment. Keahi also shared about the importance of understanding environmental and humanitarian disasters that directly impact the ʻāina and wai, such as the Red Hill Bulk Jet Fuel Storage Facility leak contributing towards contaminated water and climate change influencing erosion of the land. Aspects of this crisis will be briefly touched upon in the next subsection titled, Advocacy.

In addition to students, Kahealani shared from an educator perspective the value in learning with the students about food sustainability. She recalled that as a child she did not learn these ancestral wisdoms of caring for the land in the private school she attended.

In reflection, she shared the realization that when she is working alongside her students during the community-based projects, it affords her an opportunity to learn *with* and *from* her students. She stated,

> It's nice to see the students working together, but I learned a lot about their families during that time, too. We have many students who come to us from homes of cultural practitioners and it's wonderful because we can invite them into class at a later time to help teach students and myself new material. So, I get to learn from the students and their families about cultural practices from Tonga, Palau, Tokelau, Mexico, etc.

As the climate of the world changes, it is an appropriate time for students to increase their understanding of the concepts of food sustainability and sovereignty. Through their science lessons of working in the land, the students will continue to grow in the knowledge of caring for the O'ahu coastlines, seasonal cycles, mountain resources available within those seasons, and how to take care of and utilize ancestral wisdom to maintain those resources in perpetuity.

Theme 3: Advocacy

Standing Together Against Injustice

The final theme that arose throughout the data provided by the students is related to the first theme: mālama (to protect and care for). In some capacity, each student or educator mentioned at some point the importance of protecting, caring for, and standing up against injustices faced by not only by the Native Hawaiians, but environmental and humanistic crises that would affect any resident in the state of Hawai'i. One of the reasons contributing to the push against forms of injustice may involve the historical context of Hawai'i remaining an illegally

occupied state within the United States and the lasting effects this has had on the people whose land have been stolen and in some areas, destroyed. Further explained by Malia,

> And that's what's confusing for people Native to this land. You're seeing the land of the free, but how can we be free if we are still illegally occupied? The ʻāina is Native to our people, and right now, there's no freedom. The Kingdom was overthrown, and our kids know that we have to fight back still to protect what our kupuna protected for us. This is not America; this is the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Hālau Kū Māna holds pride in their development of cultural practitioners and leaders in the community. The values of leadership and protection of the people and land are woven through each grade level to expose the students towards real life application of advocacy. For example, in Grade 11, the focus of the school year combines knowledge of Indigenous land-use practices with current political applications and the skills necessary to advocate for sovereignty and balance for place, people, and culture. Through their work at ʻAihualama Loʻi and huakaʻi (journey/mission) to other sites, the haumana (students) build a sense of responsibility and continue the school program with the content, values, and skills necessary to become leaders in their homes, communities, and the world. In the 12th grade, students dive deeper to discover who they are, explore their passions, and investigate their community and world. Students apply their learning experiences to lead efforts toward positive, systemic change and healing for themselves, their ʻohana (family), the kaiāulu (community/village), the ʻāina (land), and for the lāhui (nation/tribe/people). By working with experts, students work toward solutions and gain valuable experience that can guide their next steps for their future. As such, the students attending Hālau

Kū Māna are well-versed in understanding the need to protect and care for others when they see matters to be negatively impactful on the community.

During several interviews, students expressed the negative impacts caused by the Red Hill Bulk Jet Fuel Storage Facility leak which contributed to the contamination of water for around 90,000 residents. This act of land destruction was not only committed by the United States Navy but was also attempted to be covered up. Across the island of Oʻahu, residents, including the Hālau Kū Māna school community, stood up against the U.S. government and participated in marches to protest in front of the Iolani Palace. Keahi shared,

> The water at my house started tasting different, making me and my family feel sick. And that fuel tank feeds water from where it was all the way down to Hawaii Kai. So like, all these different families were affected and the ʻāina too was just damaged.

Other students shared similar stories and acknowledged that their families became ill with headaches, migraines, cancer developments, neurological disorders, nausea/vomitting, and the development of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. When asking students how they see being visible in protesting against acts of injustice can help develop solutions, some responses included the following:

> Yes, it made everyone more conscious because obviously people know about it, but like, a lot of people just brush it off. And so when people started, like, protesting and doing stuff to make it more seen, it was like everybody flipped and started like, Oh wow this is an issue. (Keahi)

> Whenever, like we do, like, activism, activities, and marching movements it really puts into perspective, like, we're like, actually fighting for something important. The amount of people that also want to rally together brings awareness to the movement. It really just like, shows me that. Like, we're not alone. This fight is to protect everyone and bring justice. (Anuhea)

> We march, but as a people we're very peaceful. When we march we offer oli and chant together. In a way it's a spirtual protection for us, but at the end of the day we're all working together to stand up for what is right. All we want is for our people and the residents here to be safe, but the Navy poisoning us is not right. Parts of our sacred land are damaged forever. Our people are sick. Their families are sick. When will the harming of us end? (Māhealani)

Māhealani continued to share that her understanding and power in the school participating in several protests and marches is a way for students to develop their leadership skills. She shared, "A lot of people who have come out of Hālau Kū Māna are respected Hawaiian practitioners. We are not violent people, but we are here to say 'no more'." Māhealani reflected on how she and her family were very active in the protesting against telescopes being built on Mauna Kea located on the Big Island. As a family, she and her 'ohana joined thousands in standing in between the U.S. military and law enforcement in opposition of their sacred mountain being built on a few years ago. She argued, "we never see telescopes being built on top of or inside a Christian church or another place of worship on the mainland, so why build on ours?" Some

students drew parallels between the adverse effects of the construction of the Dakota Access Pipelines on Native American territories.

The students collectively recognize that injustice can have a major impact on individuals and communities as a whole. They are concerned not only about harm being done to Indigenous communities and communities of color in their own country but also in other parts of the world. In a time where division is increasingly visible, the students' understanding their purpose, advocacy, and leadership skills are timely.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, I presented data from interviews with students and educators at Hālau Kū Māna Public Charter School. Throughout their narratives, they shared various Indigenous wisdom and cultural practices they carry with them, many of which have been taught to their families over multiple generations. In addition, educators contributed by identifying strengths they see within their students and ways in which their students' knowledge of cultural values and practices inspires and contributes to the decolonization of their lesson plans. Students play a crucial role in achieving Indigenous sovereignty and should be afforded opportunities to shape their educational experiences. I identified three themes through my analysis: reciprocity of care, artistry, and advocacy.

In examining the emerging themes and considering existing data on Indigenous communities, I address three discussion points in this chapter. First, as evident in the literature and my research, Indigenous youth bring a variety of forms of capital to the school. Second, Hālau Kū Māna Public Charter School leverages and builds capital for the benefit of its students, fostering a learning environment of culturally sustaining and revitalizing practices. Third, Indigenous students thrive in learning environments where their ancestry is honored and visible in multiple aspects of their school campus.

Following a discussion of these points, I will present recommendations. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a reflection and recommendation for including Indigenous student voices in research.

Cultural Capital and the Indigenous Youth Experience

Indigenous youth carry with them a wealth of knowledge that often goes unacknowledged or unseen in K-12 public school settings that do not prioritize integrating culturally sustaining and revitalizing practices. The purity in caring for one another and their desire to further their skill development in their ʻōlelo makuahine (Native language) are indicative of the familial and linguistic capital they possess. Familial capital, defined by Yosso (2005) as the cultural knowledge nurtured among familia (kin), or extended family, carries a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition and provides a foundation of kinship for many students who attend Hālau Kū Māna (p. 77).

Examples of familial capital were present in all collaborators' narratives, as they spoke of their family traditions, ancestral history, and cultural practices that remain present in their daily lives. Students felt empowered by their multiethnicity but felt special pride in their Indigeneity. This form of capital served as a source of physical and emotional support both inside and outside of their school. There were numerous examples of this shared in the interviews, most notably by Mahina, who spoke of the value of intergenerational living. The study's collaborators demonstrated a clear understanding of the cultural practices and forms of wisdom that have benefitted them throughout their lives. They understand the value of their rich history, as well as the lasting impacts of settler colonialism specific to their lāhui (people/nation). In addition, they recognized that, in many important ways, Hālau Kū Māna is distinct from schools run by the Department of Education, and they considered these distinctions beneficial to their learning process and a primary reason to attend school.

Students attending Hālau Kū Māna come from all over the island of Oʻahu. Naturally, the student population and the eudcators are socioeconomically and culturally diverse. When I spoke with educators, they shared that many students generally live in lower- to middle-class communities and have attended low-performing and under-resourced schools. While few families are an exception, many students' families benefit from receiving community support and resources. Social capital exists in the form of support for students from persons beyond their immediate families. In many stories, students spoke to the community resources that provide food resources and connections to extracurricular activities such as paddling and dance or music lessons. These resources also include volunteer opportunities for the students to help with cleanup and land restoration. For example, Mireya participated in a non-profit called Mana Maoli. Mana Maoli was established to serve the local community of Hawaiʻi by providing music and entrepreneurship opportunities. The organization supports youth in becoming economically self-sufficient by connecting them to famous local musicians, a partnership that can be a pathway towards financial independence and potential career opportunities.

Finally, collaborators' hope that their education will enable them to help support their family financially is an example of aspirational capital. Although most collaborators are years away from entering higher education, this type of capital serves as a source of motivation for their future educational endeavors. Their narratives reflected the desire to honor their families and the skill sets they learned from them. Keahi, for example, has plans to become an architect to honor his grandfather. The art of woodworking is a skill achieved under the training of his grandfather and uncles, and he sees value in working towards its mastery. He said, "I want to carry the legacy and honor him, and just raise my keiki the way I was raised. Just to love the

community, be family, work in the ‘āina, and live aloha.” Kekoa’s plan to work in environmental engineering or agriculture is another example of aspirational capital. His inspiration comes from his father, who has taught him since he was a young boy the importance of food sustainability practices, which require him to mālama ‘āina (to care for or protect the land).

Theoretical Implications

Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework challenges deficit-based characterizations of communities of color. It highlights the need to focus on the assets and strengths present in these communities. In addition, this theoretical framework highlights the value Indigenous and other marginalized communities bring to broader society by emphasizing counter-narratives and building upon strengths. The intention of this study is to disrupt mainstream curricula that do not recognize that value. The study necessitates a theoretical framework that focuses attention on how student voices (including the knowledge and experiences expressed through those voices) are an asset can positively contribute to education systems for Indigenous youth.

Culturally Sustaining and Revitalizing Pedagogy (CSRP) provides a framework for educators to reconsider how family and community engagement can foster student learning (Lee, 2021; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Subagyo, 2023). To begin, school administrators and educators must look inward and self-evaluate how colonialism continues to show up in curriculum and instructional practices. This requires the courage of self-reflection, ongoing program and policy evaluation, and the willingness to push against injustice and commit to the long haul of resistance. Interrogating the mainstream White middle-class norms of the Western world (individualism, separateness, White-dominance, transactional relationships) is no easy task, but it

is necessary. It requires educators to be intentional in curricular choice, lesson planning, and teaching practices to foster an inclusive and diverse classroom open to Indigenous wisdom, languages, teachings, and ceremonial practices. In doing so, scholar-practitioners utilize the community's strengths to create culturally responsive ways of educating their youth. CSRP can serve as a navigational tool and movement throughout all levels of education to improve opportunities for learning for communities of color, particularly for Indigenous communities. As connections across the global world expand, educational institutions must place value and adopt education models that support a multilingual and multicultural society, inclusive of Indigenous cultural practices.

Hālau Kū Māna: Leveraging and Building Capital

In addition to the capital students bring into the school, the learning environment of Hālau Kū Mana enriches the students. Consequently, Hālau Kū Mana serves as a multiplier of capital and a pathway to uncover the latent forms of capital existing within each student.

Aspirational Capital

Yosso (2005) defined aspirational capital as the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers (p. 77). Hālau Kū Mana students may arrive at the school with aspirational capital, depending on age, maturity, and influence of their family. However, they further develop aspirational capital throughout their school years as the educators encourage a commitment to pursuing higher education. While many families encourage youth to continue their education through college, the students also work with the educators to review career assessments to evaluate student strengths, identify colleges in and out of the state, and explore financial aid options for which they may qualify. In addition, the school

helps sponsor college trips around the islands of Hawai‘i and exposes students to colleges on the Pacific mainland. The school provides scholarships for students whose finances may not allow them to travel for educational purposes. Two collaborating students expressed gratitude that these scholarships covered the cost of travel and food, which would have otherwise been a barrier. One student shared, “I didn‘t know there were so many degrees that I could study about when I grow up, but now I learned about so many options out there. I’d really like to learn Spanish.” While many students were interested in college, few were familiar with the application process, as many had parents or caregivers who did not attend college. Because of this, the students spoke about the value of working collaboratively with the school in the future when it is time to apply to college. Many were interested in obtaining college-level degrees to return and work in Hawai‘i.

Linguistic Capital

Almost all collaborators said that speaking multiple languages is important to them, and Hālau Kū Mana provides all students the opportunity to learn languages. Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences and the notion that students of color arrive at school with multiple languages and communication skills (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). Hālau Kū Mana provides a pathway to greater linguistic capital for students who may or may not come to the school site speaking multiple languages by using daily practices of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, hula, music, and art projects with the students. The majority of collaborators mentioned these practices as being their “favorite to do each day,” and it is worth noting that a majority felt that, by practicing ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i throughout the day, they felt more connected to the ‘āina, community, and their ancestors.

Familial Capital

For many students at Hālau Kū Mana, their school is an extension of their immediate family. As such, it is a space for students to both share the cultural wisdom learned in their home environment and develop new knowledge through school activities. Several students referred to their school peers, educators, and community members they met working on community-based projects using the word ‘ohana, which is a telling indicator of their perception of their relationship. Anuhea and Leilani shared views reflective of familial capital about a community organization they work closely with through Hālau Kū Mana, called Papahana Kuaola. Papahana Kuaola creates functional economic sustainability using an environmental health education model. The organization believes Hawaiian knowledge shapes the decisions that sustain Hawaiian culture and Native ecosystems. In addition to collaborating with community organizations, Hālau Kū Mana works closely with the families on campus, and educators often develop close-knit relationships with families to meet students’ needs. These close relationships are, without a doubt, key to the success of their students. As Ailani stated, “I call most of my kumus (teachers) either Aunty or Uncle because they are more than just my teacher. I can tell they care about me, and this school is a safe place for me throughout the day. I love being a student here because I’m just happy.” These examples of familial capital provided a sense of community, comfort, and support as students and educators felt.

Navigational Capital

Navigating capital refers to the skills of maneuvering through social institutions that, historically, were not created with communities of color in mind (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). In addition to supporting students in developing aspirational capital, Hālau Kū Mana establishes a

pathway to navigational capital through their partnership with the local community college and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Throughout the school year, educators and students collaborate with local colleges to expose students to what life looks like for college students. In addition, students are connected to a program called Purple Mai‘a which is a nonprofit organization that exposes Hawaiian students to the S.T.R.Ē.Ā.M (Science, Technology, Research, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Art, ‘Āina, and Math) learning experiences. Ailani, Anuhea, and Keahi shared their experiences participating in the “Future Ancestors” program built within Purple Mai‘a. Future Ancestors focuses on inspiring, empowering, and activating students to amplify traditional knowledge and practices through the use of contemporary technologies and innovation. Laying the foundation for future explorations into Indigenous innovation and entrepreneurship built around Native Hawaiian values and perspectives. Through these programs, the school creates a pathway to meaningful learning experiences, including studying at a university, and helps them develop new skills and extend ancestral wisdom and competencies needed to thrive in the modern world.

Social Capital

Hālau Kū Mana provides opportunities for students and their families to develop social capital by directly connecting them to networks of community resources which are instrumental in providing emotional support and are a navigation tool through society’s institutions. For example, through the Youth Sustainable Sciences Internship Program, students visit the Hale Tuahine Farm to learn various aquaponics and sustainable gardening skills. This is one community resource closely tied to the school. Another is the Kōkua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services’ ‘Āina Education Program, which provides one community-

based project for the students. Yet another promising resource is the ʻAihualama Loʻi at Lyons Arboretum at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, where students also engage in community-based projects for learning. A primary focus of ʻAihualama Loʻi at Lyons Arboretum is participating in community-driven processes for organizing student educational resources, developing connections with community organizations, and building educational advocacy.

The alumni network of Hālau Kū Māna is vibrant. The former students are actively involved in the school's programs and maintain a close bond with the teachers and current students. Some have even returned to become educators at Hālau Kū Mana. Another way they stay connected is by participating in the annual Alumni Waʻa Camp where both current students and graduates of the school are able to join one another and participate in activities together.

Resistant Capital

Yosso (2005) described resistant capital as knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (p. 80). By attending a school focused on Native Hawaiian values and cultural practices, the students learn about the history of the Hawaiian islands, including the harmful impacts of colonization. Several students reflected on how their deepening understanding of historical injustices—including forms of physical and cultural erasure—has influenced them to want to remain active in the community and advocate for themselves and others. Furthermore, Hālau Kū Mana's Aloha ʻĀina Education Model provides a natural transition for students in Grades 11 and 12 from building the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for community leadership to actually applying their learning and leading efforts toward positive, systemic change and healing for themselves, their ʻohana, the kaiāulu (community, neighborhood, village) the ʻāina, and for the lāhui (people/Nation).

Thriving Through Visibility

Students at Hālau Kū Māna spoke to the importance of feeling seen and valued on their school campus. Several students did this by highlighting the differences from their past educational experiences in other schools. While some students spoke to feeling unseen at their previous schools, others went further and spoke to the detrimental impact this feeling had on their mental health. Collectively, students discussed how their daily mood, perception of school, and their overall grades improved since becoming a student at Hālau Kū Māna. Students spoke positively of the school's academic rigor, outdoor education model, and lived values asmajor factors in their success. Being "accepted for who I am" and not feeling that they had to be "molded" into an individual not aligned with their true identity were also common factors. In addition, students spoke to the close relationships they had with both the educators and school staff at Hālau Kū Māna—often describing them as their family. Students shared that this bond allows them to confide in their teachers if they are having a rough day or if they need help with a school assignment. It was evident that a community defined by the absence of judgment and the presence of mālama helped students feel visible and, ultimately, thrive

Implications for Practice

Hālau Kū Māna's inclusive approach to honoring students' forms of cultural knowledge should serve as a model for other K-12 schools. One way Hālau Kū Māna can continue to shift away from deficit views and build capital is by partnering with other charter or immersion schools around the world to expose their students to cultures outside of the Hawaiian cultures. There are many students who attend Hālau Kū Māna who are not Native Hawaiian but are Indigenous to other parts of the world. Several students expressed interest in learning more about

other forms of Indigenous pedagogy worldwide. As a learning opportunity and an offering of wisdom to other Indigenous school communities, the school may consider collaborating with neighboring states or countries to learn from and exchange ways to integrate Native forms of wisdom throughout their curricula.

Implications for PK-12 Educational Settings and for Higher Education

PK-12 and post-secondary institutions must ensure that Indigenous youth have access to resources and learning opportunities that support Native wisdom and cultural teachings on the school campus and in the community. In addition, PK-12 and post-secondary institutions should consider how they can integrate cultural values and knowledge to reflect the students in their school community. This would require an extended invitation to parents, students, cultural practitioners, and community leaders to meetings where developments and decisions impacting educational programming would occur.

Policy Implications

While this study did not specifically examine policy, it is important to acknowledge that there is a responsibility and need for the United States Department of Education to adhere to and honor the sovereignty of Indigenous communities. In addition to creating policies that do this, there is a need to address and resolve the disparities of funding provided to charter and immersion schools. As an educator of the school, Kahealani shared her perspective:

> It's still a reality that we don't have as much funds as a government school and get less funding because we are a charter school. I think we get paid around half of the funding that a DOE school would receive to educate our students. It makes it hard to maintain programming for our students and it also makes it difficult to

> retain good teachers because it's too difficult to survive here with not enough money.

Kekoa agreed with his colleague, explaining, "Our administrators work really hard to write constantly for grants, but we always need more funding and it's a barrier we face compared to what DOE are receiving from the state compared to us." The United States Department of Education must re-evaluate and re-structure funding and financing by to create equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Indigenous Students and Families

Recommendations for students and their families will be described in this section. The first recommendation would be to continue to share your stories and continue to show up in educational spaces that do not traditionally welcome your voices. Show up to School Board meetings and ask questions. The second recommendation is to listen to the needs of your children. Students can be innovative thinkers and emotionally wise beyond their years. Give them the space to voice their educational needs. You must continue to advocate for your needs and those of your community. The input from parents and students can significantly impact the decision-making process for educational programming. By involving families, schools can become a safe haven and help students achieve their dreams. Students are more likely to thrive when their families are involved in their learning. Your participation is essential, and schools are better because of your presence. You and your children matter.

Recommendations for Educators

The experiences shared by students and educators in the study inspired the following recommendations directed to all educators and school administrators.

Staff and Training

First and foremost, ensure that there are school administrators, staff, and educators of diverse backgrounds who are representative of the student body. Hiring staff who share similar backgrounds to the students may help students feel more connected and able to ask for support in areas of need (mental health, links to resources, language development). This may also help foster healthier community and family relationships, which, in turn, may help the school more effectively meet students' needs. Additionally, if there are educators who share similar backgrounds with the student body, faculty may be more sensitive to the reality of the barriers students encounter. Lastly, it is important to provide educators opportunities of ongoing training. Training should encompass a variety of topics, including student mental health, social-emotional wellness, culturally relevant and sustainable practices, and diversity in teaching and learning practices. While institutions of higher education often have departments that lead Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, PK-12 school districts can use professional development opportunities to build DEI initiatives that address disparities. Educator input would be key, and all professional development experiences should create space for educator leaders to actively collaborate with each other to improve the experiences of their students of color.

Leveraging Capital

Another recommendation is for educators to explore how we can leverage our own power within institutions to provide avenues that foster the success of students. We can support students

across PK-12 and higher education settings by leveraging our resources to provide extra assistance. Recommendations include promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion on your school campus; advocating for scholarship funding; positioning yourself on student admission boards; directly connecting with committees and boards responsible for addressing these issues; attending School Board meetings; and creating connections with community organizations and families. These initiatives can help create a more inclusive environment for all students.

Curriculum Choice

Another strategy requires educators to re-evaluate the narratives highlighted in the classroom. This requires educators to reconsider narratives that are reinforced in textbooks, in assignments, in assigned readings, and by guest speakers. By re-evaluating the narratives that are platformed in your classroom or school, educators are forced to recognize how lessons potentially cause harm to students of color. This ongoing evaluation of curriculum choice would open the door to new narratives that may be more culturally inclusive of the student body.

Healing Spaces

Educators hold the capacity to provide spaces not only to learn but also to heal. As reflected in many students' narratives at Hālau Kū Māna, their school and educators created a sense of safety in the learning environment, which allowed students to grow— intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Educators can play a unique role in students' lives by creating classrooms that serve as spaces of healing. This does not mean that educators must or should play the role of a mental health provider for students. However, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that fosters a sense of kinship and belonging among students. Educators can provide a space for students to showcase their talents and traditions to be used as

teachings in their courses. Additionally, they can adjust their lessons to incorporate the needs of their students. This could be through integrating cultural traditions to memorialize their loved ones or by integrating cultural practices that honor specific teachings or holidays unique to the student.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research examining the cultural assets of Indigenous communities should continue to highlight students' voices to understand their experiences and their views on how best to improve their educational experiences. Additional qualitative data on students' experiences and parents' input could help drive changes in PK-12 and higher education settings. Research that captures the unique experiences of Indigenous students can augment quantitative data and help educators understand their students' needs better. In order to measure the long-term impact of culturally relevant immersion programs on the academic performance and social-emotional well-being of students, future research may need to leverage additional funding to expand these programs. This could help to provide a larger sample size and a more diverse range of participants, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of these programs. Additionally, increased funding could help to provide more resources and support for students and educators involved in these programs, further enhancing their effectiveness.

Chapter Summary

This study captures the stories and cultural knowledge Indigenous youth bring to an exemplary school. Youth voices highlight the benefits of an asset-based approach to schooling—one that supports Indigenous youth and educators in decolonizing curricula and serving their communities. While much was learned in this study, questions remain: What educational needs

of Indigenous youth are still not being met in school? As educators and scholar-practitioners, how do we further support Indigenous communities to ensure educational sovereignty? In what way do parents or caregivers of Indigenous youth think the school community needs to better meet their children's academic needs?

This research could continue by expanding the collaborating participant pool and attempting to recruit upper-class students from the high school. It would also be significant to repeat the same study in three to four years to compare the original responses and trace how their forms of cultural knowledge and capital have shifted and evolved. Another way to further the research would be to expand the study by collaborating with other charter and Hawaiian immersion schools across the islands to compare ancestral forms of knowledge and decolonization techniques. While the existing research highlights a need to incorporate Indigenous teachings and wisdom passed from generation to generation, there is limited documentation of such integration in practice outside public charter and/or immersion schools. As such, a comprehensive examination uplifting the cultural wisdom that youth voice contributes to education stands to shed light on the formation of self-determination and revitalization of culture within schools. Lastly, creating educational spaces that are culturally sustaining and revitalizing for the school community must include the voices of those living within the community. The answers cannot be provided without first-hand narratives and direct contributions from Indigenous youth and their families. Without this being done, reaching Indigenous education sovereignty cannot be achieved.

Epilogue

This dissertation began over a decade into the healing of my own inner child work. In the process of grieving the passing of my father, I found peace in the reconnection with the lands and oceans where both of my parents were also raised. Although the distance of Pacific Ocean separated these sacred lands, the similarities and cultural values of my ancestors to these lands realigned my mind, body, and purpose in life. In these spaces, I felt the reconnection with ancestors I'd never met but only learned about through family stories and photographs. Since then, I've learned to find *reconnection in the disconnection* from the Western world. Perhaps *finding comfort by leaning into the discomfort* of loss isn't as scary as it initially feels. I am reminded that caring for homegrown vegetation, medicinal plants, language, and folklore and following my grandmothers' and mother's recipes helps me feel connected once again.

I embarked on my research study hoping it would be illustrative and informative for academia to find the cultural values and practices to support better Indigenous student learning. My hope for this study's findings is to influence academia to place the values, strengths, and teachings of Indigenous practices (reflective of the community) at the forefront of community-based learning. Still, I did not anticipate the life-changing impact the students and educators would have on me as a researcher. The collaborators in my study excelled in reclaiming their youthful voice and power. Their courageous voices and call to advocate and care for others are immeasurably valuable. Through the power of their voice, these youth are healers of the larger community. Being able to shed light on their cultural assets, both as individuals and as a community, has been a life-changing experience and a privilege, thanks to the values instilled in them and shared with me.

APPENDIX A

Storytelling Circle Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How did you choose this charter school to attend? What aspects did you like about this school in particular?
2. What cultural practices of yours do you see helping to strengthen school communities and support other Indigenous students?
3. Are there stories or lessons your family taught you while growing up that you carry with you when you come to school?
4. How do you see schools integrating ancestral knowledge or teachings from your heritage to support Indigenous students best?
5. Are aspects of your cultural teachings and practices not taught in school? What would you want to see added to support your learning?
6. How might your educational experience differ as an Indigenous student if your school did not incorporate your cultural teachings?
7. Student voice and empowerment can begin conversations that lead to continuous improvements to support your learning. In what way do you see your student voice as being a leading force to create change, and how do you view your role in your community?

Student Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. I'm interested to know about your cultural practices and the history of where your family is Native to. Could you walk me through your family's cultural background?

2. Are there stories or lessons your family taught you while growing up that you carry with you when you come to school?
3. How does your school best integrate ancestral knowledge or teachings from your heritage to support you as an Indigenous student? Are there benefits? Are there disadvantages? What do you find most helpful?
4. Are aspects of your cultural teachings and practices not taught in school? How can we, as educators, support you better?
5. Is attending a school that supports your cultural identity important to you? If so, why or why not?
6. How do you see your role in this school and the community?

Educator Interview Questions

1. I'm interested in knowing about your cultural practices and the history of where your family is Native to. Could you walk me through your family's cultural background?
2. What influenced your decision to work in a school whose mission and values are rooted in Indigenous teaching practices?
3. How do you see schools integrating ancestral knowledge or teachings from your/your students' heritage to support Indigenous students best?
4. What cultural strengths do you see in your students that they bring from their home community to support their learning?
5. Hālau Kū Māna's teaching expands beyond mainstream curricula. In what ways do you see the decolonization of curricula benefitting the students you teach?
6. What resources are in place to support this education program for your students?

7. What school resources do you need as an educator to continue teaching culturally relevant and sustainable programs for Indigenous youth?
8. Student voice and empowerment can begin conversations that lead to continuous improvements to support student learning and advocacy. How do you see student voices as being a leading force to create change within the greater community?
9. As an adult, how do you sustain cultural practices and ancestral forms of knowledge within your own family and classroom?

APPENDIX B


SEEKING PARTICIPANTS
Hi
THE WISDOM WE CARRY: UPLIFTING INDIGENOUS YOUTH VOICE
IN COLLABORATION WITH HĀLAU KŪ MĀNA
• ARE YOU A STUDENT BETWEEN 12-18 YEARS OLD?
• INTERESTED IN SHARING ABOUT THE STRENGTHS YOU BRING TO SCHOOL AS A STUDENT?
• DO YOU LOVE YOUR CULTURE, SEE YOURSELF AS A LEADER, AND WANT OTHERS TO LEARN FROM YOU?
EDUCATORS, WE WELCOME YOU TOO
If you are curious to learn more please reach out to:
Claire Kēhaulani Ramírez at cramir24@lion.lmu.edu
or via the QR Code above
Loyola Marymount University

APPENDIX C

https://flip.com/2286b691

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