HO'OMOE WAI KĀHI KE KĀO'O:
CREATING A SPACE & PLACE FOR MĀKUAHINE IN THE UNIVERSITY

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BY
CHANTRELLE A. WAI'ALAE

Thesis Committee
James Kimo Armitage, Chairperson
Mehanaokalā Hind
Erin Kahunawai Wright
ABSTRACT

In 2011, The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) marked the start of a new school year by implementing the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan entitled *Achieving our Destiny*. Of the five values listed in this plan, the value of making UHM a “Hawaiian Place of Learning” was foremost. The plan reported that 57% of UHM’s students were of Asian or Pacific Islander ancestry and 56% were women (Hippensteele et al. 7). According to the 2010 *Native Hawaiian Student Profile*, UHM enrolls the largest number of Hawaiian students compared to any other campus in the UH system, enrolling 2,866 Hawaiians in 2010 (Balutski, Freitas, and Wright 5). Majority of the Hawaiian students enrolled were women (Balutski, Freitas, and Wright 5). Yet none of the proposals presented in the Strategic Plan addressed Hawaiian women, or even mentioned Hawaiian mothers, who will be referred to as Mākuahine Scholars, at UHM.

This paper highlights Mākuahine Scholars as a segment of UHM students. Information gathered from interviews with mākuahine at UHM provided insight into the experiences, significance, and needs of this unique student population. This paper challenges UHM’s stance as a “Hawaiian place of learning” by calling for the recognition and support of an essential group of Hawaiians on campus, the Mākuahine Scholars. This project seeks to 1) Identify Mākuahine Scholars as a unique group of students at UHM, 2) Analyze and voice the experiences of Mākuahine Scholars within the university system, 3) Document services currently available to Mākuahine Scholars, and 4) Develop a series of resolutions or suggested services that will acknowledge and support this marginalized group. With hopes to elucidate the challenges before Mākuahine Scholars in order to highlight a path towards improved achievement and success at UHM, this paper is written for all mothers, those of the present as well as those who will consequently make their mark.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... 2
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................. 3
LIST OF FIGURES ...................................................................................................................... 7

CHAPTER 1: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 8
My Personal Connection ........................................................................................................... 8
Outline. ....................................................................................................................................... 12
Why Mākuahine Scholars? ....................................................................................................... 12
The Role of the Makuhine ....................................................................................................... 13
Problem Statement .................................................................................................................. 15
Research Procedures ............................................................................................................. 18
Methodology ........................................................................................................................... 19
Theoretical Significance ......................................................................................................... 21
  • Origins ................................................................................................................................. 21
  • CRT and Mākuahine Scholars ............................................................................................ 22
  • Mākuahine and the University .......................................................................................... 23
  • From Rags to Riches: The Power of Perception ............................................................... 24
  • Community Cultural Wealth in Hawaiian Culture ........................................................... 26
  • CRT Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 30
Research Questions ............................................................................................................... 31

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review ................................................................................................. 31
Previously Conducted Research . . . . . 31
Identifying Universal Needs of Student Mothers . . . 32

CHAPTER 3: Financial Need . . . . . . . . . 33
The Price of Being a Student and a Parent . . . . . 33
Cost of Attendance: Fact or Fiction . . . . . 35
Financial Challenges and Unmet Need . . . . . 37
The Working Mother & the Increase in Challenges for Low Income Families . . . . 39
There is Hope . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 40

CHAPTER 4: Childcare . . . . . . . . . . . 42
PATCH . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 42
Terms Associated with Childcare Programs . . . . . 44
Types of Childcare . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 44
  • Family Child Care . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 45
  • Child Care Centers. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 46
  • Preschools . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 47
  • Head Start . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 47
  • Relative/Friend Care . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 48
  • In Home Care . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 49
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Children’s Center . . . . 50

CHAPTER 5: Community Support . . . . . . . . . 56
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Hawaiian Enrollment 25
FIGURE 2. Cost of Attendance 33
FIGURE 3. Expenditures 35
FIGURE 4. Mean Family Income 38
FIGURE 5. Teacher-Child Ratio 70
FIGURE 6. Cost Break Down 71
FIGURE 7. Resolutions Matrix 77
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Previously Conducted Research:

There are many studies, which I will refer to throughout this paper, that are founded in concepts of race and gender in the education system. In Shut Out: low income mothers and higher education in post-welfare America, various studies analyze the experiences, challenges, and obstacles that low income mothers face in the university system. The study conducted by Sharp, one of the many authors featured in Shut Out, was similar to my analysis in that it included interviews from student mothers. Sharp also includes interviews with faculty and compares services and experiences for student mothers across three schools.

However, my study on Mākuahine Scholars is unique in that it is centered in the experiences and challenges of Mākuahine Scholars and targets UHM. Aside from analyzing and documenting these challenges, this project proposes actual solutions and recommendations to provoke change at UHM. It is my goal to ensure that my work will go beyond the pages before you and extend into new policy and services for Mākuahine Scholars.

Identifying Universal Needs of Student Mothers

As a Mākuahine Scholar, I am well aware of the challenges and difficulties that Mākuahine Scholars encounter. Simple tasks that most college students may take for granted, such as the opportunity to go to class or free time to do homework, can be a daily struggle. I could write on and on about the struggles and challenges that I alone face as a working Mākuahine Scholar. However, my needs, circumstances, and challenges may differ from other Mākuahine Scholars. Therefore, this section seeks to highlight information gathered from
studies and research on student mothers nationwide. Although there was no data specific to Mākuahine Scholars, national data compiled has helped to formulate universal needs and challenges of student mothers. The lack of data centered on Mākuahine Scholars has identified the gross need for research on this group.

As a result of research on student parents nationwide and the interviews conducted with mākuahine scholars, I have identified three target areas of concern for student mothers. These areas consist of financial aid, childcare, and community support. When referring to community support for Mākuahine Scholars, this included support from family, friends, and the university community. As a Mākuahine Scholar, I myself have battled with each of these areas and I found the stories and experiences of other student mothers to be very relevant to my own.
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