

Looking to the past to Teach Future Generations: A Call for Hānai Pedagogy

- Proposal Abstract ID: 1580762
- Proposal Strand: Strand IV: Deepening the Impact of Education Research and Research to Practice
- Session Type: Roundtables
- Proposal Abstract Status: Complete / Locked

## Author(s)

---

1. RB

**Robin Brandehoff, n/a (she/her/hers)**

Position:

Assistant Clinical Professor

Department:

School of Education and human development

Organization:

University of Colorado Denver

Office Phone:

[REDACTED]

Email:

[REDACTED]

Role:

Speaker and Main Contact

Biography

Robin Brandehoff is an Clinical Assistant Professor in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education and oversees the Justice, Equity, and Div

Have you presented this content at other educational conferences within the last 2 years?

Yes

If yes, where?

AERA 2023 Chicago

## Section II. Abstract Information

---

### Target Audience Level

- Intermediate

### Keywords

- Diversity
- Other: Grow Your Own Program

### Short Abstract

Ka Lama is a grow your own teacher preparation program located in Wai'anae, Hawai'i, which encompasses the largest community of Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) individuals in the state. This qualitative case study inquired: How do Ka Lama teachers use Kanaka 'Ōiwi traditions, language, and culture in their own pedagogies? Kanaka methodologies and Goodyear-Ka'ōpua's (2016) Methodological Ropes for Research and Resurgence were used to guide and interpret semi-structured interview data from 16 participants and 50 hours of fieldwork observations. What emerged established the seven principles of Hānai Pedagogy (Author, in press) including: Cultural Identity, Languaging, Relationships, Community, Service, Talk Story and History. Hānai Pedagogy moves to dismantle racial injustices to construct educational possibilities by challenging oppressive systems impacting AANAPI residents of Hawai'i and the ongoing effects of colonialism in the islands. This pedagogy calls for culturally sustaining critical thinking and implementation in curricula to seek liberation through mentorship, education, and community connectedness.

### A. Statement of the issue.

Hānai Pedagogy is founded on a culturally and linguistically affirming education encompassing core principles to spotlight Indigenous identity and cultural epistemologies. Central to this framework are the familial relationships that mentorships cultivate and sustain between educators, students, and the community. To interrogate consequential education research and include marginalized voices, this framework is purposefully hopeful and collaborative. It is drawn from historical as well as current experiences and forms of learning of AAPI groups who have held on to their historical and educational capital through painful acts of colonialism and cultural violence to pass on their ancestral knowledge to future generations.

### B. Literature review.

Every culture has a term for chosen family. In Hawai'i, we used Hānai, the closest translation being a person who is adopted kin. This concept of familial connection is common in communities of Color, particularly those that have experienced social and racial oppressions and colonization (Smith, Yzaguirre, Dwanyen, & Wieling, 2022). Indigenous connectedness honors and strengthens familial bonds which exist within a community linking itself to the central family unit of grandparents, parents, and children (Ullrich, 2019). Red Horse (1997) described the potential of a family unit as being both biological and spiritual, meaning that a family can be related by DNA and/or by their principles, values, and connectedness. Anishinaabe female community elders are present at the birth of all children, welcoming them into the tribe through songs and stories (Talaga, 2019). As Anishinaabe children grow up, they learn about community kinship through their biological and spiritual family members within their community, thus preserving the past as they step through to the present. In Brazil, familial-based community connections link individual tribes to a greater whole and functions as a response to colonization, enslavement, and separation dividing tribes and families across the country (Barretto Filho, 2018). History and colonization have taught us that oppressive divisions of a community can at once separate tribes and peoples, but also bring them together in solidarity and as a single unit.

In my research with youth in areas lacking resources and formal mentoring programs, young adults often describe mentors from their local community and their favorite teachers in familial terms: "Other Mother," "Uncle/Tio," "Auntie/Tia" or "Cousin/Primo" (Author, 2020). Moving toward this collective notion of familial mentorship, and influenced by my own culture and Hānai experiences, this paper introduces a pedagogical framework that is still in process. This framework builds upon foundations of culturally and linguistically affirming education, encompassing Hānai core principles, to share and spotlight Indigenous identities and cultural epistemologies. Central to this framework are the familial relationships that mentorships cultivate and can ultimately sustain between educators, students, and the community at large.

### **C. Contribution**

Hānai Pedagogy reflects the 2024 AACTE conference call to "Ascend New Heights" by asking educators to examine their own pedagogical epistemologies and cultural and/or place-based histories to dismantle current racial injustices in the classroom. Collectively, our aim is to construct educational possibilities by looking to our past to teach, support, and sustain our future students. In this study, we do this by challenging oppressive systems impacting AAPI residents of Hawai'i and the ongoing effects of colonialism in the islands, but the core values and principles of Hānai Pedagogy can be applied beyond Hawai'i as well. Grow Your Own Programs are not new. INPEACE and their Ka Lama program has been around for over thirty years. In Denver, the conference site for AACTE 2024, Pathways2Teaching has been serving students for well over a decade. Grow Your Own programs not only support the local community by providing pathways into education, but they encourage local community members and predominantly at-risk populations of students to consider teaching as an act of social justice and return to their home to teach future generations. In low-income and marginalized areas such as Hawai'i, the majority of teachers can often stem from the mainland and organization such as Teach for America. Though useful in staffing school sites, these teachers do not always stay long. Their lack of understanding and appreciation for the peoples, culture, and land keeps them at a distance within the school community, despite the best of intentions. INPEACE has been working to dismantle these tensions by not only providing Ka Lama students with mentorships and eliminating financial barriers for students, but by also providing professional development opportunities for all educators, including non-native teachers. This work highlights the importance of Ka Lama's programming but also the intrinsic ways in which educators can connect with the school population and greater community to build familial relationships and efforts with students and families in educational spaces. In addressing both the conference strand and subcategory, this pedagogy calls for culturally sustaining critical thinking and implementation in curricula to seek liberation through education and community connectedness.

### **D. Relevance**

This qualitative case study focused on the following research question: How do Ka Lama teachers use Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) traditions, language, and culture in their own pedagogies? Situated in Wai'anae, Hawai'i, this study centers the Ka Lama teacher preparation program, which mentors AANAPI (Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander) educators serving a local population that has the highest concentration of Kanaka 'Ōiwi in the state (Hawaii.gov). In this area, most of the population is living at or below the poverty line, with 46% of residents having received their high school diploma, 11% having attained their bachelor's degree and only 3% having attained a graduate degree (World Population Review, 2023).

Data sources include 18 hours of in-person, semi-structured interviews with six educators (five female, one male), five school leaders (three female, two male), and five INPEACE staff (four female, one male), as well as 50 hours of community-based field observations, site visits, and five classroom observations. All participants identified as AANAPI and were associated with INPEACE through their teacher licensure experiences (educators), their partnership with INPEACE as a school administrator (school leaders), or as an employee of the non-profit (staff).

The interview protocol for all interviews was guided by Kanaka methodologies and applied Goodyear-Ka'ōpua's Methodological Ropes for Research and Resurgence: "Lāhui (collective identity and self-definition), ea (sovereignty and leadership), kuleana (positionality and obligations), and pono (harmonious relationships, justice, and healing)" (2016, p. 2) to build relationships, collaborate with participants, and use our collective knowledge to conduct research. Qualitative data was analyzed and what emerged established the core principles of the Hānai Pedagogy framework. In my presentation, I propose to share how these methods were used and how the principles emerged (more below).

### **E. Implication for Action**

Hānai Pedagogy is purposefully hopeful and collaborative. It is drawn from similar social and educational worldviews of decolonizing education and research (Smith, 1999; Meyer & Kotler, 2008; Wilson, 2008; Bishop, 2011), but it is specifically situated within the space of Wai'anae, Hawai'i, and the AANAPI community of teachers, mentors, and students within the frame of this study. Their experiences and knowledge are rooted in their community and specific lived histories, yet they are also akin to the current experiences and forms of learning of AANAPI groups who have also held on to their historical and educational capital through painful acts of colonialism and cultural violence to pass on their ancestral knowledge to future generations. This pedagogy recognizes and honors our history, amplifies our silenced experiences, and celebrates the familial connections that can be forged within educational and community spaces as a call to action to serve and support each other for the continued growth of the next generation.

The seven principles of Hānai Pedagogy have been developed using preliminary data collected from semi-structured interviews, site visits, and community fieldwork observations. They include: Cultural Identity, Language, Relationships, Community, Service, Talk Story and History. Establishing a classroom that is culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) means learning about the cultural identities of all members of the learning community and purposefully representing those identities throughout all aspects of the learning process: celebrating cultural language (Sembianté & Tian, 2021), representing cultural identity through in-class texts, inviting in student experiences, and collaborating with community members to conduct an authentic learning experience through sharing knowledge and cultural traditions. To do this, educators must let go of modern and colonial practices of assessment to share in and explore decolonized methods of learning and growth. In Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) populations, language is not only a verb, but is a circular act of honoring the past through culturally sustaining lessons and knowledge-sharing, passing wisdom and experiences down through generations. It is how individuals connect with each other: by blending languages influenced by cultures and peoples introduced to the islands. It is how Kanaka elders teach their children about the power of language, and how language can bring communities together to take back the power that was stripped from them through colonization. It is a way of carrying the past into the present and continuing to nurture it, a notion that appears throughout Indigenous cultures and histories. This pedagogy is not established overnight, but through relationships built and tended to in and out of classroom spaces. For Ka Lama educators, the relationship begins with their Ka Lama mentor. Sherry, a middle school history teacher, attributed her success as a non-traditional teacher to her mentor and Ka Lama colleagues who went through the program and college courses with her. With established connections, it is easier to bring community members into the classroom, blurring the edges between school and community to find common ground—a shared space of wisdom, support, and

tradition. Within these communal spaces, educators and school leaders can learn more about their students' strengths, forms of capital (Yosso, 2005), and needs. The school and community can thus work in tandem to uncover the needs of its members and work together to understand and problem-solve obstacles through community-driven services (Newman et al., 2020). Hānai pedagogy encourages Indigenous-led learning through talk story or storytelling to engage with information and pass down knowledge wielded by the community (Brown et al., 2021) through narratives which provide students a foundation for their own memory-making and story writing on paper. Nā kupuna and Ka Lama educators tie these local stories to STEM standards by focusing on the 'āina, biology, and solar system. Others connect the mo'olelo (stories) to Hawaiian and United States history, and the impacts of politics and oppression on local families. Finally, these stories blend seamlessly into daily English language classwork such as writing, oral traditions, and language work.

## F. Methods

In the roundtable, I will give an overview of the study (objective, research questions, methods, analysis, and findings) with a focus on the methods and analysis as many folk on the mainland are not as familiar with Kanaka methods and talk story narratives. I plan to engage the participants and table with a conversation around the principles of Hānai Pedagogy with the aim of learning from my colleagues: what do they identify with? If/how does this pedagogy mirror their own experiences and though the study is place-based, can this pedagogical framework transcend place? Personally, I have goals to publish this work and apply the framework to other GYO programs I have worked with, but being able to discuss the research and framework among colleagues will help me to better understand it and see the framework through a prism of perspectives. I invite my colleagues to critique my work and push my thinking on its applicability and future.

## Section III. Content Learning Objectives

1. Upon completion, participants will be able to describe Hānai Pedagogy and consider its application in educational contexts outside of Hawai'i.
2. Upon completion, participants will be able to critique the Hānai Pedagogical framework for future academic and research considerations.

## Section IV. Aligning with AACTE Strategic Priorities and Core Values

---

- 1. Advocate for high-quality educator preparation. Graduates of educator preparation programs will be profession-ready and prepared to meet the needs of PK-12 districts and schools.**  
This proposal centers a teacher preparation GYO program in Hawai'i which focuses on using culturally sustaining and specific histories, narratives, and traditions to teach state/federal standards.
- 2. Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. Educator preparation programs and their faculty, students, and communities will provide successful learning environments that demonstrate diversity, equity, and inclusion.**  
In using Kanaka traditions, language, and culture throughout their pedagogy, teachers applying Hānai Pedagogy principles will prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout their curriculum and will promote an inclusive and successful learning climate for their classrooms through culturally sustaining approaches to teaching and relationship building.
- 3. Advance educator preparation policy, practice, and research. The use of leading-edge research and models of innovative practice will advance the field of educator preparation and strengthen public education for all students.**  
Hānai Pedagogy is a new framework that will advance educator preparation by focusing on how educators can use cultural traditions and language specific to their students and/or the school site area to educate and tie local cultures and narratives to the state/federal curricula. Hānai Pedagogy is inclusive and it is believed that it can be adapted for all students. In this roundtable, I hope that educators are able to critique and grapple with the framework to provide new perspectives for its applicability.