The Application of Terror Management Theory to Native Hawaiian Well-Being

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This article examines a psychological explanatory framework called the terror management theory (TMT) as applied to Native Hawaiians. According to TMT, faith in a cultural worldview—combined with the achievement of those standards—leads to self-esteem, which in turn leads to lower anxiety and positive adaptive behaviors. The TMT model suggests that Hawaiian children's self-esteem, anxiety, and adaptive behaviors are linked to (a) their identification with being Hawaiian, (b) their ability to practice Hawaiian core values and beliefs, and (c) restoration of collective cultural pride among Native Hawaiians. This article also discusses implications for future research and how these findings will contribute to existing knowledge concerning Native Hawaiian identity and well-being.

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Research indicates that Native Hawaiians continue to demonstrate social, political, economical, and educational disparities. Native Hawaiian adolescents, Grades 6 through 12, display high rates of antisocial behaviors in risk areas such as school suspensions, alcohol and drug use in school, solicitation of drugs, vehicle theft, arrests, rates of depression, likelihood to attempt suicide, and firearm possession (Kanaʻiaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005; Office of Hawaiian Affairs [OHA], 2000; Saka & Lai, 2004). Hawaiian adolescents also report higher lifetime prevalence for tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use (OHA, 2000). Native Hawaiian children continue to be disproportionately victimized by child abuse and neglect (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005).

Native Hawaiians constitute 26% of the students served by the Hawaiʻi Department of Education (Kamehameha Schools, Policy Analysis & System Evaluation, 2004). Native Hawaiian students scored approximately 10 percentile points lower than statewide averages in math and reading, with the gap widening in relation to the progression of grade level (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005). Native Hawaiians continue to be overrepresented among students qualifying for special education programs (Kanaʻiaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003b) and are underrepresented in institutions of higher education and among adults who have completed 4 or more years of college (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005; OHA, 2000). They are more likely to be retained one grade level and to be excessively absent in secondary schools. Native Hawaiian children are more likely to attend restructuring schools under the No Child Left Behind Act, as well as attend schools where there are higher faculty turnovers and tend to have teachers with less experience and fewer qualifications (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005; OHA, 2000).

Native Hawaiians positively indicated their sense of strong ties and reliance on family, communities, and neighborhoods (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005). However, risk for maladaptive behaviors and negative social outcomes among today's Native Hawaiian population, especially its school-age youths, may be the result of their marginalization from traditional Native Hawaiian culture and the dominant Western culture (Hishinuma et al., 2000). To succeed in a Western school setting, Native Hawaiian students have had to leave their culture and values at home and assume Western values and behaviors associated with success (Kawakami, 1999). Native Hawaiian children who continue to be at risk for disparate conditions often do not realize that they are disconnected from these inherent Hawaiian cultural

values. Reconnecting Hawaiian children to lost or dormant Hawaiian values may play a significant role to support their effort to succeed at home, at school, and in their community. Given opportunities to practice cultural values may increase self-esteem in Hawaiian children, increasing their chance of success.

There has been much research in the areas of education, social sciences, health, and history to explain the phenomenon of such disparities among Native Hawaiian children and youths, and effective preventative and intervening remedies have been designed to resolve some of these issues. This article introduces the *terror management theory*, or TMT, as a psychological theoretical explanation for disparate conditions among Native Hawaiian youths.

Terror management theory suggests that in order for an individual to maintain psychological calmness and composure, the individual must sustain (a) faith in a culturally derived worldview that influences reality with meaning and order and (b) the belief that one is a significant contributor to this reality (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003). Self-esteem is obtained when one is successful at achieving the standards of culture. Therefore, TMT states that self-esteem helps to serve as an anxiety buffer. The higher the self-esteem, the greater chance for an individual to buffer against anxiety. TMT applied may help explain and provide possible solutions to resolving present issues that Hawaiian children face by addressing culture, identity, practice of core values, and self-esteem.

The Psychodynamics of Terror Management

Terror management theory is an empirically tested psychological framework that explains how we as human beings defend against anxiety and existential terror. Inasmuch as humans are prone to anxiety, TMT attempts to give an explanation of social behavior by focusing on our essential being and circumstances (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991). It suggests that culture serves as a psychological defense by providing a potential buffer against anxiety caused by the human condition, which is inevitable death (Salzman, 2001). Terror management is presumed to be an unconscious and ongoing defense (Pyszczynski et al., 2003).

Culture and Anxiety

Self-consciousness, our cognitive ability, causes us to wonder or worry about who we are and what is our worth (our self), where we are going (our future), and why things occur the way they do (causality). We are aware of our mortality and know that it is impossible to live forever. This awareness creates anxiety (existential terror; Salzman, 2001). Becker (cited in Solomon et al., 1991) suggested that humans confront the physical problem of death and tragedy through the creation of culture to minimize the anxiety associated with the awareness of death. Therefore, as humans, we adopt a cultural worldview to buffer this anxiety (Solomon et al., 1991).

We as human beings need to find higher meaning. We create and maintain the social construction of culture by providing a shared symbolic construct. According to Salzman (2001), cultural worldviews imbue the universe with order, meaning, predictability and permanence and are constructed so that security can be maintained through the belief that one is a valuable member of the universe. Thus, cultural worldviews serve as an anxiety-reducing function by providing a sense of meaning (Pyszczynski et al., 2003).

Although cultural worldviews vary, they offer descriptions for what people should do to live "good" and "valuable" lives. Culture provides standards by which an individual can be judged to be of value (Solomon et al., 1991). Kanahele (1986) stated that values as standards define for a person how he or she should behave in life, what actions merit approval/disapproval, and what patterns of relations should prevail among people or institutions. Therefore, cultural values as standards tell us what we want to be, what kind of world we want to live in, or how we evaluate ourselves and the world.

Culture and Self-Esteem

It is necessary to view self-esteem as being universal. Self-esteem is the belief that one is a person of value in a world of meaning (Pyszczynski et al., 2003). Self-esteem is the sense of one's value in living a good life and is significant in the cultural construction of meaning (Salzman, 2001). Self-esteem can only be derived from meaningful action in this world and consists of viewing oneself as a valuable participant in a culture.

Self-esteem is acquired when one accepts the standards of a cultural worldview and views oneself as achieving those standards (Solomon et al., 1991). Salzman (2001) stated that self-esteem is the result of having faith in a culturally prescribed worldview and living up to its standards. Self-esteem cannot be procured for the self through self. It is culturally contrived (Pyszczynski et al., 2003), the accepted standards of that meaningful reality.

Basic values may vary among cultures, but self-esteem is always achieved by the belief of a cultural worldview and the achievement of those standards (values). Similarly, Kanahele (1986) claimed that every society's ideal has a concept of a "good life," a desirable and ideal way of living that produces a highly acceptable state of well-being. Members of societies who share and have faith in common beliefs, practices, values, and standards strive to obtain the good life. The more values members of societies accept and respond to, the more needs they fulfill, thus allowing them to be happier beings (Kanahele, 1986) with heightened self-esteem.

Self-Esteem as an Anxiety Buffer

According to TMT, the primary function of self-esteem is to buffer anxiety associated with vulnerability and death. Positive self-esteem is the feeling that one is a valued participant in a culture. When self-esteem is raised, anxiety is managed and adaptive action occurs (Salzman, 2001). Likewise, low levels of self-esteem result in higher levels of anxiety, which can lead to behaviors that may be maladaptive for an individual.

Anxiety is heightened when we as humans do not do the "right things" according to the expectations of the social construct of culture. When we adhere to the standards set up by culture, we sustain approval by those around us, thus elevating self-esteem. Self-esteem as an anxiety buffer has two aspects. First, an individual must have faith in a cultural worldview, and second, one must see oneself as achieving a set of standards/values of that cultural worldview. Self-esteem can only be achieved in these circumstances, which then allows the anxiety-prone human to escape feelings of inferiority (Salzman, 2001). When self-esteem is high, anxiety is managed and actions are taken to preserve faith in cultural worldview. If faith in cultural worldview is preserved, standards can be achieved to heighten self-esteem.

Conversely, if one has faith in the cultural worldview but has not achieved the set of standards for being and acting in that world, self-esteem cannot be achieved. This results in having no cultural anxiety buffer, and anxiety goes unmanaged. Another reason for maladaptive anxiety management strategies is when a cultural worldview is challenged, fragmented, and not believed—whether or not standards for being and acting are achieved, self-esteem is not achieved, thus providing no cultural anxiety buffer and no management of anxiety.

Empirical Support for Terror Management Theory

The formulation of TMT had two basic hypotheses that would lead to empirical predication, the design of studies, and collection of data to test predictions within a laboratory setting. The first hypothesis was that raising one's self-esteem would lead one to experience less anxiety following a threat.[1] To test this hypothesis, Pyszczynski et al. (2003) told college students that they would be watching a short video and they would be asked their reactions to it. Students were given personality tests, personalized psychological assessments, and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Half of the students watched a 7-minute video of *Faces of Death* that included an actual autopsy and electrocution, which served as the anxiety-provoking situation. The other half watched a 7-minute video from the same documentary that was nonthreatening and had no references to death. Then all the students completed anxiety tests. It was found that those in the raised self-esteem condition did not report elevated levels of anxiety in response to graphic depictions of death (Pyszczynski et al., 2003). A second study was done to replicate and extend findings from the first study. The results of this study supported that of the first.[2]

Studies have also investigated the effects of self-esteem on defensive perceptions of vulnerability to illness and death. In one study, participants were given positive or neutral feedback. Half of the participants were told that emotionality led to a shorter or longer life. Those participants who were given neutral feedback were engaged in vulnerability-denying defensive distortions. They reported being more emotional when they were told that emotionality led to longevity and being less emotional when emotionality was associated with a shorter life expectancy. When self-esteem was raised by positive feedback, participants did not report differences in emotionality. Raising self-esteem reduced the need to engage in vulnerability-denying defensive distortions (Pyszczynski et al., 2003). Multiple studies have provided support for the TMT proposition that self-esteem functions to reduce anxiety in stressful situations (Pyszczynski et al., 2003).

Pyszczynski et al. (2003) stated that more than 120 studies in different countries were conducted to test the second basic hypothesis of TMT, which was that cultural "worldviews assuage the potentially paralyzing terror associated with the awareness of our mortality" (p. 45). Reminders of death should cause people to increase their defense and bolstering of cultural worldviews. In studies that tested this second hypothesis, participants were asked to think about their own death, called *mortality salience*. Mortality salience and moral transgression were tested, as well as mortality salience and worldview defense (Pyszczynski et al., 2003). Mortality salience should produce a strong need for the protection that worldview provides and consequently provokes an especially strong positive reaction to anything and anyone who upholds the personal vision of reality diffused through culture and a strong negative reaction to anything and anyone who violates this reality (Pyszczynski et al., 2003). In support of the theory, a body of research has shown that asking people to contemplate their own mortality does produce such responses. Beliefs about the nature of reality served to alleviate the concerns of mortality.

Hawaiians' Trauma Caused Disruption of Culture

Terror management theory can be used to explain the trauma of the Hawaiians brought on by changes in the social, religious, and economic structures of Hawai'i. Kanahele (1986) spoke of the years of degradation for the Hawaiians since Western contact. Salzman (2001) stated, "indigenous peoples and the cultures that support them psychologically have been traumatized by contact with European peoples" (p. 183). Such was the case for Hawaiians, who were forced to give up their language, traditions, myths, cosmology, religion, and rituals. Old Hawaiian traditions disintegrated with an increase in Western contact (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992). The Hawaiian population also dwindled following contact, which led to a surrender of political and economic power (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992; Kanahele, 1986).

In the application of TMT, Salzman (2001) discussed the death threat Native Hawaiians have encountered with the introduction of new diseases, suffering a culturally traumatic experience. The Native Hawaiians did not have immunity from these Western diseases and died by the tens of thousands, virtually wiping out the population.

By their own standards and values regarding death, many Hawaiians may have felt that they were evil and had done something evil to deserve such desecration. In Hawaiian tradition, the universe was *pono* (in harmony) if the *mōʻī* (king) was pono (righteous), so if the disaster occurred, the mōʻī was not pono (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). However, Hawaiians continued to die under Kamehameha's reign. Kamehameha continued to remain pono in the eyes of the people. During his reign, the *ʻāina* (land) flourished, Kamehameha remained religious and continued to honor various *akua* (gods), and there was peace in the Hawaiian Islands, yet people died (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). Therefore, questions and doubts surfaced concerning the traditional beliefs in the old akua. When Kamehameha died, the *aliʻi nui* (high chief) had to search for a new source of *mana* (power). The aliʻi nui no longer viewed the *kapu* system (things determined sacred and prohibited) as pono (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). Before the Calvinist missionaries arrived in 1820, Liholiho, Kamehameha II abolished traditional Hawaiian *ʻai kapu* (in which men ate separately from women and certain foods were restricted for consumption), *heiau* (temple), and akua (Armitage, 1996; Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). These were not only rituals and traditions but served as an infrastructure for the order of Hawaiian society (Joesting, 1972, Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). This disruption left a void in Hawaiian religion that also accounted for the fragmentation of cultural worldviews.

The Western missionaries also assisted the Hawaiians toward self-degradation, leading them to believe that their sinful ways were to blame for the disasters. The Westerners made Hawaiians feel like they needed to turn from their savage ways and renounce their "culture," such as the hula (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). Death from foreign diseases surrounding Hawaiians often made it easy to convert them to Christianity for the promise of heaven and an afterlife (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992). Over time, the Hawaiians' traditional cultural worldview was fragmented, with no set of values and standards available. It did not seem pono. The Hawaiians were vulnerable to question the legitimacy of their cultural worldview, thus shattering their faith in it. As a result, self-esteem could not be obtained, and standards could not be achieved. With self-esteem unavailable to the Hawaiian people, they were left feeling inferior to Caucasians and, thus, psychologically defenseless. The Hawaiians' lack of psychological defense led to maladaptive anxiety-reducing behaviors that were a quick relief but in the long term caused more grief and pain. For example, Liholiho and aliʻi nui indulged in foreign goods—foods, liquor, clothing, jewelry, guns, ships, among other things—leading to expenditure of thousand of dollars and excessive drinking and eating (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992).

Another example of cultural disruption was the stifling of the Hawaiian language when Westerners colonized Hawai'i. The written word introduced to the Hawaiians by Westerners was a way to disseminate information quickly and a means of achieving power. Kane (1997) stated that this was "incompatible with the belief that knowledge was sacred power, a manifestation of mana that must be guarded as sacrosanct to those worthy of it" (p. 41); therefore, making information readily accessible through the written words could be misused. However, ali'i realized that literacy was the key to understanding and using the power of the Western culture. After the missionaries arrived in 1820, they published a reader in Hawai'i. Queen Ka'ahumanu learned to read in 5 days, and schools were set up throughout the kingdom. By 1824, two-fifths of the entire population had graduated from school, and by 1834, the majority of the population had become literate. The Kingdom of Hawai'i soon achieved the highest literacy rate of any nation in the world at that time (Kane, 1997).

However, in 1893 Hawaiian children who attended school in Hawai'i were prohibited from using their native language and were forced to speak English, which was a second language to most Native Hawaiian students (Native Hawaiian Education Act of 2001). The cultural worldview that Native Hawaiians held was that their language was important for their very existence and perpetuation of their culture. However, this worldview was shattered, and Hawaiians felt that they needed to speak English to be deemed important by society, and that speaking the native language and subscribing to the culture were not good enough in the colonized Western world. Hawaiians were made to feel that English was superior. Being compliant to colonization, the Native Hawaiian students did not speak the native language in school. As a result, a high sense of self-esteem was not achieved.

As a result of lower self-esteem, there was no cultural anxiety buffer, and anxiety was not managed. The majority of Native Hawaiian students found it hard to participate in a Westernized school setting that forced them to leave their cultural values at home (Kawakami, 1999), and they often exhibited nonparticipating behaviors. They were labeled as being "lazy" and deemed unmotivated. Throughout the years, their reading achievement scores were affected, and sometimes students were labeled as "dumb." This group soon believed and acted out these negative labels.

They strove to become Westernized by practicing Western culture. Most Native Hawaiians discontinued the practice of Native Hawaiian culture, resulting in cultural degradation over generations, until the emergence of a Hawaiian renaissance in the mid to late 1970s (Kanahele, 1982).

Hawaiian historical contexts are far more complex and sometimes contradictory than what has been presented here. The examples summarized in this article clearly demonstrate that the cultural worldview of Hawaiians was shattered over generations, and that Hawaiian "ways" have always been threatened, seemingly inferior to the superiority of Western ways. This may explain the reason for lack of anxiety-buffering self-esteem and the constant internal struggle to overcome generational stereotypes. Nainoa Thompson, the first Hawaiian in centuries to become an open ocean deep-sea navigator, the most important job in the ancient days of Polynesian voyaging (Harden, 1999), stated, "The loss of culture, loss of beliefs—you end up feeling second-rate in your homeland...there's a strong connection between self-esteem and physical health, and sometimes we define that as spirit" (p. 223). The lack of self-esteem in the consciousness of many of the Hawaiian people hindered their ability to buffer against anxiety over the span of generations, causing them to exhibit maladaptive behavior. Anxiety-prone behaviors manifested in many, but certainly not in all Hawaiians, may account for Hawaiians having the greatest number of citizens on welfare, lowest paying jobs, highest incarceration rates in proportion to total population, ranked first for most Western diseases, highest high school dropout rates, and shortest life expectancy among all peoples in the islands (Dudley & Agard, 1993; Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005).

How Do We Begin to Define a Hawaiian Cultural Worldview Today?

There have been many literary contributions that address Hawaiian values and the need to understand and apply them. With the introduction of Christian missions to Hawaiʻi in 1820, the study and comprehension of Hawaiian thought came to an end (Kaʻanoʻi, 1992). Anti-Hawaiian sentiment, colonialism, and institutional racism permeated every aspect of Hawaiian society (Kanaʻiaupuni & Ishibashi,

2003a). In much of the literature regarding Hawaiian values, references are made to pre-Western and post-Western exposure. Because ancient Hawaiian society communicated orally, there is consensus among writers that some of the Hawaiian antiquities, *mana'o* (thoughts, insights) of pre-Western exposure, could have been diluted or misinterpreted by following generations (Malo, 1996).

It is through understanding the philosophy of Hawaiian culture that values can be identified. However, scholars continue to search for answers concerning Hawaiian values (e.g., Kanahele, 1986), asking questions such as: What were the values of Hawaiians before Cook? Can traditional values be known? How have those values changed since, and to what extent are they practiced? What is their present-day validity?

Pukui, Haertig, and Lee (1972a, 1972b) attempted to describe Hawaiian beliefs and customs applicable to today. However, for the sake of discussion in relation to TMT, this article focuses on core Hawaiian values as the means to achieve cultural worldview. Kanahele (1986) polled a cross-section of a Hawaiian community and asked them to identify what they thought were Hawaiian values. The results were a list of 25 values (see Table 1). When participants were asked to rank these values, *aloha* (love) was first, followed by *ha'aha'a* (humility), *ho'omana* (spirituality), *lokomaika'i* (generosity), *'olu'olu* (graciousness), *ho'ohiki* (keeping promises), *na'auao* (intelligence), *ma'ema'e* (cleanliness), and *kōkua* (helpfulness).

Before 1778, Hawaiians may have placed ho'okipa, *koa* (courage), and *kela* (excellence) high on the list (Kanahele, 1986). Kanahele explained that historical conditions account for these differences. For example, ho'omana was listed as a value, but in ancient Hawai'i spirituality was not a value but a guiding principal and was integrated throughout the culture itself (Ka'ano'i, 1992). Modern-day Hawaiians may think differently because living in a Western society has diluted their sense of ancient Hawaiian culture.

TABLE 1 Twenty-five identified Hawaiian values

aloha (love)	haipule or hoʻomana (spirituality)
haʻahaʻa (humility)	kūpono (honesty)
hoʻokipa (hospitality)	wiwo (obedience)
laulima (cooperativeness)	maʻemaʻe (cleanliness)
ʻoluʻolu (graciousness/pleasantness/manners)	paʻahana (industriousness/diligence)
hoʻomanawanui (patience)	leʻaleʻa (playfulness)
hoʻokūkū (competitiveness)	hoʻohiki (keeping promises)
huikala (forgiveness)	naʻauao (intelligence)
kūhaʻo (self-reliance)	maikaʻi or kela (excellence)
koa (courage)	kōkua (helpfulness)
lōkahi (harmony/balance/unity)	hanohano (dignity)
alakaʻi (leadership)	kū i ka nuʻu (achievement)
lokomaikaʻi (generosity)	

Note: From *Kū Kanaka–Stand Tall: A Search for Hawaiian Values*, by G. H. S. Kanahele, 1986, pp. 19–20.

Ka'ano'i (1992) gave another perspective with regard to Hawaiian values. He stated that the subjective orientation of Hawaiians' understanding of the environment and relationship to nature—that man should *ho'omanamana* (empower) nature rather than overpower nature and that man is a part of nature and affected by nature—is fundamental to Hawaiian culture. For example, the central concept for ancient Hawaiians that most clearly demonstrated the connection between their cosmology and their values was mana (Kanahele, 1986). Mana was and is a universal energy, the force that animates all life and elements of the universe, a divine supernatural force available to humans for perfectibility (Kanahele, 1986; Pukui et al., 1972a). Because Hawaiians believe in the divine interconnectedness of nature and their culture, Ka'ano'i believed that Hawaiian religious philosophy is the foundation of Hawaiian values.

Ka'ano'i (1992) suggested that the cornerstones of Hawaiian values are *'ohana* (family), aloha, *pa'ahana* (industriousness/diligence), and *maika'i* (excellence), sometimes referred to as kela. These values will help Hawaiians understand and succeed in areas regarding family, health, education, nature, business, and government. 'Ohana is the foundation of Hawaiian culture; the root of origin was a deeply felt and a unifying force (Pukui et al., 1972a). The core values applied to family would be aloha, ho'okipa, pa'ahana, *ho'oponopono* (setting right), and *lōkahi* (unity). The concept of 'ohana encompasses a sense of unity, shared involvement and responsibility, mutual interdependence, help, loyalty, solidarity, and cohesiveness (Pukui et al., 1972a).

Contemporary Hawaiians believe that a cornerstone value is aloha, interpreted to mean love. A warm welcome, hug, and touching nose to cheek is often a display of aloha. *"Alo"* meaning face and *"ha"* means to breathe, to breathe upon the face (Ka'ano'i, 1992). To define aloha is to live it. Aloha describes the highest level of emotional, romantic, and sexual love between husband and wife. The perpetuation of this love is found in their children, who in turn carry on the ideals of aloha. In this way, love is everlasting (Ka'ano'i, 1992). According to Pukui et al. (1972a), aloha was the neutralizer of hostility. Profound concepts that prevented hostile behavior or attitudes were aloha (love and affection), ho'okipa, lokomaika'i (generosity and good will), kōkua (mutual help, cooperation), *kala* (mutual forgiveness), *ho'iho'i* (returning, anger would return to the instigator), recognition of *luna 'ike hala* (conscience or superego), and emphasis on interdependence (Pukui et al., 1972b).

Work ethics are also important to Hawaiians. The value of work, pa'ahana, in a family establishes a foundation for lōkahi and is regarded as honorable and worthwhile. According to Hawaiian thought, an activity must have been socially productive to be deemed as work; it must have provided benefit to a group or community. Related to pa'ahana, Hawaiian values reflect a striving for maika'i, personal excellence (Ka'ano'i, 1992). Personal excellence increased personal mana (Ka'ano'i, 1992), sometimes regarded as authority, an inherent quality of command and leadership, or personal magnetism (Pukui et al., 1972a). This mana in turn would reflect the quality of one's family and culture. Personal excellence applies to one's health, dress, or talents; to aloha, as in love and in making love; to being a friend or family member; and to education, business, and government. It was more important to Hawaiians to increase mana than to receive any material compensation.

Malo (1996) noted that because information of ancient traditions was memorized and orally transmitted, this might have caused inaccuracies, controversy at times, and disagreements. Therefore, to begin to accurately define Hawaiian core values, it may be necessary to debate perspectives of core values, both traditional and contemporary.

Implications of the Existence of the Current Mixtures of Values

The Native Hawaiian population doubled from 1990 to 2000 and has become more diverse than ever, according to U.S. Census data (Malone & Corry, 2004). Nearly two of three Native Hawaiians reported multiple races (Malone & Corry, 2004). Therefore, many Hawaiian students are bicultural and identify with both Western and Hawaiian culture. There are actions that can be taken with these students to have bicultural competence without sacrificing their cultural foundation (Salzman, 2001). It is important to help these students become skillful at identifying and achieving Hawaiian standards and values they are comfortable with to achieve anxiety-buffering self-esteem.

To address this biculturalism of Hawaiian and Western cultures, Kaʻanoʻi (1992) stated that Hawaiians should not be afraid of Western tools or systems because it is the "self" that empowers them, not the other way around. If Hawaiian values and self-identity are intact, Hawaiians will not be intimidated by Western ideals but will be able to filter and use them for their benefit through their values. For example, a college education is a great tool to use to *kū i ka nuʻu* (achieve), to become *naʻauao* (intelligent), to become *kūhaʻo* (self-reliant), and to increase mana, which in turn reflects the quality of the ʻohana and community. There is a need to foster cultural identity in Hawaiian children so that they can be empowered to use Western tools and systems for their benefit instead of being intimidated by them.

Biculturalism may pose a challenge to some Hawaiian youths. Surrounded by the dominant Western culture, some youths may have subconsciously or even consciously marginalized their Hawaiian identity (Kanaʻiaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003a). They may not feel like they belong to either culture, have no faith in any cultural worldviews, cannot achieve any cultural standards, and are unable to achieve anxiety-buffering self-esteem, all leading to maladaptive anxiety-buffering actions. These Hawaiian youths could renew their cultural identity and gain access to its standards and values, thus being able to achieve anxiety-buffering self-esteem.

An Attempt to Repair Fragmented Cultural Worldview

The Hawaiian renaissance (Kanahele, 1982) is an example of returning to self-appreciation and of trying to mend a fragmented cultural worldview. It includes self-determination efforts, the revival of the language through language immersion schools, the hula, martial arts, music, ancient voyaging, and the return to indigenous healing practices (*lāʻau lapaʻau* [healing therapies], *lomilomi* [massage], and *hoʻoponopono* [mediation, "to correct"]). However, this effort to revitalize Hawaiian culture cannot "upstage the debilitating effects of more than 200 years of political, social, cultural and psychological trauma" (Kanaʻiaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003a, p. 1).

Kanahele (1986) stated that members of the generation of the Hawaiian renaissance have more pride in being Hawaiian than the preceding generation. Therefore, if we allow Hawaiian students who identify with being Hawaiian to reestablish a cultural worldview that they have faith in and help them achieve its standards/values, this will help them build anxiety-buffering self-esteem and lead them to exhibit adaptive instead of maladaptive behavior. These positive behaviors may affect academic achievement, reduce health risk behaviors, enhance prosocial behavior, and facilitate greater community involvement to perpetuate the culture among broader global audiences.

Terror Management and Implications for Healthy Hawaiian Youths

Terror management theory suggests that if people have faith in a cultural worldview and see themselves as achieving its standards or values, they will have access to anxiety-buffering self-esteem, thus making adaptive behavior more probable (Salzman, 2001). The TMT psychological defense explanatory model may explain Hawaiian maladaptive behavior in society, but it can also help create solutions for promoting positive healthy adaptive behavior that leads to a more productive lifestyle for Hawaiian children and youths. Such solutions may be social and educational programs that include cultural interventions and opportunities for Hawaiian youths to identify with being Hawaiian and achieve core Hawaiian values, so self-esteem can be achieved and anxiety managed. This in turn translates into the demonstration of adaptive behavior by Hawaiian youths.

Raising self-esteem is important for the successful functioning of Native Hawaiian families. Those who have a better attitude toward "self" achieve more than those who have a poor attitude toward self (Kawakami, Aton, Glendon, & Stewart, 1999). A survey of Hawaiian educators revealed that successful learning experiences for Hawaiian students must take place in a culturally authentic physical and social learning environment (Kawakami, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial for Hawaiian students to identify with and have opportunities to live Hawaiian culture and values to develop a better attitude toward self, thereby raising self-esteem, increasing the chance of success, and lowering the risk of failure.

Terror management theory supports the notion that helping raise Hawaiian students' self-esteem is vital to their success and very existence. Bean (1992) noted that children with high self-esteem behave in ways that are self-satisfying, are able to accept more responsibility more comfortably, and experience more personal satisfaction from doing so. They have better interpersonal relationships and are more likely to be chosen for leadership roles. Children with high self-esteem usually have the confidence to demonstrate their creative inner process and expect to be appreciated for what they have done. Conversely, children with lower self-esteem may cover feelings of inadequacies by exhibiting bad behavior (Bean, 1992).

Cultural Opportunities for Hawaiian Youths

Today, there are examples of cultural interventions for Hawaiian children that could well promote the renewal of cultural identity and an opportunity to practice Hawaiian cultural worldview, thus providing a means to achieve anxiety-buffering self-esteem leading to adaptive behavior outcomes. Among these examples are selected Hawaiian charter schools, which have been established to better educate Hawaiian children using culturally appropriate strategies and Hawaiian values. Hawaiian charter schools have also provided opportunities for innovative educational approaches for Native Hawaiian youths (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2005). Students have performed better on SAT-9 reading tests than those in mainstream public schools and also tend to be more engaged and have higher attendance rates (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2005).

Kamehameha Schools also provides a learning environment that ensures that Hawaiian students' experiences and learning styles are welcomed. Kamehameha Schools strives to institutionalize and practice cultural perspectives throughout the organization, instilling a strong sense of pride, self-esteem, and identity with culture for Native Hawaiian children (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003a). Kamehameha Schools aims to rebuild cultural and social stability for Hawaiian students by restoring cultural literacy. Students feel most comfortable in a learning environment created for Hawaiians by Hawaiians and are able to succeed academically in learning environments that facilitate cultural pride and practice. They do not have to fear culturally biased classroom practices (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003a).

Programs sponsored by the Polynesian Voyaging Society and other Hawaiian agricultural programs exemplify effective ways to connect Hawaiian students with their cultural roots (Harden, 1999). Participation in these programs gives the students a sense of accomplishment that makes them feel proud of their heritage and boosts anxiety-buffering self-esteem, thus leading to adaptive actions.

Another example is a program introduced at University of Hawaiʻi–Hilo. The Nāʻimiloa Curriculum Model, developed by the university's Center for Gifted and Talented Native Hawaiian Children, attempted to implement a values-based curriculum that was designed to provide opportunities for Native Hawaiian students to display and practice values throughout the school year and eventually in their daily lives (Kawakami et al., 1999).

Other existing programs that reinforce Native Hawaiian cultural identity and integrate traditional Native Hawaiian knowledge and values have proved successful in renewing a sense of pride and confidence among Hawaiian youths (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005). Positive cultural identity is important to Native Hawaiians who struggle with such negative views of themselves (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005). Reconnecting Native Hawaiian youths to values and traditions that are inherently a part of them is vital to the restoration of positive cultural pride and cultural renewal of an indigenous culture that has been fragmented over generations. Some examples of these programs are language immersion programs, placed-based learning education programs, and community health programs (Kanaʻiaupuni et al., 2005).

Conclusion: Proposal for Future Studies

The terror management theory's explanation of how humans defend themselves psychologically against the anxiety of inevitable death has been supported in literature. The theoretical underpinnings of TMT directly correlate to the historical plight of Native Hawaiians. For example, Hawaiians historically dealt with physical annihilation and sudden death, as well as cultural trauma. Therefore, TMT is deemed as a viable explanatory model for Hawaiians' behavioral and social outcomes.

The resurgence of the Hawaiian language, music, dance, and other cultural practices provoked Native Hawaiians to revisit their cultural values. Native Hawaiian organizations and institutions revisit Hawaiian values and cultural practices to establish guidelines and standards that, if practiced, would help increase the chances for Hawaiians to overcome socioeconomic disparities and to be productive, contributing citizens in present-day society. Also, existing educational institutions and programs have institutionalized and embedded cultural opportunities within educational practices to ensure academic and social success for Hawaiian children. Native Hawaiian values, active restoration of those values, and the establishment of cultural standards support the notion that TMT could be used to explain much of the historical and current behaviors of Native Hawaiians.

Research in much of the literature addressing cultural identity and its impact on self-esteem, social behavior, education, and the health of Native Hawaiians is indicative of comparisons made using empirical research conducted on other indigenous groups and minorities. To enhance this existing body of research, it is proposed that the empirical testing of TMT, in a natural versus laboratory setting, be used as a viable tool to evaluate the effectiveness of current educational and cultural interventions for Hawaiian children.

Applying the components of TMT, future research on Hawaiian youths could examine if Hawaiian youths who identify or seek to identify with "being Hawaiian" and are assisted in achieving its core cultural values (a) will have higher levels of self-esteem if they see themselves achieving cultural standards following cultural intervention, (b) will have lower levels of anxiety following intervention, and (c) will increase "adaptive" behaviors such as studying, achieving academic standards, and making positive contributions to their families and communities. Future studies could be designed specifically to evaluate various Native Hawaiian cultural programs by measuring the variables of TMT, including identity and practice of Hawaiian cultural values on self-esteem, anxiety, and adaptive behavior of Hawaiian youths. The methodology would include pre- and postmeasures of Hawaiian identity, self-esteem, anxiety, and prosocial behaviors. Data collected from empirical research using the theory of TMT applied to Hawaiian youths may provide valid and reliable information to help evaluate and design effective educational and cultural interventions.

In conclusion, this article suggests that TMT should be considered to provide explanations, within a social psychological reference, for maladaptive and adaptive behaviors of Native Hawaiian youths. The application of TMT could be used to provide empirical evidence that evaluates components of best practices for culturally based programs. Data collected may inform community leaders in creating, promoting, and sustaining existing effective cultural programs, educational practices, and interventions for Native Hawaiian children and youths. It is important to note that TMT research can contribute new knowledge and perspectives to existing research about Hawaiian identity and well-being. Research using the TMT framework can create a new body of scientific evidence that may provide justification to secure future political and economic support for Native Hawaiian programs.

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Notes

1 The first hypothesis concerned self-esteem as an anxiety-buffering function (Pyszczynski et al., 2003). When people believe they are valuable in a world of meaning, "they should be able to function securely" (Pyszczynski et al., 2003, p. 39). Pyszczynski et al. found that there were hundreds of studies already available that found negative correlation between self-esteem and anxiety; high self-esteem is associated with low anxiety and low self-esteem is associated with high anxiety. Other existing experiments examined the effects of bolstering or threatening self-esteem.

2 The second study involved students in a laboratory situation who were physically aroused by electrical shocks. Physiological effects such as skin conductance (the small electric current traveling between a person's fingers) were measured. Greater anxiety in a person causes greater perspiration; water causes the electric current between fingers to travel faster. Half of the students were told that they would receive electrical shocks (threat), whereas the other half were placed in a nonthreatened situation, the physical stimulation of light waves.