

THE ROLE OF NATIVE HAWAIIAN MOTHERS AND FATHERS IN CONVEYING TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN BELIEFS AND PRACTICES TO CHILDREN

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This study examines how Hawaiian adolescents' knowledge of and beliefs in traditional Hawaiian cultural practices were associated with the ethnic background of their mother and father. Data from a community sample of 2,607 Hawaiian adolescents from five high schools on three islands in the state of Hawai'i were used. The outcome of Hawaiian beliefs and cultural practices were measured using the adolescent version of the Hawaiian Culture Scale. Results show that children whose parents were both of Hawaiian ancestry had higher scores on the Hawaiian Culture Scale than those with only one parent of Hawaiian ancestry. When examining aspects of Hawaiian culture, Hawaiian mothers were more important in transmitting beliefs related to folklore whereas fathers were more important in transmitting beliefs related to activities. The findings strongly suggest that the role of fathers in transmitting traditional Hawaiian cultural values to children is greater than generally believed.

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It is generally recognized that an individual's ethnicity is, in itself, a relatively poor indicator of cultural identification, which varies greatly across members of any given ethnic group. Bicultural persons, meaning those whose parents are of two different ethnic groups, may identify with one, the other, both, or neither of their ancestral ethnic groups (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991). The relative roles of mothers and fathers are of interest in how children may identify, to differing degrees, with two or more cultural backgrounds because identification with either a minority or majority culture (vs. no identification with any culture) is a source of personal and social strength (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991) and other healthy outcomes (Farver, Bhadha, & Narang, 2002).

In Hawai'i, the roles of males, far more than females, have lost much of their value since Western contact (Cook & Tarallo-Jensen, 2006; Howard, 1971, 1974). It is generally assumed that Hawaiian matriarchs keep traditional Hawaiian culture alive both at home (Ito, 1999) and in the social and political realms (Linnekin, 1990; Trask, 1993). This general trend may be related to evolutionary explanations of parental behavior (i.e., reproductive roles) of why mothers tend to invest more in their child's upbringing than fathers (Blum, 1997) and that kinship systems favor the maternal side (Rossi & Rossi, 1990).

Hawaiians, defined for this study as individuals with any Native Hawaiian ancestry, comprise one of the most ethnically diverse and unique populations in the United States, with nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of Hawaiians reporting multiple races (Malone & Corry, 2004). Like other indigenous populations in the United States, Hawaiians have sustained devastating depopulation from infectious diseases and loss of their lands and sovereignty rights since Western contact in 1778. Accompanying these losses was the disintegration of traditional social, cultural, and healing systems (Andrade et al., 2006; Cook & Tarallo-Jensen, 2006). Despite Western dominance, traditional Hawaiian beliefs resurfaced in the 1970s during the Hawaiian renaissance, when ancestral beliefs and knowledge came to be more highly valued and political activism became stronger. The main catalyst was the *Hōkūle'a*, a double-hulled long-distance ocean voyaging canoe built in 1975, which highlighted the craftsmanship, complex skills, and detailed scientific knowledge needed for traditional navigation and fostered pride, once again, in being Hawaiian.

Cultural identification is a dynamic and multidimensional construct encompassing affiliation with one's ethnic group and other ethnic groups (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Farver et al., 2002; Phinney, 1990). Ancestral cultural values, beliefs, and traditions passed down by mothers and/or fathers can bring a sense of cohesion and sense of belonging to one's ethnic group in the face of marginalization, assimilation, and racism. Admittedly, there are many other sources of information concerning Hawaiian values and beliefs aside from parents. Given that mothers have been the traditional kin keepers, it is hypothesized that mothers will have a greater influence than fathers in transmitting Hawaiian culture to children.

The purpose of this research is to assess the degree to which mothers, fathers, and mothers and fathers combined transmit Hawaiian cultural information and values to children. The data obtained from this study may be of relevance to larger issues of bicultural or multicultural identity in the Pacific and the United States as it becomes more ethnically diverse (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007).

METHOD

Participants

Participants were part of a cross-sequential study conducted by the National Center on Hawaiian Indigenous Behavioral Health (formerly the Native Hawaiian Mental Health Research Development Program), whose purpose was to research the epidemiology of mental health disorders in a multiethnic sample of adolescents in Hawai'i, including Hawaiian youths.

This report analyzes data from only respondents of Hawaiian ancestry, 9th to 12th grade. There were a total of 1,233 male and 1,374 female Hawaiian participants. Data were obtained from students attending five high schools in the state of Hawai'i, and research protocol was approved by the Committee on Human Studies Institutional Review Board at the University of Hawai'i–Mānoa. Three of the five schools were selected because of their high proportions of full- and part-Hawaiians, the main focus of the project. To provide a comparison sample of non-Hawaiians (i.e., those without any Hawaiian ancestry), we included two additional high schools that were more representative of the state's population.

Two of the schools were in rural areas, two were in suburban districts, and the remaining school was in an urban area. Overall, the communities in which the schools were located had median household incomes lower than that of the State of Hawai'i (State of Hawai'i Department of Education, 1997), and the 1993–1994 data set consisted of approximately 15.3% of the total population of full-/part-Hawaiians [range of 14–17 years of age; average of the 1991 and 1996 years] in the State of Hawai'i as personally communicated by the Hawai'i Health Surveillance Program (State of Hawai'i Department of Health, 1997). For this study, data from the 1993–1994 school year were used because of the large sample ($N = 4,182$) and the inclusion of the Hawaiian Culture Scale–Adolescent (HCS–Adolescent) version (see Measures section below for scale description and Hishinuma et al., 2000, for the full scale and psychometric properties).

Procedure

The Hawaiian High Schools Health Survey is a 45-minute self-report questionnaire consisting of demographic, help-seeking, cultural, and psychiatric measures and was developed in collaboration with the National Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research (Ackerson, Wiegman, Manson, & Baron, 1990). Parents were notified of the study by mail, given a toll-free phone number to contact researchers, and given an opportunity to refuse participation. Voluntary participation was preceded by active assent by the student. Approximately 60% of all students participated in five high schools. A separate analysis of participants from the 1992–1993 data set revealed that a higher proportion were female, had higher grade point averages, and had lower rates of absences, suspensions, and conduct infractions as compared with those who did not participate (Yuen, Nahulu, Hishinuma, & Miyamoto, 2000).

Measures

Ethnic background was based on the adolescents' self-report of their mother's and father's biological background.

The Hawaiian Culture Scale (HCS) was constructed based on feedback from several Hawaiian participant focus groups: *kūpuna* (Hawaiian elders) who were experts in Hawaiian culture; Native Hawaiian professionals (e.g., school teachers, administrators, professors, ministers); *kua'āina*, those who live off the land and

sea; and adolescents and young adults (Andrade et al., 2000). Factor analysis of the HCS–Adolescent version resulted in seven subscales (Hishinuma et al., 2000). The first six subscales, each followed by a sample item, are as follows: Lifestyles (8 items), taro farming; Customs (11 items), family home blessed by Hawaiian priest or *kahuna*; Activities (10 items), hula; Folklore (5 items), night marchers; Causes/Locations (3 items), political causes; Waiāhole/Waikāne; and Causes/Access (2 items), access rights to ocean. Answers were rated on a 3-point scale with higher scores representing higher identification with Hawaiian culture items. The seventh subscale was Language Proficiency and was composed of 2 items that assessed Hawaiian language proficiency: (a) “Rate your ability to understand the Hawaiian language,” rated on a 5-point scale (i.e., 1 = *not at all*, 3 = *pretty good*, 5 = *excellent*); and (b) “Rate your ability to speak the Hawaiian language,” rated on the same scale. Focus group informants believed that the Hawaiian language was essential to the survival of the culture, and if understood and/or spoken, then there would be greater cultural affiliation. To calculate an overall subscale score, we rescaled the Language Proficiency subscale from a 5-point to a 3-point scale given that the other six subscales were based on a 3-point scale. If this were not done, the Language Proficiency score would unduly affect the mean of the seven subscales (i.e., scores above “3” could be obtained for the Language Proficiency subscale). The following formula was used to rescale the Language Proficiency subscale score: $\gamma = 1 + (x - 1)/2$ (where $x = 1$ to 5 rating; $\gamma =$ rescaled score; e.g., rating of 5 converted to a 3, 4 to a 2.5, 3 to a 2.5, 2 to a 1.5, and 1 was unchanged). The overall seven subscale score was the mean of all seven subscale means and was a measure of Hawaiian ethnic identity related to specific cultural beliefs and practices. The internal consistency of the seven subscales was assessed. Cronbach alpha ranged from .82 to .96 for Hawaiians (i.e., overall = .94, subscales 1–7, .90, .88, .87, .90, .82, .96, .87, respectively), demonstrating the validity of the HCS, especially by the almost nonoverlapping distributions of HCS scores of Hawaiians versus non-Hawaiians (Hishinuma et al., 2000).

In addition to the seven scales, a total of four questions assessed valuing Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian beliefs. Two questions evaluated to what degree Hawaiian traditions were valued and should be maintained: (a) “How much do you value Hawaiian beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes?” rated on a 5-point scale (i.e., 1 = *not at all*, 3 = *somewhat*, 5 = *very much*); and (b) “How important is it to you to maintain Hawaiian cultural traditions?” rated on the same scale. The same two questions were asked regarding the degree to which respondents valued non-Hawaiian beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes. The sum of the two responses concerning each

of the cultures served as the measures of self-reported valuing of each culture, with higher scores reflecting more importance on Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian values, respectively.

Finally, youths identified the most important people in their lives, which was assessed with the question, "Who is/are the most important person(s) who brought you up (Check all that apply)?" The choices were biological mother, biological father, stepmother, stepfather, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, foster parents, sibling (brother or sister), *hānai* (informal adoption) parents, or other.

RESULTS

Preliminary analyses of Hawaiian culture measures by gender revealed different profiles for male and female participants. As a consequence, the results are presented separately for each gender (Table 1 for male students and Table 2 for female students). Student-Newman-Keuls tests (a subsequent test technique that takes into account every pairwise group comparison) indicate that the contribution of mothers, fathers, and both differed for male and female participants for (a) valuing Hawaiian beliefs, (b) valuing non-Hawaiian beliefs, (c) Customs, (d) Folklore, (e) Causes/Access, and (f) Language Proficiency. Despite these differences, only valuing non-Hawaiian beliefs was the influence of one parent greater than that of both. The general pattern showed that participants with both parents of Hawaiian ancestry had significantly higher means ($p < .01$ or less) in all measures (and lower on the value ascribed to non-Hawaiian beliefs) than those with only one parent of Hawaiian ancestry (mother or father).

TABLE 1 Mother versus father with Hawaiian ancestry on Hawaiian culture measures: Male students only

Hawaiian Culture Measure	Group						Analysis of Variance			Student-Newman-Keuls			
	Only Mother (M) Hawaiian		Only Father (F) Hawaiian		Both Parents (B) Hawaiian		F	p	R ²				
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N				
Value Hawaiian beliefs ^a	3.49	1.17	356	3.49	1.11	377	3.80	1.05	500	11.8	<.0001	.019	B > M & F
Value non-Hawaiian beliefs ^a	3.05	1.08	356	3.08	1.08	377	2.87	1.09	500	5.2	<.01	.008	M & F > B
Value Hawaiian–non-Hawaiian beliefs ^b	4.44	1.49	356	4.40	1.42	377	4.93	1.44	500	18.7	<.0001	.029	B > M & F
Hawaiian Culture Scale (HCS): Overall ^c	1.88	0.37	356	1.85	0.38	377	2.02	0.36	500	25.6	<.0001	.040	B > M & F
Factor 1: Lifestyles	1.85	0.59	345	1.80	0.57	365	2.10	0.58	489	32.8	<.0001	.052	B > M & F
Factor 2: Customs	1.79	0.45	350	1.81	0.45	368	1.90	0.45	490	7.4	<.001	.012	B > M & F
Factor 3: Activities	1.96	0.45	344	1.90	0.50	362	2.11	0.47	485	22.3	<.0001	.036	B > M & F
Factor 4: Folklore	2.29	0.56	348	2.25	0.51	368	2.35	0.56	489	3.1	<.05	.005	B > F
Factor 5: Causes/Locations	1.67	0.55	346	1.67	0.57	363	1.80	0.57	490	7.9	<.001	.013	B > M & F
Factor 6: Causes/Access	2.07	.075	346	2.04	0.78	364	2.21	0.77	489	5.6	<.01	.009	B > M & F
Factor 7: Language Proficiency ^d	2.13	0.78	355	2.00	0.76	376	2.39	0.82	499	27.2	<.0001	.042	B > M > F

Note: Participants who did not indicate their gender, did not respond to the value Hawaiian beliefs or non-Hawaiian beliefs, or were non-Hawaiian were not included.

^a Rating scale of 1 = *not at all*, 3 = *somewhat*, 5 = *very much*.

^b Difference of (value Hawaiian beliefs–Value non-Hawaiian beliefs) + constant of 4.

^c Mean of available subtest scores (1-3 ratings; Factor 7 adjusted from a 5- to a 3-point scale to calculate the mean).

^d Consists of ability to understand Hawaiian and to speak Hawaiian.

TABLE 2 Mother versus father with Hawaiian ancestry on Hawaiian culture measures: Female students only

Hawaiian Culture Measure	Group						Analysis of Variance				Student-Newman-Keuls		
	Only Mother (M) Hawaiian		Only Father (F) Hawaiian		Both Parents (B) Hawaiian		F	p	R ²				
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	F	p	R ²	
Value Hawaiian beliefs ^a	3.69	0.98	443	3.84	0.99	413	3.99	0.99	518	11.5	<.0001	.016	B > F > M
Value non-Hawaiian beliefs ^a	3.10	0.98	443	3.22	0.97	413	2.98	1.01	518	6.9	<.01	.010	F > B
Value Hawaiian–non-Hawaiian beliefs ^b	4.59	1.30	443	4.62	1.23	413	5.02	1.29	518	17	<.0001	.024	B > M & F
Hawaiian Culture Scale (HCS): Overall ^c	1.93	0.36	443	1.97	0.35	413	2.06	0.35	518	15.8	<.0001	.022	B > M & F
Factor 1: Lifestyles	1.64	0.51	437	1.60	0.52	408	1.82	0.54	510	23.2	<.0001	.033	B > M & F
Factor 2: Customs	1.97	0.45	440	2.00	0.42	413	2.06	0.44	511	5.2	<.01	.008	B > M
Factor 3: Activities	2.22	0.44	435	2.25	0.43	407	2.37	0.42	510	16.5	<.0001	.024	B > M & F
Factor 4: Folklore	2.41	0.54	436	2.44	0.49	409	2.40	0.51	510	0.7	0.5192	.001	n/a
Factor 5: Causes/Locations	1.65	0.57	436	1.69	0.55	410	1.81	0.59	509	10.7	<.0001	.016	B > M & F
Factor 6: Causes/Access	2.06	0.78	436	2.14	0.77	410	2.19	0.77	508	3.5	<.05	.005	B > M
Factor 7: Language Proficiency ^d	2.21	0.76	443	2.33	0.90	413	2.52	0.84	518	17.6	<.0001	.025	B > F > M

Note: Participants who did not indicate their gender, did not respond to the value Hawaiian beliefs or non-Hawaiian beliefs, or were non-Hawaiian were not included.

^a Rating scale of 1 = *not at all*, 3 = *somewhat*, 5 = *very much*.

^b Difference of (value Hawaiian beliefs–Value non-Hawaiian beliefs) + constant of 4.

^c Mean of available subtest scores (1-3 ratings); Factor 7 adjusted from a 5- to a 3-point scale to calculate the mean).

^d Consists of ability to understand Hawaiian and to speak Hawaiian.

This set of results ran counter from expectations (that mothers, not fathers, are the culture bearers) based on Ito's (1999) and Linnekin's (1990) analyses. From these analyses, Hawaiian fathers transmit cultural beliefs more than previously thought, and children with parents who are both Hawaiian have the highest mean scores on items of Hawaiian culture.

To examine what specific areas of Hawaiian cultural knowledge both mothers and fathers of Hawaiian ancestry transmitted to children, we performed an analysis examining who was listed as the most important person (mother or father) and participants' scores on each of the seven HCS factors. When differences were examined between mother or father being listed by the participant as the most important person in their lives, Hawaiian mothers were more important in transmitting beliefs related to folklore, $t(773) = 2.44, p = .0150$, whereas fathers were more important in transmitting beliefs related to activities, $t(755) = 2.35, p = .0192$ (see Table 3). Hawaiian mothers were less important in transmitting beliefs related to lifestyles, $t(771) = 1.96, p = .0499$. In further analysis of the 79 whose mother was Hawaiian but not listed as the most important person, we found that grandparents, fathers, aunts, uncles, and siblings were most commonly cited as being important in transmitting lifestyle knowledge.

TABLE 3 Significant difference in Hawaiian culture measures by most important person (mother vs. father) with Hawaiian ancestry (1993–1994 Hawaiian only)

	Mother Most Important Person		Mother Not Most Important Person		Significance	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Hawaiian Culture Scale						
Factor 1: Lifestyles	1.72	0.55	1.99	0.62	t(771) = 1.96	.0499
Factor 4: Folklore	2.38	0.53	2.22	0.71	t(773) = 2.44	0.150
	Father Most Important Person		Father Non Most Important Person		Significance	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
Factor 3: Activities	2.11	0.50	2.01	0.47	t(755) = 2.35	.0192

Note: There were no significant difference on all Hawaiian culture measures between the following four groups based on analysis of variance and Student-Neumen-Keuls:

- Mother most important person
- Father most important person
- Both mother and father most important persons
- Neither mother nor father most important persons

DISCUSSION

Participants whose parents were both of Hawaiian ancestry scored higher on Hawaiian culture measures than those with only one parent of Hawaiian ancestry. Our results are consistent with Root's qualitative data reported in *Love's Revolution* (Root, 2001), which strongly suggests equal influences of two interracial partners on child socialization.

There are several study limitations. The nonresponse rate was 40% of the total student enrollment. Information on nonrespondents indicated that these individuals tended to be male, have lower grade point averages, and have higher rates of absences, suspensions, and school infractions. There are also limitations associated with measuring Hawaiian cultural identity. Although the HCS was validated with this sample (see Hishinuma et al., 2000, for the psychometric properties of the HCS), the majority of Hawaiians are of mixed ancestry. There is evidence that bicultural individuals, those who identify with their own and other cultures, manifest healthy outcomes (Farver et al., 2002). Further research is needed that explores cultural identification as a multidimensional and dynamic construct and how mothers, fathers, extended family, and important persons contribute to identity formation.

Finally, the data were collected more than a decade ago during the 1993–1994 school year. Since then, there has been tremendous activity in the areas of recognizing the importance and contributions of fathers (e.g., “Inspiring Father’s Conference” in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, April 2006; the Hawai‘i Coalition for Dads; the National Fatherhood Initiative) and Hawaiian cultural transmission through larger social institutions (e.g., Hawaiian-focused charter schools, Hawaiian language immersion); Hawaiian identity as a complex process that weaves together physical and spiritual realms, genealogy, and sociopolitical ties to the land and sea (Kana‘iaupuni & Malone, 2006); and Hawaiian identity as being influenced by external forces that do not share common interests of indigenous peoples (Halualani, 2002).

The higher level of male involvement in conveying traditional activities to children demonstrates traditional familial roles, in which mothers pass on more domestic and behavioral lessons of the culture and fathers teach cultural activities, generally outside of the home. Perhaps the most important message to Hawaiian commu-

nities is that fathers are as important as mothers in learning to understand and follow traditional Hawaiian ways and that extended family members are valuable teachers as well. Mothers, fathers, and other family members have powerful roles in conveying Hawaiian culture that help children develop a sense of self-identity within society and help children maintain a sense of psychological well-being.

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