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Abstract Title:

Examining the Relationship Between Hawaiian Cultural Practices and Moral Development

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Abstract:

Both cultural engagement and moral development are essential elements of human development. Moral development plays a key role in human development because it is how a person learns the rules within a community, starting with self and family, and then extending to a larger society. Our exposure to morality begins with our interactions with our family and culture of origin. Cultural engagement, for the purposes of this study, I have defined as “active participation in the cultural practices of, identification with, and loyalty to, the indigenous society of one’s birth or adopted homeland.” Cultural engagement has been found to be particularly important for members of marginalized communities, for instance the Native Hawaiian community. The suppression of Native Hawaiian culture intensified after the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. It wasn’t until the 1970s that Native Hawaiians began to revitalize their traditional culture. Therefore, because the socio-political context of traditional Hawaiian culture no longer exists, it is important for Native Hawaiians to re-engage in traditional cultural practices.

To date, few studies have examined the link between engagement in cultural practices and moral development. The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between moral development and Hawaiian cultural practices. The current study will examine the relationships between engagement in Hawaiian cultural practices and moral development using two scales: 1) Nā Mea Hawai`i: A Hawaiian Acculturation Scale (NMH), and 2) the Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ). Approximately 50 Hawaiian community members will be recruited through email and social media to participate in this online study. It is hypothesized that identifying and actively participating in Hawaiian cultural practices will be related to moral development. The results from the study will inform current views in the related professional disciplines, and perhaps even lead to new initiatives in human development, not only within the Native Hawaiian community but also in native communities around the world.