Resilience in Their Own Words: A Strength-Based Analysis of Qualitative Interviews with Native Hawaiian Elders

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INTRODUCTION

- Native Hawaiians, the Indigenous peoples of Hawai‘i, experience social and health disparities, many based in historical and continuing inequities and structural racism.
- Yet, an increasing number of Native Hawaiians are living into old age.
- To improve care, healthcare and service providers should learn about Native Hawaiian history, cultural strengths, and resilience.

METHODS

- 20 kūpuna from rural areas in Hawai‘i were recruited by Senior Meal Sites in Hawaiian communities.
- Each elder participated in 3 interviews via Zoom held in a talk-story style.
  - Interview 1 served as an introduction to develop rapport.
  - Interview 2 focused on kūpuna strengths and resilience.
  - Interview 3 focused on their experiences with healthcare and service providers.
- Interviews were transcribed and coded using a priori and exploratory coding techniques.

RESULTS

- We heard many challenges, including health challenges, maintaining a healthy weight, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence.
- At the same time, kūpuna shared many examples of resilience and strength.

COMMUNITY

“When I come into [my home] district, I have a 10% stress reduction automatically. I know that if I break down and I’m stuck somewhere, somebody is gonna come by that knows me and offer help.”

TEACHINGS FROM ELDERS

“Everyone has challenging times, there’s no doubt about it. I always think, “Okay, what would my grandmother do in this situation?” Sit down and think really hard. What would she do?”

HAWEIAN LANGUAGE

“Cousin. Can you talk to Mama because she’s talking to us in Hawaiian but we no understand.” So I go on the phone and I talk story with her. I can hear my cousin crying because she don’t really understand what her mama is saying. After a while, I tell her what we talked about and she go, “Cousin, thank you so much.” So, I am happy and proud to know that I can ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi (speak Hawaiian).”

DISCUSSION

- Providers should acknowledge and respect their clients as strong and resilient, while continuing to assess and address the health and societal challenges they may be facing.

Native Hawaiian kūpuna (elders) draw strength and resilience from family and community relationships and from personal and cultural values and practices.

Understanding their history, strengths, and resilience can lead to improved patient-provider relationships.

PURPOSE

- The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify sources of strengths and resilience for Native Hawaiian kūpuna (age 60+).