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Toward *Kuleana* (Responsibility): A Case Study of a Contextually Grounded Intervention for Native Hawaiian Youth and Young Adults¹

Alma M.O. Trinidad

University of Washington, School of Social Work

Abstract

As a minority ethnic group, Native Hawaiian youth and young adults face an array of issues associated with colonization, such as persistent structural discrimination and the loss of land and indigenous ways of knowing. They are also at risk for a wide range of negative behaviors, including interpersonal violence, suicide, substance use, and juvenile delinquency. This article explores how community youth development, critical pedagogies, and Hawaiian epistemology can help Native Hawaiian young adults cope with such issues. It begins with a brief discussion of critiques on conventional youth violence prevention programs. To address these critiques, three bodies of literature are introduced: 1) community youth development, 2) critical pedagogy, and 3) community epistemology. Data were derived from a single case study of a community-based youth program. The program, located in an impoverished, rural community in Hawai‘i, entailed running an organic farm. Seventeen participants were involved in the study. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Utilizing critical indigenous qualitative research, a content analysis of the interviews was conducted to build a working conceptual model. Preliminary findings suggest that a program with key processes of community youth development, critical pedagogies, and Hawaiian epistemology may serve as a vehicle for health and wellness, thus preventing a host of negative behaviors, such as violence. Based on the findings, a critical contextually based approach to violence prevention that focuses on providing opportunities for Native Hawaiian young adults to take an active participatory role in promoting health is proposed.

Keywords

Native Hawaiian youth; Native Hawaiian young adults; community youth development; critical pedagogy; Hawaiian epistemology

¹Abbreviation:

AAPI Asian American Pacific Islander

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For additional information, please contact Alma Trinidad at the University of Washington, School of Social Work, Box 354900, 4101 15th Ave. NE, Seattle, WA 98105, almat@u.washington.edu.

Alma M.O. Trinidad, MSW, is a PhD candidate at the University of Washington, School of Social Work. The article is based on her dissertation work.

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1. Introduction

Past empirical studies show that, compared to other ethnic groups in Hawai'i, Native Hawaiian youth have high rates of a wide range of negative behaviors, including interpersonal violence, substance use, suicide, and juvenile delinquency (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2005; Ishibashi & Tibbetts, 2003; Chesney-Lind et al., 1992; Chesney-Lind et al., 1995; Gao & Perrone, 2004; Pearson, 2004). Like other ethnic minority families, Native Hawaiian families settle in segregated neighborhoods of deep poverty (Orfield & Yun, 1999, as cited in Roffman et al., 2003). Living in poor communities has long been associated with vulnerability to an array of negative behaviors, including violence (Sampson, 2001; Sampson et al., 1999; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Matsuoka, 1997). Despite millions of dollars from government and private sources, individual- and family-level interventions have met with limited success and sustainability. The high rates of negative behaviors among Native Hawaiians persist and, in some instances, have increased. Recent research suggests that changing individual behavior requires consideration of the social context in which that behavior occurs (Gieryn, 2000; Fullilove, 1996; Kawachi, 1999). Geographic space, including physical structures and the presence of environmental hazards, affects individual well-being. The role of social context has been identified as an important factor, but past research has used the concept of community or its proxy, geographic space, without examining key characteristics and processes. Past research has neglected the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions of geographic space that capture the meaning people have for the area in which they live. In this paper, I refer to the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions as *place*.

Place is not merely geographic location. It includes the dynamics of power, oppressive structures, or forces (Poland et al., 2005; Harvey, 1993; Smith & Katz, 1993; Massey, 1993; Keith & Pile, 1993) associated with colonialism (Trask, 1993, p. 49) and historical trauma (Yellow Horse Brave & DeBryun, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995; Sotero, 2006). Place is not only a site of social relationships. It also possesses a deeper cosmological and metaphysical relationship with the land itself (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001), which in turn sustains health and wellness. For Native Hawaiian communities, health and wellness are inextricably linked to colonial experiences of dispossession and oppression, such as the loss of land, traditional knowledge, language, and culture (Trask, 1993, p. 49; McMullin, 2005). In this article, *place* embodies the processes of critical consciousness of historical trauma of one's community, and community knowledge of how to live well and be healthy in one's environment.

2, Critiques on Conventional Youth Violence Prevention Programs

Although many and varied youth violence prevention programs have been conducted in minority communities, little is known about their effectiveness (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). Program implementation and evaluation often fail to recognize existing mechanisms of power and oppressive structures in the social context in which these programs operate (Prilleltensky, 2008). To address this issue, three major critiques on conventional youth violence prevention programs serving marginalized communities are identified here: 1) an exclusive focus on the individual level and use of the medical model, 2) how youth are viewed by helping professions, and 3) how culture is invoked in the content of the program.

2.1 The Medical Model: Roots in Pathology

Conventional youth prevention programs heavily support the use of the medical model, which pathologizes the behavior of individuals and focuses on the risks of negative behaviors (Siegal & Scovill, 2000; Sohbat, 2003). The medical model is also oriented toward rescue and protection, instead of strength or resilience (Finn & Checkoway, 1998). This perspective causes service providers to see young people from minority backgrounds as deficient and "at risk," and limits providers' ability both to view their clients as people with assets and strengths

(Cahill, 2006) and to create spaces of empowerment for their clients. Interventions based on this view often underplay the assets and strengths of minority youth and their communities, weaken their ability to help themselves, and prevent them from *participating* in creating healthy environments.

2.2 How the Helping Professions View Youth and Young Adults

The medical model stereotypes of youth and young adults (i.e., persons aged 18–25 years), especially those from vulnerable backgrounds, promote the widespread view among the helping professions of youth as victims—“victims of poverty,” “problems of society,” “alienated from community,” or “disengaged from democracy” (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Checkoway et al., 2003). This perception of youth as passive actors in their environment blocks approaches that promote critical awareness of one’s community, its history, and issues of structural discrimination, oppression, or politics (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). It also limits opportunities for youth to participate in change-oriented activities to improve their community and to promote health, wellness, and nonviolence. Consequently, programs fall short in providing *meaningful* experiences for marginalized youth who encounter structural inequalities (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Bernard, 1997; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Ginwright & James, 2002).

2.3 How Culture is Invoked in Youth Programs

Youth prevention programs often invoke culture as a major part of their program content, but use of the construct is frequently general and vague (Meyers, 2001; Grande, 2004). The construct of culture needs to be examined to further understand the specific needs of a cultural group and how cultural knowledge exchange occurs. Identifying underlying processes of cultural knowledge production and expression, and putting culturally appropriate epistemology at the center, can increase understanding of the role of intervention in creating meaningful health and wellness messages for youth.

2.4 A Call for Critical, Contextually Driven Efforts

The critiques discussed above call for programs to integrate processes that encourage youth-led participation, critical consciousness about one’s social context, and use of community epistemology. A closer examination of the *processes* involved in engaging youth in community-building provides a critical understanding of the interplay of structure and agency that affect life opportunities and wellness. Critical, context-driven ventures contribute to the body of work on community, community-based interventions, and place as they expose the mechanisms of power and oppressive structures. Critical pedagogies and community epistemology can lead to insights about the process of youth participation. Thus, the overarching research question in this article is: How does a community-based, grassroots youth program employ the processes of youth community building, critical pedagogy, and community epistemology?

3. Literature Review: Bridging Three Theoretical Frameworks

To build a working conceptual model for youth violence prevention programs for rural Native Hawaiian youth and young adults, three bodies of literature are integrated in this study: community youth development, critical pedagogies, and Native Hawaiian epistemology.

3.1 Community Youth Development: Youth Participation and Community Contribution

Community youth development emphasizes youth participation and contribution to one’s community. Many programs for marginalized adolescents see youth as problems rather than as problem solvers. Programs that provide opportunities through youth participation shift the

power dynamics and encourage youth to take an *active* role in *being* the change. Strategies for developing program capacity for youth participation in community change are based on asset building with the goal of making communities better places for youth to grow up. Youth participation tactics are *inclusive* and *participatory* in nature.

Hart (1997) describes a typology of youth participation using two major segments—degrees of nonparticipation and degrees of participation. Nonparticipation includes: 1) manipulation, 2) decoration, and 3) tokenism. Degrees of participation describes a range of youth participation from least to most optimal: 1) assigned but informed, 2) consulted and informed, 3) adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth, 4) youth-initiated and directed, and 5) youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults. Sutton (2007) also presents three major processes of participation that emerged in a national study on youth programs: 1) social integration, 2) community involvement, and 3) civic activism. Previous literature and findings from the current study indicate that a *transformative* philosophy contained an array of youth/adult interactions with more of an emphasis on youth-initiated (or youth-led) approaches (Hart, 1997; Mullahey et al., 1999). Most conventional youth programs aim for social integration, which includes more emphasis on individual competencies as program outcomes and less emphasis on community building or social contribution. Programs with participation processes that included community involvement were likely to produce a range of positive outcomes (Sutton, 2007). Generally, those that possessed a youth-led component showed promise in providing meaningful spaces for disadvantaged youth, but needed further expansion to include a *transformative* element that speaks to structural discrimination and injustices (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Mullahey et al., 1999; O'Donoghue et al., 2002; Bernard, 1997). *Contribution* to families, neighborhood, and communities is the unique construct of the community youth development model. *Contribution* is a departure from the dominant discourse of the youth development movement that focuses on changing individual skills and attitudes. In sum, active youth participation and community contribution may provide spaces for developing local knowledge, dialogue, and reflection on how to utilize local resources to promote health and wellness, and prevent violence.

3.2 Critical Pedagogies: Tools to Raise Critical Consciousness

Many programs for marginalized youth try to change their behaviors rather than help them understand the sociopolitical context in which their behaviors occur (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Ginwright & James, 2002). Programs that incorporate critical pedagogies may provide such a space to involve youth in reflections on the sociopolitical contexts within which they live. Critical pedagogies provide a venue for understanding systemic injustices and an outlet for Native Hawaiian youth to further examine their positionalities (sociopolitically constructed identities) in society. Critical pedagogy challenges the assumptions, practices, and outcomes of the dominant culture and conventional ways of learning (Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b). It evolves from the discourse of critical theory (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Burbules & Berk, 1999; Freire, 1997; McLaren & Giroux, 1990), responds to institutional and ideologic domination, and represents *transformational* education and learning (Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b). Critical pedagogy raises questions about inequalities of power, and promotes critical thinking (Burbules & Berk, 1999). Learning, especially learning about healthy lifestyles, is a political process (Freire, 1997; McLaren & Giroux, 1990). Critical pedagogy begins with a recognition that learners exist in a cultural context (Freire, 1997). *Situationality*, a term coined by Freire, demonstrates the importance of space and place, indicating that being in a situation has spatial, geographical, contextual, and cultural dimensions (Massey, 1994; Tuan, 1977; Fullilove, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Through a process of *decolonization*, learners reflect on how their situation often corresponds to their relationship to a political place (Harvey, 1993; Smith & Katz, 1993; Massey, 1993; Keith & Pile, 1993).

Decolonization, a core construct of critical pedagogies, involves learning to recognize disruptions and injury, and to address their causes (Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b). It involves relearning ways of being healthy in the world that are socially just. Decolonization is also an act of resistance that must not be limited to rejecting and transforming dominant ideas, but also include recovering and renewing traditional cultural ways of learning (Bowers, 2001). Deconstruction has a grand intent to take apart the story, reveal underlying texts, and give voice to things that are often known intuitively (Smith, 1999, p. 3).

Conscientization, another core construct of critical pedagogies, is learning to recognize social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action in addressing oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1997, p. 17). It also provides the notion of *praxis* (reflection and action) for youth to express their desires for a better and healthy community.

Generally, critical pedagogies provide opportunities for growth, leadership development, and participation in a *political* social movement (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Burbules & Berk, 1999; Freire, 1995; McLaren & Giroux, 1990; Giroux & Giroux, 2008; Jaramillo & McLaren, 2008) toward health, wellness, and nonviolence. This study investigated how a specific youth program employed critical pedagogies.

3.3 Native Hawaiian Epistemology

Many programs for minority youth superimpose values and ways of being that are contrary to the youths' native culture. A focus on community epistemology is essential in understanding the specific needs of a cultural group, and challenges colonial assumptions about learning that contradict indigenous values. Focusing on epistemology forces helping professions to look at where and how scientific information is generated, who participates in the creation and production of knowledge, and how knowledge is valued and wielded in the expression of power relationships in society (Brandt, 2004). The discussion of epistemology is paramount for *political* reasons as it speaks against philosophical universalism. This is especially crucial as many youth interventions have historically been transported to minority communities that have limited *voice* in shaping or developing them. Further examination of community epistemology is needed to fully understand the dynamics of power.

Putting Native Hawaiian epistemology at the center of youth prevention programs encourages production of knowledge from the ground level. It works toward *indigenization*, which allows a space to retell one's own story of past and present—both local and global. Communities, cultures, languages, and social practices that are seen as marginalized then become spaces of resistance and hope (Smith, 1999, p. 4; Trask, 2001; Grande, 2004). Indigenization also allows indigenous youth to “hold alternative histories” and “knowledges” (Smith, 1999, p. 34).

Such an approach represents a paradigm shift in the development of youth programs, and a way to link intervention to distinct indigenous cosmologies, address the essence of identity, and contribute to the discussions of place and genealogy for Native Hawaiians. A focus on community epistemology helps build and maintain a sense of community where access to information is political (Kanahele, 1986; Meyers, 2001; 2003). In sum, as Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo (2001) state:

As a concept, indigenous epistemology focuses on the process through which knowledge is constructed and validated by a cultural group, and the role of that process in shaping thinking and behavior. It assumes all epistemological systems to be socially constructed and (in)formed through sociopolitical, economic, and historical context and processes. It also recognizes that culture is variable, an ongoing conversation embodying conflict and change, shaped by the dialectic of structure and agency

(Giddens, 1979), inherently ideological, and prone to manipulation and distortion by powerful interests (Foucault, 1980; Gramsci, 1978; Habermas, 1979) (p. 59).

The work described in this article built upon Meyers' (2001) work on Hawaiian epistemology. The study examined an epistemological principle: the role of place, history, and genealogy in knowledge exchange.

4. Method: The Case Study and Analysis

The case study focused on a youth program that targets Native Hawaiian and other Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth in a rural community on O'ahu, Hawai'i. It was part of a larger national study of youth programs across the United States funded by the Ford Foundation in 2005, and received institutional review board approval before data collection began. Formed in 2000, the youth program was part of a community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The overall goal was to empower the rural community to move toward self-sufficiency, especially around issue of food security. Its founders characterized the program as a social movement to develop a comprehensive plan and a sustainable local food system by educating youth, fighting hunger, and improving health, nutrition, and wellness by being part of the expanding organic agricultural industry. To meet its mission, a holistic, interconnected economic development and educational project was formed. The program's activities included:

1. **Organic Farming**—A youth-led, five-acre, certified organic farm produced and sold over 25 different varieties of high quality organic fruits and vegetables, such as arugula, lettuces, tat soi, pak choy, basil, cilantro, parsley, green onion, collard greens, kale, root vegetables, eggplants, lemons, limes, tangerines, and mangos.
2. **'Ai Pohaku workshops**—A hands-on, culturally based program at the intermediate school about traditional Hawaiian agricultural and food practices, designed to nurture both youth and their families.
3. **Ka'aihonua**—A youth-run organic garden at the high school that enabled hands-on studies of contemporary agricultural science in the context of traditional Hawaiian culture and knowledge.
4. **Youth Leadership Training**—Hands-on, entrepreneurial, agricultural, educational leadership experience through which participants can earn an Associate of Arts degree from the community college.
5. **The Community Organic Agricultural Center**—A partnership between a community college and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Department (HUD) to establish and expand expertise in tropical organic agriculture.

The program offered paid internships to 12 youth or young adults, aged 17 to 25, over a 10-month period, providing them with hands-on, real-life work, and business experiences. Youth and young adults were recruited to the program primarily through "word of mouth" or local advertisement in the community.

4.1 Sample and Data Collection

The case study included an analysis of in-depth, open-ended interviews with 17 participants: eight young adults, four youth staff members, two parents, one board member, one person who was both a parent and a board member, and one community advocate/*kupuna* (elder) who eventually became a board member. All the young adults except one were male, and ranged in age from 18 to 21 years. All identified themselves as part-Hawaiian, except one who identified himself as Samoan. Three staff members were male and one was female. They ranged in age from 28 to 49 years. Two staff members were part-Hawaiian. One staff member identified himself as half-Japanese and half-Jewish-Hungarian. The other identified himself

as Caucasian from New Zealand. Among the parents, board members, and community advocate, four were female and one was male. They ranged in age from 35 to 55 years, and were all self-identified as part-Hawaiian.

4.2 Interview Guide and Procedure

The in-depth, open-ended interview covered the following topics: 1) the youth program and different types of activities in which youth are involved; 2) the youth and parents or community members involved in the program; 3) the neighborhood or community and its role in the youth program; 4) resources of the youth program; and 5) what youth take away from their involvement in the program. An interview guide was used to prompt discussion. In cases where discussions were not easily solicited, a more semi-structured interview was implemented (see Appendix). Trained research assistants, including the author, conducted the interviews on the telephone or in person. Each interview lasted one hour on average, and was transcribed and coded.

4.3 Content Analysis

The content of the interview transcripts was analyzed using a combination of inductive and deductive techniques to build a working model. Open and axial coding, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling procedures from the *interpretive* method known as grounded theory were used to construct categories and identify relationships between major categories in the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Building on a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective (Stryker, 1987; Hollander & Howard, 2000), an interpretive stance was valuable in learning about the participants' implicit and explicit meanings and experiential views on their contexts. This method was especially useful in developing conceptual frameworks.

The content was analyzed line by line to identify and compare ideas. Categorical codes were established. A selective review of the literature on concepts related to community youth development, critical pedagogies, and Native Hawaiian epistemology were initially utilized to establish the content analyses. Impressions and interpretation of the data were recorded in memos. The author's interpretation of the data included past community organizing and research work with Native Hawaiian and other AAPI youth and young adults in Hawai'i, which added greater depth in contextualizing them. Additionally, interpretation of data was validated by sharing the findings with the youth program's participants (program director, youth and young adults, and others). Other methods were utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, such as prolonged engagement and data triangulation (Drisko, 1997).

Theoretical relevance of the above concepts led to further coding of observational notes. As categories were formulated, linkages between them were identified and refined. These ideas were organized into a conceptual framework that includes categories and their different dimensions. Relationships between the categories were assessed and validated with the data consistently. Microsoft Word and Weft qualitative data analysis (QDA) software were utilized to manage the data.

5. Results

The goal of the study was to build a working conceptual model. These themes and dimensions are discussed below. The findings suggest a conceptual model that contains a place-based, critical approach to promoting health and wellness among Native Hawaiian youth.

5.1 Active Participation and Community Contribution

Two major themes emerged in this grouping: 1) how youth are viewed and 2) youth's role in the decision-making process. These themes influenced active participation among youth, and further encouraged them to make a commitment to improving their community.

How youth are viewed—Program staff and other community members viewed youth and young adult participants in a positive way, holding them in high regard, with respect. Although many of the youth came from difficult backgrounds (e.g., abuse, violence, crime, or drugs), all were seen as assets or strengths to their community. They were not viewed as “problems,” but rather as problem-solvers. This view of youth encouraged individual self-esteem, and positioned youth to change their environment or community. As one young adult said:

I think that we're the ones who will change what's happening in the world right now. Everybody has a part in this. It's such a chain reaction. If one person stands up, then people will follow.

Parents reported seeing the program instill pride, and empower the youth to make a positive difference in their communities. One young adult shared that, despite negative stereotypes, the program helped youth believe that their community was an “awesome” place to grow up and that “intelligent” people came from their area:

Because all they [other people] hear from this area is people beating each other up, people getting shot and whatever, people getting into bad things all the time.

When they see us out on The Farm, like big-time people, they like what they see.

They like what we put out.

Many of the youth discussed how the program helped them come together to change and help their community. Collectively, they exuded a positive aura, and in turn others in the community respected them.

Youth's role in the decision-making process—Findings suggest that the youth in the program were provided with opportunities to participate in major decisions, and take on leadership roles in the program as well as in the community. This was demonstrated by one young adult's view of the staff:

They [program staff] want to see the youth really take charge. They want to see them organizing things, putting stuff together, [and] really going at it. We just had a concert and everything was put on by [the] youth. The whole committee was made up of youth, 98%, and they did the whole thing.

A community volunteer/elder also shared this sentiment:

They [the youth] have become leaders in the community. They're creative.

They're already planning a co-op. They're planning to take the Farm to the next level. Not just teach people about organic farm[ing]. ... They put on leadership conferences themselves. They've sponsored and planned and executed a community concert with no alcohol.

Evidently, youth were in positions to make decisions in planning and implementing major activities of the program. The activities were led by youth with strong support from adult allies. In addition to the daily tasks of running the farm, other activities included speaking up at neighborhood board meetings, legislative hearings, and community presentations. Such activities also provided opportunities for youth to learn and to participate in the decision-making process at the neighborhood level. This created a sense of stewardship. A young adult concisely stated:

They [the youth] want to see this place prosper, and they want to be a part of it. I really see that they want to have this place here all the time. They want it to keep going.

In general, when youth were viewed as change agents and made part of the decision-making process in the program and community, they felt connected. A staff member summed it up:

Youth who are connected on the inside, to [other] youth, [and] to the earth, have a tremendous potential to restore, rejuvenate, care, and take care of the earth and each other.

5.2 Critical Pedagogies

Two themes emerged under critical pedagogies: 1) processes of situationality, decolonization, and conscientization, and 2) place-based action. According to the findings, youth had opportunities to participate in a variety of place-based activities. These activities promoted critical thinking, and provided spaces for the youth to take part in the process of decolonization and conscientization.

Processes of situationality, decolonization, and conscientization—As part of the critical awareness process, many participants, both youth and staff, became fully aware of disparities in their community. Many youth found an outlet to talk about these disparities through their weekly workshops or side conversations as they worked in the field. A young adult observed:

There's a lot of trouble going on. A lot of drugs, abuse, [and] hunger going on. A lot of sickness, because of the food that has been put out. The community needs a lot of help, and that's why the organization is there to help. The community has potential, because there's a lot of land, fish, and veggies and livestock. Our community should be sustainable, but it's not because there's imported stuff. The question is why. The community needs a lot of education.

Another young adult commented:

Now people need to be educated, because people drop out of school at a young age. It's pretty bad here. Here, there's lots of crime. Drugs are a big power over here. The cops try their best, but they can't do that much. The social structure is not good here. The program has showed me that there's more stuff out there. It has taught me how to talk to people and that there's good things—being healthy, being respectful to others—and that there's more to what we see.

Many young adults also became aware of the structural inequalities that exist in the community. The program not only allowed a space to explore such issues, but also provided ways to deal with them. A communication class was one example of such space. It dealt with stereotypes and prejudices. A staff member shared:

I think there are some stereotypes that do affect our kids here. The question in [regards to] the job application [process] came from youth talking about how they have been stereotyped. It's case by case... We definitely talk about this informally and sometimes formally in classes like communication skills by giving examples of the way people think and talk about certain people. We talk about this especially in relation to the history of our community.

A young adult shared:

If you go to a place where the guys who are hiring are from [other more privileged communities] and all that, and you tell them that you're from [this community], they'll think, "I don't know if he is really dependable."

Another young adult added:

I've been out to jobs where I applied in town. And "You from the homestead, huh?" I'm like, "Yup." So they think, "If I hire this guy, I'm taking a particular risk. He might steal from me. He's from the homestead, and he might not show up at work, because he lives on the homestead."

Participants were given a space to discuss these sensitive issues, and to move on to critique the existence of these disparities and inequalities as indicated by one young adult's thoughts about the media's role in diverting the importance of things in life:

Well, I think a big part is that the media has a lot to do with distracting young people from important things in life. It's like that for anybody actually. The media doesn't put value on food and the sacredness of food in the way we promote it.

He continued by expressing how the program helped him and others become "enlightened" through working collectively as a group in the program:

But after working with a lot of students, they become much more aware. Because of our discussions that we have—political or philosophical—a lot of students become enlightened. They get exposed to a lot of ideas... we talk about a lot of other things. Mainstream media's ongoing narrative is pretty self-centered, and that doesn't really work on the farm. It's the diversity and shared effort that is the value we promote.

These examples show how the program created a venue in which decolonization and conscientization could occur.

Place-based action—Findings from this case study also demonstrated how the process of decolonization and conscientization provided opportunities for growth, leadership development, and participation in a *political* social movement toward health, wellness, and nonviolence. A community member/*kupuna* (elder) shared how knowing one's community or place, and its political history, was important:

It goes back to the grounding, yeah. To know who you come from and where you come from, your self-esteem, you have the responsibility to stand up for your community and advocate for it. When you take the responsibility, along with responsibility comes more political landscape and one step forward, not just knowing, you will be able to influence it. Cause you can know it as a bystander, but to know it, you be a mover and shaker. You become guided.

He emphasized that participation in place-based action empowers one to be a community leader. He also shared how some youth have learned the major political processes that exist in the county and state governments. Another staff member recalled his youth participants testifying at a state commission meeting regarding water rights and the unequal water distribution:

We had four youth who wanted to testify; we had the unique position to be the only youth in the formal testimony. And we were people who had experienced windward water in the taro patches. There was no rehearsal. We were asked by the lawyers if we'd please get our youth up to testify. When we did, it was remarkable.

Other place-based actions included community planning. A staff member shared how female youth participate in discussions to make the community better:

They've talked about the movie, "The Ya-Ya Girls," and places where girls need a place to come and talk ... a place to have friendship and to maybe prevent some of the problems that the young girls get into. They have a lot of ideas, some crazy and wacky, and sometimes we apply that: "Why wait until next year? Why not try it now?"

Overall, the program's goal was to be part of a "movement," and as a community member/*kupuna* (elder) pointed out,

... to create a healthier community. Not just through the production of healthy stewards, but healthy lifestyles which give them existing farming structure and trying to make them have a 180 degree view of this town.

5.3 Native Hawaiian Epistemology: *Malama 'Aina* (Care for the Land) and Community History

Two themes emerge in this grouping: 1) *malama 'aina* and 2) community history. Findings suggested that knowledge production and exchange take place through the utilization of the Hawaiian value of *malama 'aina* and understanding the history of the community.

Malama 'Aina—Expanding on the notion of place-based action, findings from the case study suggest that the use of land becomes an important metaphor deeply rooted in Hawaiian culture. *Malama 'aina* promoted a sense of place. In Hawaiian culture, the *'aina* (land) is what "feeds" and "nourishes" the community, and embodies a physical place of knowing. The *'aina* is a venue for learning and being. The program director explained the importance of it, saying:

Our land is what sustains us. We have an amazing piece of land even if we had to work under a tree. If we had to do that, we would still be happy. That particular piece of land really connects us to the things we do.

Malama 'aina was the foundation for Hawaiian learning and knowing, as strongly signified by a community member/*kupuna* (elder):

It really is a connection and a sense of place which gives them the foundation that builds upon one's self-esteem which allows the traditional layers of learning that builds upon that. So that is why it [the program] is successful. It's the multi-layered method of teaching.

Metaphorically, the torch of knowledge learned through tending the land was applied to one's well-being, as a board member/parent noted:

Go to the ocean. Go over there, get peace. You don't need to fight with anybody. If you feel like fighting, just jump in the water. Who are you going to fight with in the water? It's fulfilling. It's peaceful. It has serenity. It clears [one's] mind. No need to go in the bar—to go drink. What is that going to give you? A headache and one speeding ticket and jail. Smash your car? No, return to the land. Enjoy, enjoy the land.

Generally, the value of *malama 'aina* was at the heart of the curriculum. It brought deeper meaning and purpose, and provided wisdom that cannot be taught through textbooks. The same *kupuna* mentioned above summed up what comes out of *malama 'aina*—the process of action and reflection:

Their [the participants'] level of self-esteem grows with the project and it comes from the person being grounded—having a sense of place. Then the opportunity to have the decision making process, to understand their sense of responsibility (*kuleana*), the carrying out of the *kuleana*. The learning comes out of the doing. The doing comes from the learning.

Community History/Genealogy—Findings from this case study suggest that the significance of community history helped build the sense of place and knowing the *'aina*. The program director emphasized the importance of learning about one's community history and genealogy:

It's critical. It's important for kids to understand the root or core of the problems in their community. If we want to respect and understand all of these things, we have to

look at our past history and we have to look at history from different points of view. We encourage kids to look at culture and the history of this place through both a Western and Hawaiian sense of the truth. So that way, at least we are looking at agriculture and community security all the time. So it's real important for us to know our history. We talk about this [community history] all the time.

An overarching purpose in understanding their community's history was to stay grounded. This was exactly what a *kupuna* stressed:

Grounded... often times, youth doesn't have a sense of where they come from. There is no value in the land that they walk on. There is no value in the spiritual places that surround them. So when they're grounded, they hear about the places around them and how and why they are important, why these mountains, the stories about that mountain, the stories about that beach, the name [of this community]...it is given as the representation of what stood out the most when they got here that got the name. So it gives them some connection to the past. ...now I know my place of where I come from, I know my place in this community, [and] what my place is in the larger community.

The program also served the purpose of connecting local issues to global issues, and instilled the value of connecting to other communities similar to theirs. This was stated by their program director:

From the program, the important thing for them [youth] to learn is that Hawai'i and young Hawaiians and [other] young youth of color have similar experiences today, and the root of their experiences in the history of this place is not unique. Many, many countries have had the similar colonial experiences.

Instilling the sense of place not only built community *among* community members and members of the program, but also *across* communities with parallel experiences. A collective power of ending oppression, anger, and violence, and working toward healing was created through *malama 'aina* and learning about community history.

6. Discussion: *Kuleana* (Responsibility) - A Proposed Critical Contextually Based Approach to Preventing Youth Violence

Findings from this case study suggest a working model that conceptualizes a critical approach to health and wellness (see diagram below). This model bridges theories of community youth development, critical pedagogies, and community epistemology. It has promise in preventing a host of negative behaviors, such as violence, among Native Hawaiian youth. It incorporates the processes of youth participation, critical consciousness, and most importantly, production of cultural knowledge. These processes are complimentary, yet work simultaneously through specific activities that many conventional youth programs lack. These processes also encourage youth and young adults to learn how to live well in their social context or environment.

The primary grouping of this working model emphasizes *inclusive* youth participation and community contribution, more specifically *youth-led* participation. When youth are viewed as community change agents, they are allowed to become part of solving, not creating, problems in their communities. Participating in the decision-making processes that affect them brings a sense of ownership and allows youth to feel that they matter in their community. Active participation serves as a vehicle for collective action in preventing a host of negative problems, such as drug abuse and violence. A great sense of transformation and empowerment at both the individual and collective levels comes out of youth participation and community contributions. This paradigm shift in the views of youth is strength-based and utilizes the assets that exist in their communities.

The second grouping of this working model supports the use of critical pedagogies to gain critical consciousness among youth. It further encourages youth to critique structural inequalities or issues of oppression that are sometimes the root of negative behaviors. Embedding the process of situationality, decolonization, and conscientization brings greater meaning to one's action in life. This process considers the youths' social, cultural, and political environment and context. It allows youth to be part of the dialogue on issues that affect them, and helps them to be critical of the social structures and mechanisms. It further builds a sense of agency. Reflection is key, and instills responsibility toward oneself and others. When done collectively, critical pedagogies promote a sense of community both within and across communities.

The last grouping of this working model incorporates community epistemology, in this case Native Hawaiian epistemology. Community epistemology creates a sense of place, with community history at its center. It encompasses the process of indigenization, and deepens the meaning of cultural values and knowledge in youth's action. A key component in this process is the youths' participation in creating knowledge that is relevant to them. In the case of Native Hawaiian youth, it is knowing about culture, the history of exclusion, and how culture and history affect them on the individual and collective levels. Community epistemology and the practice of *malama 'aina* help Native Hawaiian youth decolonize and critique the structures that create unhealthiness and a host of related issues. As indicated in the study, the *'aina* becomes the core of the program's curriculum, mainly through learning about the community's history and genealogy. *Malama 'aina* increases responsibility toward the land and each other, thus instilling *mana* (power) at the spiritual level. Knowledge created and produced intentionally goes beyond the immediate lessons of running a farm to other areas of youths' lives. Knowledge can spread to affect the well-being of one's family, work, and community.

Research, policy, and practice implications of this working conceptual model include further understanding of community grassroots organizing, empowerment, and sociopolitical development among youth. To continue to refine and critically formulate a conceptual framework applicable to other AAPI youth, further work needs to focus on disentangling how community-based youth programs: 1) encourage AAPI youth to take control of the issues that affect them, 2) raise critical consciousness, and 3) perpetuate, create, produce, and claim cultural knowledge as a means of combating issues of structural discrimination as they relate to negative behaviors. This working conceptual model calls for culturally responsible youth programs tailored to a population's social, political, and economic contexts. On the policy level, systems that interface with youth may want to adopt policies that cohesively link meaningful activities with decision-making processes that represent an epistemology relevant to the youths' native communities. This provides a more empowering experience, and allows community members to own the process. This conceptual model has promise to empower and transform the community, and heal the land and ethnic minority youth themselves.

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Appendix

Interview Guide

Constructing a Social Justice Framework for Youth and Community Service

Researchers: Dr. Sharon E. Sutton, Professor, Department of Architecture University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 206.685.3361

Dr. Susan Saegert, Professor, Department of Environmental Psychology City University of New York, New York, New York, 718.624.4535

Dr. Lorraine Gutierrez, Professor, School of Social Work University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 734.936.1450

Overview—I'm going to ask you your opinions about the youth program you're in. We want to know what you think about the types of activities you do, the youth who take part in the program, the neighborhood or neighborhoods the program serves, the resources the program has, and what you get out of the program. We are especially interested in your opinions about the program's successes and limitations in improving the situation for youth and their communities. Would it be okay for me to tape the interview?

The first questions are to get some facts about you—

1. To begin,

- I'd just like to confirm that you're male/female.
- And also that you're ____ years old.
- What's your race [prompt for ethnicity, if appropriate]?
- How long have you been in the program?
- What's the main reason you started the program? Why do you stay involved in the program?
- (f-i) Do you attend school during the school year? [If yes] What grade are you in. [If no] What are you doing?
- (f-ii) Who do you live with? [mother] [father] [another relative] [unrelated adult] [guardian] [alone]
- Do you live in the neighborhood where the program is?
- (h-i) What time of year do you attend the program?
- (h-ii) About how much time do you spend in the program every week?

The next questions are about the program and the different types of activities you're involved in—

2. I know that your program offers [name the types of activities]. What program activities have you been involved in? What are your favorite activities? Why? In your opinion, what would the ideal activities for a youth program be like?

3. Can you tell me a little more about how the activities in the program get organized?

[prompts]

- Who decides what types of activities you're going to do?

- What responsibilities do youth have for organizing activities?
- What responsibilities do parents or other adults from the community have in organizing the program's activities?
- Are there enough people [volunteers, staff] to carry out the program's activities? Why/why not?

4. What comes out of these activities in terms of improving things for youth and the community?

[prompts]

- How have these activities helped you as an individual?
- How have these activities helped other youth in the program?
- How have the activities you do in the program helped the community?
- How do you document the success of your activities?

5. Some people think that most youth have trouble learning to care about the larger community. What's your opinion on this topic?

[prompts]

- [If agreement that this is hard for youth] Why is it hard to learn to care about the larger community?
- Are there things adults do that affect the way youth relate to the larger community?
- Are there things that you learn in this program that help you care about the larger community?

6. Some people think youth have a right to take part in decisions that affect their schools and neighborhoods, but other people think decision-making should be left to adults. What's your opinion on this topic?

[prompts]

- How does it affect you when you are cut off from taking part in decisions?
- What do the other youth in the program feel about taking part in decisions?
- How does it affect youth when they are included in making decisions?
- Does your program help you learn to get involved in making decisions in your community? How/why not?

The next questions are about you and the other youth in your program—

7. What do you most need from the program? What do the other youth who take part in the program need most from it? Do you think the staff would agree that this is what youth need?

8. What are your strengths? What are some of the strengths other youth in your program have? Do you think the staff appreciate these strengths? How/why not?

9. How would you describe the relationships you have with other youth in the program?

[prompts]

- When do you get along best/least?

- What do you learn from each other?

10. People have really different ideas about youth. Some people think that youth need to be *protected from* all the bad stuff in the world. Other people think they *cause* a lot of the bad stuff. Then there are those who think youth are the ones who can *change* the bad stuff. What's your opinion? What do you imagine the staff in the program think?

[prompts]

- How has being in the program affected how you think about yourself?
- How has being in the program affected how other adults [teachers, neighbors, shopkeepers, cops] think about you?

11. Some people think that it is important for youth to work on developing a positive image of themselves. Other people think that they should concentrate on changing the negative images that lots of adults have of youth. What is your opinion?

[prompts]

- What are the negative/positive images people have of youth?
- What words come to mind that describe how you see yourself?
- Are there things you do in the program to develop a positive image of yourself? What?
- Are there things you do to change the native images some people have of youth? What?

12. Some adults think it's good for youth to be able to play around; other adults see playing around as disruptive or disrespectful. What is your opinion?

[prompts]

- What do youth get out of playing around [come up with new ideas] [reduce stress] [get people to accept what you're saying]?
- Where does your program stand on the issue of playing around?

The next questions are about the parents or other adult community members in your program—

13. What do you think parents and other adult community members want from the program? Do you think they're happy with the program and what it offers the youth? How/why not?

14. What strengths do you think parents and other adult community members have? Do staff appreciate these strengths? How/why not?

15. Some people think it's good for youth to do things with adults; other people think it's good for youth to have their own space; still other people think youth should have a mix of the two. What kind of relationships does your program encourage between youth and adults?

[prompts]

- Do you participate in any program activities that parents or other adults also participate in? [If yes] How would you describe the learning that goes on between the youth and adults in these activities?

- Do you participate in any youth-only activities? [If so] How are these activities different from the ones you do with adults?

The next questions are about the neighborhood and the part it plays in your program—

16. If you had to describe the neighborhood immediately surrounding the program to someone who has never been there, what would you say?

[prompts]

- How would you describe the people? How would you describe the relationships they have with each other?
- How would you describe the services [schools, shops, public transportation, maintenance of streets]?
- What would you say about the safety in this neighborhood?
- What would you say about being able to hang out on the streets?

17. [Referring back to question #1(g)] As I recall you live/don't live in the neighborhood where the program is [If not, find out where the respondent lives in relation to the program]. Would you say that your neighborhood is a good place to grow up?

[prompts]

- What do you like/not like about living there/here?
- If your parents decided to move somewhere else, how would you feel about leaving the neighborhood? Why?

18. Some people think that it's important for youth to understand their neighborhood's past history and current politics. What is your opinion?

[prompts]

- Do you ever talk about how your neighborhood got to be the way it is in your program?
- [If yes] What have you learned about this topic?

19. Some people think that where you live affects what opportunities you have and what other people think about you. What is your opinion?

[prompts]

- Do you ever talk about things like this in your program?
- What is it like for you living in your neighborhood?
- What would it be like if you lived in a different type of neighborhood?
- Has being in the program had any effect on how you feel about living in the neighborhood? How/why not?

The next questions are to get your opinion about the resources your program has for its youth activities—

20. What are the staff like in your program?

[prompts]

- Which staff do you interact with?

- Does the program have the right kind of staff? Why/why not?
- What would the ideal staff for a youth program be like?

21. Does the program have a good space for its activities? What makes it good/bad? Does it have the right equipment? What would your ideal space be?

22. Does the program have enough money for its activities? What if the program had additional funds, what would you use them for? What if the funding were cut, what would you eliminate?

23. Would you say the program has a strong or weak reputation in the community? Does the program have good connections for getting things done?

The last questions are about what you'll take away from this program as you head into the future—

24. Can you talk about your hopes and dreams for the next five to ten years?

[prompts]

- What would you like to be doing for yourself in future years?
- What would you like to be doing for whatever community you're part of?
- What does social justice mean to you? What did you learn about social justice in the program?
- How has the program helped prepare you for achieving your [paraphrase hopes and dreams]?
- In comparison to other youth programs you know about, is this one unique or pretty much the same?

25. If you could improve one thing about your program, what would you improve?

26. Is there anything else you like to say about your program or what programs should be like for youth?

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Diagram: Critical Approach to AAPI Health and Wellness: Towards *Kuleana* (Responsibility)