

Using the *Lōkahi* Wheel: A Culturally Sensitive Approach to Engage Native Hawaiians in Child Welfare Services

Tammy Kaho'olemana Martin, M.S.W
University of Hawai'i, Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work

Meripa Godinet, Ph.D
University of Hawai'i, Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work

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Abstract

Native Hawaiians are overrepresented in the child welfare system in Hawai'i. However, culturally relevant tools to address this phenomenon are often not available. Existing assessment instruments can result in misperceptions of the needs of Native Hawaiians leading to underdeveloped interventions for this population. This paper describes a culturally sensitive tool, the *Lōkahi* Wheel, that was adapted for use in the assessment process of families in involuntary services such as child protective services. This article will also discuss the Hawaiian worldview, the *Lōkahi* Wheel and its 6 domains, relevance of the *Lōkahi* Wheel in involuntary circumstances such as child welfare, and ways to implement the *Lōkahi* Wheel. Implications for future research will also be identified.

INTRODUCTION

HELE 'E KA PILA, HELE 'E KA LEO

The music is in one pitch and the voice in another.

The above 'ōlelo no'eau or Hawaiian proverb is a metaphor wherein the music represents the disharmony of the child welfare system (CWS), and the voice of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. The movement towards a culturally sensitive CWS that fosters cultural competent practice to address the issue of disproportionality of minority groups in child welfare is not new (Korbin, 2002; Mokuau, 2002). Historically, the child welfare system has been known in various parts of the world to be indifferent to people who did not adhere to the dominant paradigm or the *parens patriae* perspective (Blackstock, Cross, George, Brown, & Formsam, 2006; Earner, 2007).

Indigenous groups of the United States of America were negatively impacted by the child welfare system's disregard for cultural sensitivity. The child welfare system, in its efforts to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children in the system, developed policies that displaced indigenous children from their communities of origin (First Nations) (Fanshel, 1972). Exceedingly high rates of removal from their homes, disconnection from their tribes and cultural knowledge, sexual and physical abuse, and death due to disease subsequently led to the genocide of these communities (Godinet, Arnsberger, & Garlock, 2012; Jacobs, 2013).

Globally, other ethnic indigenous groups were also victims of child welfare systems that were inattentive to the needs of their groups and their cultural practices. Previous literature and research has shown that not only were services demeaning to families and children, they were also known to be discriminatory (Children's Bureau Express, 2004; Courtney & Skyles, 2003).

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PRACTICE AND CHILD WELFARE

Efforts to address overrepresentation among specific racial/ethnic groups; concerns over findings that showed differential treatment of minority children (Church, Gross, & Baldwin, 2005; Earner, 2007); as well as concerns over the removal of children from their ethnic communities (Libesman, 2007; Tilbury, 2009) served as the catalysts for the development of more culturally sensitive and empowerment services for families and children involved in Child Welfare Services (CWS). Racial and ethnic groups concerned about losing their children to the system advocated strongly for culturally sensitive practice that would prevent children from entering or reentering the child welfare system (Worrall, 2001).

Essential in the work with children and families is attention to context in which culture is an important factor (Drywater-Whitekiller, 2014; Korbin, 2002; Weaver, 2005). Thus, a culturally resonant approach to practice fosters empowerment of families to take charge of their own lives while the worker serves as a support and facilitator. While the Child Welfare system in various industrialized countries have progressed in developing systems that advocate for cultural awareness, identifying culturally relevant practice to meet the needs of families and children served in the child welfare system is still sparse. Thus, an approach that helps workers be more aware, understanding, and affirming of a cultural context or worldview, of a people different from their own, is one that is empowering and contributes to the development of culturally resonant social workers.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN, OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER CHILDREN, AND THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

For the state of Hawai'i, the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians (NHs) and other Pacific Islanders (PIs) in the child welfare system are duly noted. Data on child abuse and neglect in Hawai'i from years 2000 to 2008 showed the percentage of Native Hawaiians and Part Hawaiians (unduplicated) confirmed cases were in the high 30% to 40% range (State of Hawai'i DHS, 2008). A recent five-year report that examined child welfare data from 2011-2015 continues to show similar disproportionate rates of NHs and other PIs in the CWS (State of Hawai'i DHS, 2015). Thus, data over numerous years continue to show the proportion of Native Hawaiian & PI children involved in the CWS consistently exceeding that of their 27% proportion in the population (State of Hawaii Data Book, 2015; US Census, 2010).

A research study by Godinet, Arnsberger, Li, and Kreif (2010) using 2004/2005 data of Hawai'i's child welfare system found discrepancies in the treatment of NHs and PIs. Findings indicated that both groups were in the system longer, less likely to be reunified, have greater risk of re-entry, and have a higher mean number of total removals. However, they were no more likely to abuse or neglect their children compared to non-NHs and non-PIs. Thus, findings from this study resonates with other research (Drywater-Whitekiller, 2014; Libesman, 2007) to show differential treatment of indigenous families in the CWS. Thus, culturally sensitive services are needed to address the issue of disproportionality.

This paper therefore endeavors to contribute to the scarce literature on culturally sensitive practice tools in serving NH and PI families in the CWS. It is also a tool that has the potential to integrate traditional and western perspectives that can enhance cultural resonant practice to promote engagement for NHs. Specifically, this paper will illustrate a tool that will help engage families in involuntary systems such as the CWS with a focus on Native Hawaiians, and discuss implications for practice and future research.

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TOOL: LŌKAHI WHEEL

The use of a wheel as a visual diagram to aid in social work assessments is not a new concept. For example, the Medicine Wheel from the indigenous people of North America was used to explore a concept from many different viewpoints to achieve balance and work toward healing

(Nabigon & Mawhiney, 1996; Verniest, 2006). Having a tool that focuses on restoring balance and well-being through exploring essential aspects of an Aboriginal person's life has great value in working to alleviate the devastating effects of colonization (McKenzie & Morrisette, 2002).

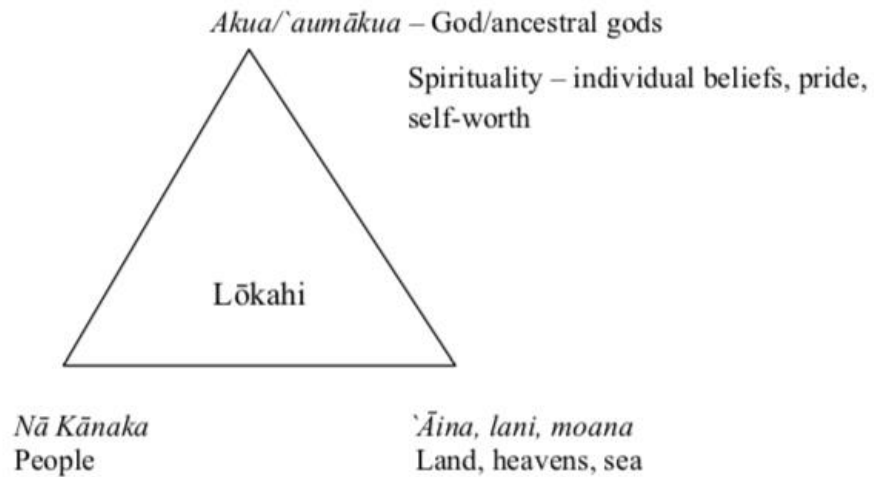
The *Lōkahi* Wheel, originally conceptualized by Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate Extension Education Division (1995), is a visual diagram on Health and Wellness for a Family Education Program serving children within a school setting in Hawai'i. The tool includes a circle divided into 6 domains of a person's life and was anchored in the Hawaiian concept of *Lōkahi* (unity, balance, harmony) within an individual's mind, body, spirit, and the whole world (Figure 3).

While all of the imagery on the *Lōkahi* Wheel remained the same, the first author adapted it 2009 to be used as a culturally sensitive engagement tool to supplement required standardized assessments with children and families involved in child welfare. It was designed to assist social workers in assessing situations and circumstances occurring within various domains from the viewpoint of NH children and families. In order to conceptualize the use of the tool to assess the needs of NH families, it is very important to understand the Hawaiian worldview, the interdependent relationships within the culture, and how decisions are made.

HAWAIIAN WORLDVIEW

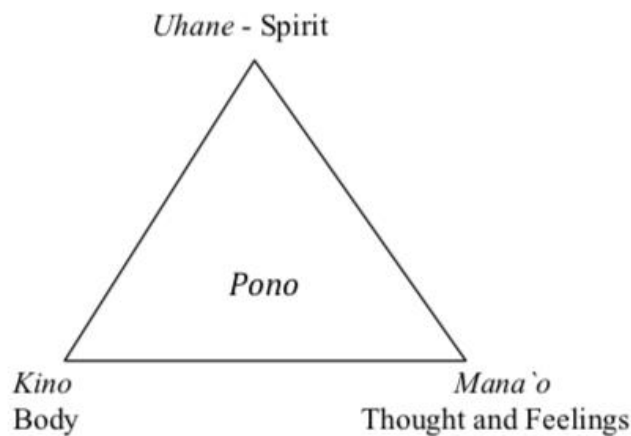
The term *lōkahi* is defined as, “unity, agreement, accord, unison, harmony” (Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 210). The *Lōkahi* Wheel is a visual diagram based on the Hawaiian worldview reflecting an interconnected relationship between humanity, heavens/ spiritual realm and the environment. No separation exists between people, the heavens and nature (Martin, Paglinawan, & Paglinawan, 2014; Oneha, 2001).

The promotion of balance and harmony is very important in the NH culture. The Hawaiian concept of self is anchored in the relationships, the spiritual realm, and the land. The idea of wellness for NHs incorporates balance of all aspects: physical, environmental, spiritual, interpersonal, and the people (McCubbin & Marsella, 2009). Therefore, the goal in working with NH families in a culturally sensitive manner is to support them in sharing the strengths and challenges in their lives to identify pathways to restore balance and harmony.



- Apex: *Akua/`aumākua* (God/Ancestral gods)
- Bottom left: *nā kānaka* (People)
- Bottom right: *ʻĀina, lani and moana* (Environment)
- Within these boundaries there exists *Lōkahi* (Unity, harmony, and balance).

Figure 1: Hawaiian Worldview – Macro Level



- Apex: *Uhane* (Spirit)
- Bottom left: *Kino* (Body)
- Bottom right: *Mana`o* (thoughts and feelings)
- Within these boundaries there exists *Pono* (Perfect Order).

Figure 2: Hawaiian Worldview Micro Level

Native Hawaiians believe that interdependent relationships exist at both the macro and micro levels. *Lōkahi* refers to harmony and balance at the community level with *akua/ 'aumakua* (god, ancestral spirits or guides), environment including *'āina* (land), *moana* (sea), and *lani* (heavens), and *nā kānaka* (people) functioning in harmony with one another (Figure 1). At the micro level, the goal of being *pono* (in proper order) is achieved through a balanced interdependent relationship between *uhane* (spirit), *kino* (body), and *mana'o* (mind, including thoughts, beliefs and ideas as well as feelings) (Pukui & Elbert, 1986) (Figure 2). The concept of *mana'o* has two core elements comprising a person's complete experience: form and essence (Martin, Paglinawan, & Paglinawan, 2014). In the context of child welfare, form refers to thoughts or structure (e.g. forms, paperwork, rules, policies, procedures and overall guidelines in the CWS). Essence refers to the feelings and/or emotions connected with children and their families' experience and how one communicates his/her feelings and emotions.

Individual children and their families often have strong emotional reactions when a child is removed from their home or their parental rights terminated. Without a basic understanding of a NH worldview, CWS workers may inadvertently offend family members when asking questions about their feelings. For example, NHs perceive their *na'au* or gut (located about 3 inches below the navel) is where their intellect and emotions are located. It is the center from which they make their decisions (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972; Young, 1998). Asking NH children and families, "How do you feel about this service plan?" may be a HOT button because they may not be ready to share their feelings and/or their trust level of CWS may be very low. Therefore, CWS workers serving NHs are likely to gain much more realistic and less heated responses if they ask, "Is this service plan comfortable for you?" since NHs make their decisions based on whether or not it "feels right" in their *na'au* or gut.

Understanding the Native Hawaiian worldview, the importance of interdependent relationships, and how they formulate their decisions will support CWS workers' overall awareness. The lens through which they can assess NHs using the *Lōkahi Wheel* as an engagement tool can facilitate and encourage the telling of individual's and/or family's story. Thus, it is the intention of the authors to share a culturally sensitive tool that would help social workers engage NH families in the assessment process to share information in a respectful manner.

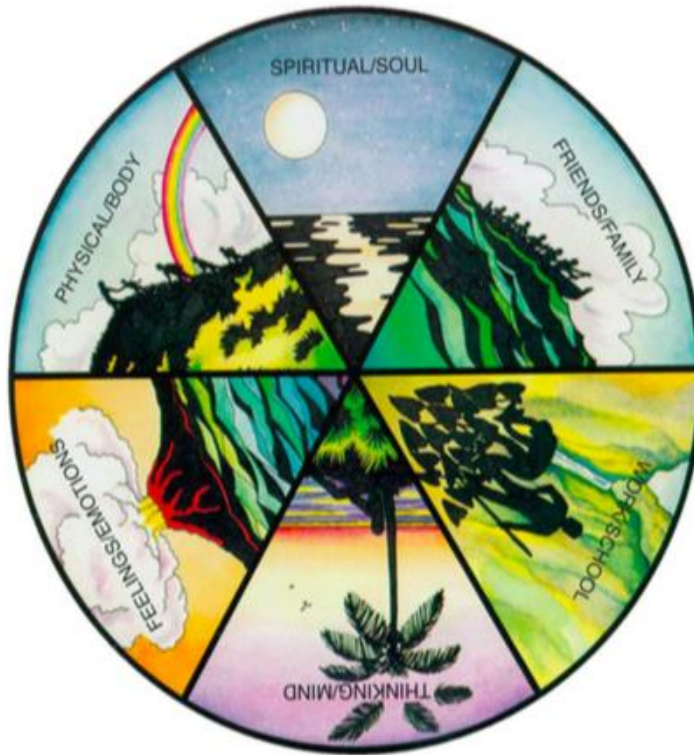


Figure 3: Lōkahi Wheel

THE 6 DOMAINS OF THE LŌKAHI WHEEL

The use of imagery and metaphor is valuable and encouraged within the Native Hawaiian culture, because of the deep-rooted value in using metaphors to express themselves (Ho‘omanawanui, 2008). Each domain is described using visual images within the domain that were developed by Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate Extension Education Division (1995). The 6 domains will be discussed in the following pairs: 1) Spiritual/Soul and Thinking/Mind; 2) Friends/Family and Feelings and Emotions, and 3) Work/School and Physical/Body. The first pair is the Thinking/Mind and Spiritual/Soul. The Spiritual/Soul domain is depicted by the moon cascading on the water as the knowledge from the heavens shining down upon the people. Thus, there is a placeholder to discuss spirituality which is of particular significance for NHs and other Pacific Islanders who place a strong emphasis on spirituality in their worldview and in their lives (Mokuau, Reid, & Napalapai, 2002). Spirituality is rarely discussed in child welfare even though it could be a strong source of support for families. However, it is important to note that for some NH families, spirituality and religion may be one in the same or two different aspects of their lives. If it is not important to a child and his/her family, then it can be left as an open domain initially

and returned to at a later time for further exploration. On the opposite side of the Spiritual/Soul is the Thinking/Mind which allows families to reflect on what thoughts they may have about particular situations in their lives as displayed by the person sitting under a palm tree.

The next pair of domains is Friends/Family and Feelings/Emotions. Friends/Family and Feelings/Emotions are across from each other because friends and families can be a great source of support and also points of tension at times. To effectively serve Native Hawaiians, it is important to understand their core cultural value of *ʻohana* (family), because family involves “a sense of unity, shared involvement, and shared responsibility...mutual interdependence and mutual help” (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972, p. 171). Therefore, if a CWS worker can learn more about the family dynamics through listening without interrupting the family member, he or she can gain a more in-depth understanding of who is within the family circle/ *ʻohana*, how the family functions, who could support the child and family involved with CWS, and how to intervene to make a positive difference to restore balance and harmony within the *ʻohana*.

The image on the Friends/Family domain of the *Lōkahi* Wheel depicts people paddling a canoe which represents their ability as a people to navigate the environment. The canoe is also an image that instills pride based on the recently completed journey of the *Hokuleʻa*, a double-hulled canoe that circumvented the globe via traditional navigations with the stars (Tradition, elation marks, 2017). In the words of Hawaiian master navigator Nainoa Thompson, “It is a vessel of healing” (Harden, 1999, p. 223). CWS workers can use this image to express to NH families, their *ohana*, and other service team members that all are in the *waʻa* or canoe together. Therefore, it’s a collaborative effort to achieve the goal that is in the best interest of the child and family, which in itself can be part of the healing process. The volcano represents the Feelings/Emotions domain. In the traditional Native Hawaiian belief system, the volcano is the *kinolau* (physical embodiment) of *Pele*, volcano goddess, who is able to explode and destroy all that is in her pathway. But, ultimately the land is cleared and new growth occurs (Malo, 1951; Pukui & Elbert, 1986, Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972). This is a metaphor for children and families that can support their realization that although many “eruptions” can occur, it may be helpful to “clear the air” and allow room for new ideas and opportunities to surface.

The final pair of domains is Work/School and Physical/Body. The Work/School domain offers opportunities for NH children and families to discuss their jobs and school experiences and share what they value in terms of employment or education. The image for this domain is the *loʻi*

or taro field which is considered a primary staple in the Hawaiian diet. Based on a Hawaiian legend, *kalo* (taro) represents the elder brother of the Hawaiian people (Beckwith, 1970). As such, *kalo* represents nature who feeds and sustains the people. In turn, the Hawaiian people cultivate and care for the land. In this manner, the *kalo* and the Hawaiian people are two siblings living in harmony (Handy & Pukui, 1972; Harden, 1999). In modern times, it is important for Native Hawaiians to nurture their employment and education so that they can be contributing members of their families.

When introducing the Work/School domain to families, CWS workers can ask families to share with them their understanding of the purpose of the *o`o* or digging stick portrayed as an image in this domain. It is a tool used to unearth the ground to prepare for planting used by farmers (Malo, 1951). Once family member(s) share their meaning of the term, CWS workers can share with families that their role in assessment may be perceived as an *o`o*, because there may be some “digging” that occurs during assessment in which hidden knowledge can be brought to the surface. The recognition of pertinent issues is the beginning of the healing process. Once cleared or addressed, there can be a new beginning and a solid foundation can be rebuilt. Thus, CWS workers using this tool provide an opportunity for NH families to offer more in-depth information in a manner that is comfortable for them. With this deeper knowledge, CWS workers may best support the family to work toward restoring balance and greater overall safety, permanency and well-being. The *waialele* (waterfall) in the Work/School domain is symbolic of the resources that flow to families through work, school, and other systems to support growth and the forward movement of life. Thus, to ascertain what type of support children and families have available to them, CWS workers can explain the symbolism of the waterfall in this context and can ask NH children and their families, “Where do you go or who do you turn to when you or someone in your family needs help?” Based on their responses, CWS workers can identify “safe spaces” for families to go to during stressful times and invite other family members to join the service team and increase the supports available to the NH children and families.

For the Physical/Body domain, a picture of people climbing uphill to the top of the mountain represents the journey that NH families embark on together as one group to achieve their goals. The idea of working together is based in the collective consciousness of Native Hawaiians (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972). CWS workers can emphasize the value of everyone working together and acknowledge that it may be challenging on their physical well-being to accomplish

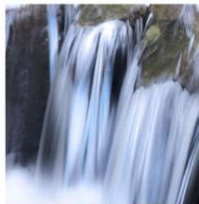
all that is in their service plan. It is also an opportunity for NH families to bring up any medical or health conditions that are relevant in understanding the families' physical functioning and remind families and CWS workers to strive for balance in all areas.



This card could represent feelings of frustration and a sense that one's life is out of order. The jaggedness of the rocks often represents sharpness and harshness in a person's life.



This card could symbolize a calm state of mind with a solid foundation at the base of the rocks since there is a larger rock at the base, or, it could represent an intensive workload.



This card could be a symbol for rest and relaxation, or, the water could reflect one's feeling of being overwhelmed.



The image of a pathway may represent a person's journey in life. It can also be symbolic of where the person is at in their journey on a physical, spiritual, and emotional level.



The image of a volcano on this card may represent anger or frustration with a particular domain in someone's life. It could also mean a crisis, or, leaving of the old and a time of renewal.



Flowers may symbolize the blossoming of ideas or children. It could also represent a time of expanding awareness.

Figure 4: Imagery Cards and potential interpretations

IMAGERY CARDS

Although asking questions in a non-threatening manner and pointing at the different domains of the *Lōkahi* Wheel may elicit relevant information for the assessment, engaging parents/guardians might still be a challenge as there is often resistance due to their involuntary involvement with the CWS. Thus, a deck of imagery cards selected by the first author was created based on imagery that is familiar to local residents in Hawai‘i (Figure 4). These cards were used to help facilitate the dialogue with NH families by having them select and place one or more imagery cards in the domain they believe best reflects their current situation or circumstance within that domain. After the cards have been placed in the domains, the family member is asked to share the reasons he/she selected certain cards for each of the domains.

For example, a CWS worker who sees a certain imagery card (i.e., volcano) in one of the domains (i.e., family) would invite the family member to share what the volcano represents for them and what does it mean with regard to familial relationships. Images vary in their meanings for different people or different family members. For example, one mother might choose the volcano to represent a strained relationship with husband or child. But another mother might interpret the same card as the crisis that opened the opportunity to develop a healthy relationship with spouse or child. Since family members have the autonomy to interpret the cards for themselves using the pictures, it can be more empowering and less intimidating than a standardized intake form or assessment tool that may be used by an agency and may increase the likelihood for NH and other PI families to feel “safe”.

The imagery cards in Figure 4 were selected based on their relevance to place such as Hawai‘i. However, the worker with knowledge of the family member’s cultural context (i.e. American Indian) may select other illustrations that are more culturally relevant for the families they serve. Although interpretations for each image are also provided in Figure 4, they are only suggestions that may be helpful in developing questions for further inquiry. Interpretations of the imageries on the cards during the assessment should be that of the NH families served by the CWS, as the process is to encourage engagement and elicit their unique and individual perspectives starting from where the client is at (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Ortega & Coulborn-Faller, 2011). Giving Native Hawaiian children and families the freedom to individualize their interpretations minimizes the potential for over-emphasis on shared group meanings for the cards based on a particular cultural group (i.e. Hawaiians). It also decreases the power imbalance that

can result from the CWS worker making inaccurate assumptions (Ortega & Coulborn-Faller, 2011) for the meanings Native Hawaiian children and their families assign to their selected cards.

PRACTICE WITH NATIVE HAWAIIAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES PLACED IN CHILD WELFARE

Children and families that enter the CWS involuntarily have often experienced trauma (Kisiel, Fehrenbach, Small & Lyons, 2009; Samuels, 2011). Yet, in addition to experiencing the current traumas of neglect due to poverty, substance abuse, and violence, indigenous children and their families have also experienced historical and intergenerational trauma due to their colonized histories (Braveheart, 2001; Libesman, 2007; McCubbin & Marsella, 2009) or illegal occupation of a once sovereign country as is the case in Hawai‘i (Sai, 2013). As a result, they often have multi-layered struggles and self-imposed negative perceptions of themselves based on societal perspectives created by their oppressor (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972; Silva, 2004). They feel powerless and may “shutdown” or appear to be resistant (McCubbin & Marsell, 2009; Ziegler, 2002). Therefore, it is important as CWS workers to be patient and allow additional time for family members to respond to questions based on their choices during an assessment (Weaver, 2005).

In order to be effective in serving this vulnerable, yet resilient population, it is important for CWS workers to place a value on decolonization and self-determination (Tamburro, 2013; Weaver, 2005). The *Lōkahi* Wheel can facilitate decolonization and self-determination, because it is a culturally sensitive approach that invites families to share their worldviews and perspectives without judgment. Families in the CWS often complain about not feeling heard or that no one listens to them. For NHs, as well as many other Pacific Islanders, who are visual learners and have a deep connection to their environment, this tool invites them to connect with their feelings and have a pathway to express them that might otherwise be difficult to discuss. This assessment offers a strengths-based, client-centered, culturally sensitive approach to assessment that invites families to express their ideas, opinions, beliefs, values, and feelings as well as seeing areas of balance and imbalance in their lives using a process by which they feel heard and validated. By engaging in a two-way conversation that is led by the child or family member, he or she is given the autonomy to be the expert in his or her own life when encouraged by CWS workers to express his or her perspectives. Rather than imposing Westernized values or worker’s interpretation, a CWS worker

facilitates more in-depth reflections from the individual's point of view. This is done through asking additional questions about the cards selected by the family member(s).

For example, when a family member is asked by a worker what the colors represent in the picture, a worker can use the following questions, "What does the pink color of the flowers represent for you?" rather than interpreting the color by saying, "Does the pink color of the flowers represent your love for your family?" This strategy of not interpreting the cards on behalf of the family member(s) is key to engagement with NH families because they are given autonomy to interpret the meaning of the cards for themselves rather than the worker imposing his/her interpretations of the cards.

This gentle inquiry process allows NH families to share their story from their point of view in a natural conversational manner rather than a standardized assessment in which CWS workers ask direct and open-ended questions from an intake questionnaire and then interpret their responses. When NH families are given a choice as to how and how much they disclose, it offers them freedom to choose what they share which communicates the message that their "story" matters and they feel validated rather than judged (Morelli, Fong, & Oliveira, 2001; Weaver, 2005). Since Hawaiian families are given the choice as to what they disclose and create personal interpretations for the cards they've selected, there is no right or wrong answer. The ability to engage in this mutual co-construction of meaning for the cards selected is helpful in gaining a more comprehensive assessment (Buckman, Kinney, & Reese, 2008) and empowers Native Hawaiian children and families. Ziegler (2002) also documents how the use of metaphor and imagery can allow someone who has been traumatized to discuss and process their thoughts and behaviors in an environment that is safe. Seeing a visual representation of their lives allows CWS workers and NH families to engage in a comprehensive assessment and see for themselves areas that may be "balanced" or "imbalanced", reflect on what they may be willing to change, and prioritize goals that will support the restoration of balance for domains that are the most challenging for them.

Based on the authors' experiences, this tool can be used to evaluate the current level of functioning for NH families. It could be completed at pre-treatment, during treatment, and post-treatment to monitor progress at different points in time. Core issues regarding relationships can also be addressed through the use of the imagery cards. For example, a child may be asked to select which cards best represent their family members for the CWS worker to gain greater insight

into the nature of the relationship the child has with a particular family member that is suspected to be abusive in a non-threatening manner because no singular family member is targeted.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTICE IN CHILD WELFARE SERVICES AND WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

At the end of Fall 2010, the University of Hawai‘i graduate students enrolled in Distance Education at the Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work were trained on the *Lōkahi* wheel and invited to use the tool in their work on the neighboring islands in rural communities where many Native Hawaiians reside. At the ending of Spring 2011, a survey was sent out to students asking for those who’ve had the opportunity to use the *Lōkahi* wheel as an approach to engage NH families to provide feedback on their experience and on the use of the tool. Six students who were able to use it with clients completed. All said that the tool was helpful in engaging NH families. Students who were Native Hawaiian and placed at an agency that serves many NHs, have used the tool with middle school and high school youth as well as other adult family members. All expressed high value in the tool’s ability to offer clients and their family opportunities to discuss their thoughts and feelings in a non-threatening manner that promoted open and honest communication. Specific comments included:

- “The best thing about it is, it’s empowering and it’s not intrusive...it gave them time to think about things and process their relationships and support systems.”
- “It’s a tool to draw out feelings. Pictures allow youth to express feelings. We (local people) learn from seeing and feeling. In order to be effective, the tool must be tailored to the clients’ environment and surroundings.”
- “Youth can take it home to communicate their feelings with their families in a non-threatening way.”

MSW student comments emphasized the ability of this tool to create a safe environment for children and their families to have open communication with CW workers as well as their family members. They reported that the use of visual imagery of familiar places supports clients’ abilities to share their perspectives and feel empowered by the richness of their personal narrative. Child welfare clients often complain about not feeling heard or that no one listens to them. The *Lōkahi* wheel invites them to connect with their feelings and to express them in ways that might otherwise be difficult to discuss (Pukui, 1983).

Child welfare workers are encouraged to create a *Lōkahi* Wheel for themselves with the imagery cards that allows them to pay attention to the thoughts and feelings that surface for them during their experience. Through this self-assessment, CWS workers will be better able to guide their assessments and respond in ways that promote opportunities for Native Hawaiian children and their families to embark on a journey of self-discovery to assess where there may be areas of imbalance and develop service plans to restore balance and harmony. It is recommended that CWS workers work in pairs and debrief this experience with one another to allow for reflection.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the *Lōkahi* Wheel contributes to the incorporation of a culturally-sensitive tool to be used in conjunction with standardized tools in CWS which has the potential to increase the depth of assessment that can be achieved with NH families and children. The tool promotes self-determination through individualized interpretations of the images on the *Lōkahi* Wheel and imagery cards and creates a “safe” space for communication through having choices and being asked questions in a non-judgmental manner. It can also be used to monitor progress over time. Core issues can be identified that may be present for an individual and his/her family. Once the assessment is complete, CWS workers and families can work together collaboratively to formulate and prioritize goals based on areas which are out of balance because of challenging issues within the various domains.

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AUTHOR NOTE

Tammy Kaho‘olemana Martin, M.S.W.
Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work
University of Hawai‘i
Email: tammymar@hawaii.edu

Meripa Godinet, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work
University of Hawai‘i