E Ho´i I Ka Piko (Returning to the Center): Positioning Local Culture in a Global Community Psychology

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Key words: Local culture, local community, local setting

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Abstract

As the demographics of communities become more culturally diverse, understanding the local cultural community context becomes increasingly important to community life and work. This paper presents an undergraduate community psychology course that positions local cultural and community perspectives alongside international and global perspectives. The author describes an undergraduate community psychology course that was developed as a part of a campus-wide initiative that aims to represent the Native Hawaiian culture and worldview across the curriculum. The course was designed around a framework that represented multiple layers or strands of knowledge representing the international, national, and local community worldviews.

This paper describes the development of the local strand of knowledge which included 1) considering the cultural, historical, social, political, and environmental context of the local setting, 2) engaging and collaborating with local scholars and cultural practitioners, and 3) selecting resources representing the local cultural and community context as it relates to community psychology principles and perspectives. Results of students' course evaluations are provided and confirm the importance of including local cultural and community perspectives in community psychology courses. The application of the course development framework to other community contexts is discussed.

Introduction

Culture has long been a variable of interest in the social and behavioral sciences and has been recognized as an important theme in community psychology since its inception in the 1960's. However, notions of culture have occupied a somewhat peripheral position in the field. The special issue on culture and community psychology recently published in the American Journal of Community Psychology suggests that community psychology is experiencing a shift in regard to culture, what Kral et al (2011) refer to as a "cultural turn" (p. 49), in which culture is being more explicitly incorporated into community psychology theories, research methods, and practice.   They call attention to the fact that "culture is local while shaped by both inside and outside, even global forces" (Kral et al, 2011, p.48). Marsella (1998) emphasized the importance of understanding human behavior and experience within cultural context and called for a global-community psychology. O'Donnell (2006) advanced the notion of a global community psychology in his presidential address at the Society for Community Research and Action 10th biennial conference. However, as we expand cultural

community psychology at the global level, Trickett (2009) reminds us that "[f]rom an ecological perspective, knowledge about the local community is prerequisite and prelude to decisions about what kinds of actions serve community goals and interests, and what individuals, groups, and social settings are most central to the action goal" (p. 347). Bond & Harrell (2006) suggest that the multi-layered cultural characteristics and diversity dynamics of every community need to be understood and considered within the community's historical, socio-political context, and local setting. Messinger (2006) emphasized that local context and history are vital to planning and implementing social programs in our communities. Trickett (2011) implores graduate training programs in Community Psychology to "focus on how to develop intervention possibilities and professional qualities that prioritize understanding of the local context and culture as prelude to research programs and intervention possibilities" (p. 67).

The challenge now before us is how to strengthen our courses and training programs with knowledge that draws from the local cultural community context. Courses in community psychology have a broad body

of literature to draw from to represent international and global cultural and community perspectives. Published literature in this area reflects foundational principles and practices of the field that can be applied broadly to different cultural and community contexts. We also have a growing body of literature that represents community psychology principles and practices of different international community contexts (Reich et al, 2007). But how do we represent the local culture and community context in our courses and training programs? This paper provides one example. It describes an undergraduate community psychology course that positions the local cultural community perspective as a central theme alongside national and international community psychology perspectives. The local cultural context is described as well as the process by which local scholars and cultural practitioners contributed to the course development process and content.

Local Context

Culture and community are highly integrated concepts in Hawaii and other culturally diverse communities. Community life is a community of culture – it is not one of community to which culture is simply an add-on consideration. Hawai'i's social, economic, and political history draws attention to issues of power and social forces that impacted the Native Hawaiian culture, the development of the "local culture" in Hawai´i, the emergence of American culture, and the acculturation/enculturation experiences of the people of Hawai´i. The context within which people of Hawai'i live is multi-cultural, multi-layered, and multi-positioned. People of Hawai'i are influenced by and culturally positioned in reference to the Native Hawaiian host culture. They are influenced by their own ethnic culture to which many retain strong ties. They are influenced by the pan-ethnic "local culture" which has its roots in Hawai'i's multicultural immigrant sugar plantation history and the cultures of more recent immigrant groups. As citizens of the United States, residents of Hawai'i are influenced by the national American culture. Although the practice of community psychology in Hawai´i is influenced by community psychology values and principles that are relevant to other communities in the United States, the cultural, social, and political history of Hawai´i, as well as its geographic location, present a disconnect from the lived experience in the continental United States. As global citizens, Hawai'i is influenced by the activities occurring in the broader international community. Therefore, Hawai´'s community psychology courses, training programs, and practice must consider and represent Hawai´i's multi-layered local cultural and community contexts.

An undergraduate community psychology course was developed to position the Native Hawaiian culture and Hawai'i cultural community context as central themes alongside broader community psychology perspectives. The course was designed around a framework that represented multiple layers or strands of knowledge representing inter/national, local, and personal community worldviews. The inter/national strand was represented by readings that described community psychology values, principles, and practices with global application, as well as specific international cultural and community contexts including the United States, Aotearoa/New Zealand, American Samoa, and Nicaragua. The local strand of knowledge, representing the Native Hawaiian culture and Hawai´i community context, was developed by 1) considering the cultural, historical, social, political, and environmental context of the local setting, 2) engaging and collaborating with Native Hawaiian scholars and cultural practitioners, and 3) selecting resources representing the Native Hawai´i culture and local community context as they relate to community psychology principles and perspectives. The course engaged the students and instructor in an exchange of ideas and personal community experiences. Students wrote reflection and application papers related to course topics, and participated in community activities through survey, interview, and service projects.

Local Process

The course was developed as a part of Uluākea, an initiative of the Kīpuka Native Hawaiian Student Center at the University of Hawai´i Hilo, which aims to represent the Hawaiian worldview across disciplines. As stated in the Center's website " Uluākea is engaged in educating faculty, not simply as an academic exercise but rather in a long-term commitment toward embracing a Hawaiian worldview and incorporating it as a part of their own. Through this perspective, faculty will develop curriculum, teach, advise, do research, and serve the community. It is important to note that this is not a rejection of Western theory, knowledge, and perspectives. Rather, it is about centering Hawaiian beliefs, ways of knowing, and worldviews and coming to know and understand theory, research, and other knowledge from Hawaiian perspectives and in promotion of the health of the Hawaiian environment" (Kīpuka Native Hawaiian Student Center).

The initiative had the support of the University administration and was led by Native Hawaiian

scholars and cultural practitioners who invited faculty from the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences to participate. The author was invited to be a part of Uluākea and chose to redesign her undergraduate community psychology course as a part of the Uluākea initiative. The invitation for participation was a critical first step as it gave the author, and other faculty who are not of Native Hawaiian ancestry, the support and permission to represent the Hawaiian worldview in their courses in collaboration with Native Hawaiian scholars and cultural practitioners.

Through interactive hands-on experiences, faculty learned about Native Hawaiian history, values, language, literature, protocol, and practices of hula, lei making, chanting, kite making, awa ceremony, and *kihei* (cape) printing. Faculty visited and learned the significance of *wahipana* (sacred sites) in the local community. Native Hawaiian scholars and practitioners shared cultural knowledge and provided one-on-one consultation with faculty. Throughout this process, faculty were reminded that they were the experts in their discipline, and were invited and encouraged to represent the Hawaiian worldview as relevant to their discipline and courses. The staff of Kīpuka helped the faculty to introduce their Uluākea

course to students at the beginning of the semester. In this way, the Kīpuka staff visibly demonstrated their support, as Native Hawaiians, of the faculty's efforts to represent the Hawaiian worldview in their courses

Local Content

Resources included in the course were selected to represent the Native Hawaiian culture and the cultural and community context of Hawai´i in relation to principles, topics, and practices of community psychology. Several parallels were found between values and principles of community psychology and the Native Hawaiian culture and Hawai´i community experience, similar to the parallels between Maori culture and community psychology that Gregory (2001) described. For example, parallel themes between Native Hawaiian culture and community psychology include 1) the integral relationship between person and *'aina* (the land), 2) the embeddedness of the individual within the *ohana* (family) and community, and 3) the importance of *kokua* (service), *laulima* (working together), and the reciprocal nature of relationships. Resources also were selected to represent the community context of the pan-ethnic local culture. Some of these resources are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Resources of Local Cultural Community Context in Hawai'i

Topic:	**Introduction**
Title:	Mauna Loa and Kilauea
Comment:	This movie introduces students to Pele on the Island of Hawai'i. It includes a video of Dr. Pualani Kanaka´ole Kanahele (WolfTrap Media, 2006b) and footage of past and recent volcanic activity to <u>ground</u> the Community Psychology course in Hawaiian culture… "in the beginning". http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3Khvnr754o
Topic:	**Introduction**
Title:	Pele Legends (Pukui, 1996)
Comment:	Hawaiian legends describe the development of Hawai'i island communities.
Topic:	**Core Values**
Title:	Traditional Hawaiian Values"
Comment:	In this chapter of his book entitled "Ka Lama Kukui: Hawaiian Psychology" Dr. William Rezentes describes core Hawaiian values (Rezentes, 1996).
Topic:	**Core Values**
Title:	Aloha is Our Intelligence – Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer (The Koani Foundation, 2007). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xNBxVGBEF0
Comment:	In this YouTube video, Dr. Manu Meyer discusses the core Hawaiian value of Aloha
Topic:	**Ecological Perspective**
Title:	You Tube Video - Kekuhi Keali´ikanaka´olehaililani (WolfTrap Media, 2006a) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxi7sqOo1po

Comment: In this YouTube video, Kekuhi Keali´ikanaka´olehaililani discusses the connection between psychological and physical/environmental landscapes from a Hawaiian culture perspective.

Topic: **Ecological Levels of Analysis**
Title: Nā Honua Mauli Ola (Native Hawaiian Education Council).
http://www.olelo.hawaii.edu/olelo/nhmo.php
Comment: 'Ecological levels of analysis' refers to the various systems that impact our lives: individual, microsystem (family, peers), organizations, communities, and macrosystem. The Council provides guidelines (at multiple levels) for developing culturally healthy and responsive learning environments in Hawai´i.

Topic: **Community Research Methods**
Title: Talk Story: Perspectives of Children, Parents, and Community Leaders on Community Violence in Rural Hawaii" (Shibuya, Affonso, & Frueh, 2007)
Comment: This article presents a qualitative research study conducted on Hawai´i Island.

Topic: **Sense of Community**
Title: Aunty Mona Malani (Kama'aina Backroads, 2007).
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1euB4Ue4xvk
Comment: This video features a chat with a Kupuna (*elder)* from Laupahoehoe.

Topic: **Diversity**
Title: "Small Kid Time"
Comment: 5th and 7th grade class photos from the 1960's illustrate acculturation and enculturation of children in the context of 'local' culture in Hawai´i.

Topic: **Coping and Social Support**
Title: Hawaiian American Families (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1997)
Comment: This article discusses the protective factors of Hawaiian American families.

Topic: **Empowerment**
Title: "Re-placing Hawaiians: Empowering Sense of Place and Identity in Wai´anae (Fermantez, 2009)
http://kipuka.uhh.hawaii.edu/Uluakea/media.html
Comment: Dr. Kali Fermantez discusses the power of connecting to ancestral places as a way of overcoming marginalization of Hawaiian's in their own homelands.

Topic: **Health Care in Rural Communities**
Title: The Mobile♥Care Health Project: Providing Dental Care in Rural Hawai´i Communities
http://www.gjcpp.org/en/article.php?issue=4&article=18
In the Spirit of Blessed Damien and Mother Marianne: Mobile Care Health Project
http://www.gjcpp.org/en/photovid.php?issue=4&photovid=19
Comment: This paper and video describe an innovative program for delivering dental care to rural communities on the Island of Hawai'i.

Title: Cultural considerations in developing church-based programs to reduce cancer health disparities among Samoans.(Aitaoto et al. 2007).
Comment: This article describes a church-based intervention for increasing cancer screening behavior among Samoans in Hawai´i.

Title: Hawaii Cancer Facts & Figures
Comment: This document provides cancer incidence and mortality rates for the major cultural groups in Hawai'i.

Topic: **Homeless in Hawai´i**
Title: (Not) In My Backyard: Housing the homeless in Hawai´i (Modell, 1997)
Comment: This case study describes efforts to provide housing for the homeless in Oahu.

Topic:	**Prevention**	
Title:	2003 Hawai'i Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Study	
	http://hawaii.gov/health/substance-abuse/prevention-treatment/survey/report2003/index.html	
Comment:	This report presents results from the 2003 Hawai´i Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use (ATOD) Study and describes risk and protective factors for ATOD at individual, peer, family, school, and community levels.	

Topic:	**Education**	
Title:	Expanding Higher Education Opportunities in Rural Hawai´i Communities (Ramos, 2005).	
	http://www.marshall.edu/jrcp/8_2_Ramos.htm	
Comment:	This article describes a university-community partnership to increase access to higher education in rural communities of Hawai´i.	
Topic:	**Program Evaluation**	
Title:	Lanakila Learning Center	
	http://lanakila.net	
Comment:	The Lanakila Learning Center, is an alternative high school serving Native Hawaiian youth in Hilo, Hawai´i.	

Student Course Evaluations

An important component of Uluākea is the ongoing evaluation of courses and the Uluākea initiative as a whole. In addition to the standard university course evaluations, the community psychology Uluākea courses were evaluated with respect to their Uluākea content. Uluākea course evaluations were distributed to students at the end of each semester. and addressed the: 1) Native Hawaiian content of the course; 2) representation of Native Hawaiian culture and perspectives in other courses; and 3) familiarity with Native Hawaiian culture. Students also were asked to provide additional comments they had about the course.

A total of 58 students were enrolled in the Uluākea community psychology for three semesters. Of these, 49 students completed course evaluations for a 84.5% completion rate. Enrolled students included psychology majors, as well as those majoring in sociology, political science, administration of justice, and communication. Of those who completed evaluations: 18% (9) self-identified as Native Hawaiian and 82% (40) as non-Native Hawaiian; 57% (28) were born in Hawaii; and 57% (28) lived in Hawaii for 16 years or more, 41% (20) for 10 years or less, and 1 student did not indicate length of Hawaii residency.

With respect to the course content, students agreed or strongly agreed that the examples used in the courses were appropriate to illustrate concepts (100%), the content contributed to their understanding of Native Hawaiian culture (94%), and the content clarified differences and similarities between Western and Native Hawaiian values and perspective (88%) They became more aware of Native Hawaiian values and perspectives (92%), wanted to learn more about Native Hawaiian values and perspectives (80%), and the perspectives of other students helped them to appreciate different points of view (82%). Most of the students (66%) were reasonably or somewhat familiar with Native Hawaiian culture before taking the course. Only half of the students(51%) reported being exposed to Native Hawaiian culture and perspectives in one or two Psychology classes, and 23% indicating that none of their Psychology classes exposed them to these areas of study. Most of the students (96%) believed it was very or somewhat important to learn about Native Hawaiian culture and perspectives. Many of the students (43%) would like to see more modules that incorporate Native Hawaiian culture and perspectives in Psychology classes; 49% also agreed as long as the modules do not interfere with the curriculum.

Written comments from students indicate that they enjoyed learning about Hawaiian culture and considered integration of Hawaiian culture into the course as appropriate and important.

- It was interesting to see the viewpoints of other people and the connection between Hawaiian culture and psychology.

- I think learning about Hawaiians and the culture is important for anyone who wants a career in psychology or social services in Hawai´i since culture is crucial to practice.

- I applaud and appreciate your work on a personal level and the efforts of the entire group in incorporating native Hawaiian culture in the curriculum. I found it very effective and appreciate the appropriate supporting material that was used to tie in community psychology concepts.

- If we are going to work within the Hawaiian community, we need to have knowledge about the culture.

Students stated that the Native Hawaiian culture should be incorporated into other courses.

- I think increased awareness of native Hawaiian culture, or any indigenous culture of a place, is important and should be further incorporated into all majors.

- This was the first class that I had that actually incorporated any type of Hawaiian content into the course. This was really important because this is Hawai´i and the people and culture are very important. Having it brought to the forefront ensures that it will continue to be addressed, discussed and kept alive.

A few students found the Hawaiian culture perspective interesting, but suggested that other cultures and worldviews be represented in the community psychology course.

- I appreciate how the course incorporated Hawaiian values and culture because it is very relevant to the environment. However, it's still important to discuss other cultures and ideas.

- Although it is interesting to learn about the Hawaiian culture perspective, university courses are in place to give people universal knowledge and should not be limited to one ethnicity, race, gender, etc.

Based on these results, the content of the undergraduate community psychology course was modified to incorporate resources relevant to other cultures in Hawai´i (e.g. Samoan) and other topics that are relevant to diverse groups (e.g. health care, prevention).

Conclusion

As the demographics of communities become more culturally diverse, understanding the local cultural community context becomes increasingly important to community life and work. This paper presented a community psychology course that positioned local community perspectives alongside national and global perspectives. Although the local strand of the course presented content that is most relevant to a specific context, namely Hawai´i, the framework used to guide the development of this course is applicable to community psychology courses in other cultural community contexts. The local strand of knowledge in a different cultural community context could be integrated into a community psychology course and/or training program by 1) considering the cultural, historical, social, political, and environmental context of the local setting, 2) engaging and collaborating with local scholars and cultural practitioners, and 3) selecting resources representing the local cultural and community context as it relates to community psychology principles and perspectives. Course and program evaluations would provide valuable and essential feedback about the relevance of course and program content to the local cultural community context being addressed.

As we reposition culture from the periphery to the center of community psychology theories, research, and practice, we must consider the cultural community context from both local and global perspectives. We should immerse ourselves in the local cultural community context and learn from local cultural scholars, and practices. We would then be better able to incorporate content into our courses and training programs so that our knowledge base, skills training, and interventions are more appropriate and relevant to the local cultural community context. At the same time, we should not become myopic but rather maintain a view of the broader national and international landscape so that we can learn and benefit from the experiences and perspectives of communities in other parts of the globe. To remain relevant and effective as a field, and as individual agents of community change, we should position the local cultural community context as a central theme of our global community psychology.

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