



FACT SHEET

Adversity and Resiliency in the Lives of Native Elders

Hā Kūpuna: National Resource Center for Native Hawaiian Elders

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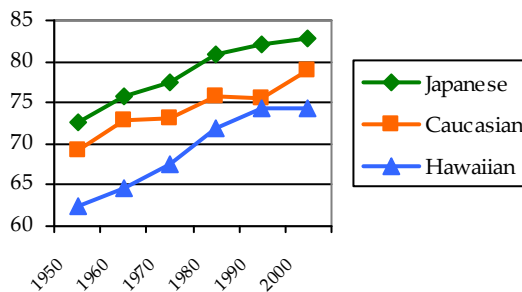
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The Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers to present-day dilemmas. Such an orientation is to the Hawaiian an eminently practical one, for the future is always unknown, whereas the past is rich in glory and knowledge
(Kame'elehiwa, 1986, pp. 28-29).

Background

- 21,000 Native Hawaiian kūpuna (60+) live in Hawai'i; 11,000 live in the continental U.S.
- Although life expectancies for all ethnic groups, including Hawaiians, have increased since 1950, the longest living groups (Chinese and Japanese) continue to live 10 years longer than Native Hawaiians.



- *Nā kūpuna* face adversities: poorer health, greater rates of disability, and an underutilization of services when compared to non-Hawaiian elders.
- *Nā kūpuna* deal with adversity through cultural resilience, grounded in enduring values and traditions that acknowledge the interconnectedness of people, nature and that spiritual realm in promoting health.

Purpose

Building on the life course literature and resiliency theories, we propose a model that provides a context from which to analyze and understand the social and health disparities experienced by *nā kūpuna*.

Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective suggests that old age is shaped by events and activities of one's earlier years. Each person's "historical world" provides different constraints and opportunities. As a result, aging is experienced differently by different age, ethnic, geographic, and economic cohorts. Over the life course, cumulative adversity for some and cumulative advantage for others can result in diverging trajectories and increasing inequality.

Resiliency Theory

Resiliency theory draws on the knowledge that every person and culture has assets and strengths. Focusing on one's assets can build resiliency, and being resilient helps one recover from traumatic events, historical and personal. Research by and about Native Hawaiians has consistently identified that Native Hawaiian cultural values and traditions are factors that support their resiliency.



Historical and Cultural Markers in the Lives of Nā Kūpuna

Dates	Events	Born 1905-15	Born 1915-24	Born 1925-34	Born 1935-44	Born 1945-54	Born 1955-64
Prior to 1915	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Illness/depopulation of Hawaiians ▪ Great Mahele ▪ Overthrow of Queen Liliu`okalani ▪ Labor imports ▪ Ali`i Trusts 	Age 0-10					
1915-1924	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World War I ▪ Dept of Hawaiian Homelands 	Age 10-20	Age 0-10				
1925-1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Depression 	Age 20-30	Age 10-20	Age 0-10			
1935-1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World War II ▪ Martial law 	Age 30-40	Age 20-30	Age 10-20	Age 0-10		
1945-1954	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GI Bill 	Age 40-50	Age 30-40	Age 20-30	Age 10-20	Age 0-10	
1955-1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Statehood ▪ Land development ▪ Mass tourism 	Age 50-60	Age 40-50	Age 30-40	Age 20-30	Age 10-20	Age 0-10
1965-1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land development and mass tourism continue 	Age 60-70	Age 50-60	Age 40-50	Age 30-40	Age 20-30	Age 10-20
1975-1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural Renaissance (hula, language, spiritual practices) ▪ Constitutional Convention 	Age 70-80	Age 60-70	Age 50-60	Age 40-50	Age 30-40	Age 20-30
1985-1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing price boom ▪ Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act ▪ Apology Bill of 1993 	Age 80-90	Age 70-80	Age 60-70	Age 50-60	Age 40-50	Age 30-40
1995-2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outmigration of Native Hawaiians ▪ Akaka Bills 	Age 90-100	Age 80-90	Age 70-80	Age 60-70	Age 50-60	Age 40-50

Cohorts born 1916-44

- Grew up during times of higher prejudice against Native Hawaiians and few services specifically targeting Native Hawaiians
- May have low levels of trust with Western models

Cohorts born 1945-1964

- Grew up when labor strikes, WWII, and statehood began to dismantle the “Big 5” hierarchy and open Hawai`i to the continental US and Asia-Pacific region

Cohorts born after 1965

- Grew up during the Hawaiian Renaissance, with growing acknowledgements of Hawaiian strengths
- Have broader access to Hawaiian-oriented programs for children, families, and elders.

Recommendations

- Increase primary preventive care at early ages
- Increase culturally responsive services
- Increase access to services

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