Psychometric Properties of the Hawaiian Culture Scale—Adolescent Version

Earl S. Hishinuma, Naleen N. Andrade, and Ronald C. Johnson
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

John J. McArdle
University of Virginia

This article reports on the psychometric properties of a newly constructed Hawaiian Culture Scale—Adolescent Version. A total of 2,272 Native Hawaiian and 1,170 non-Hawaiian adolescents were administered a 50-item inventory that measures the source of learning the Hawaiian way of life, how much Hawaiian beliefs are valued and important to maintain, how much non-Hawaiian beliefs are valued, Hawaiian blood quantum, and specific cultural traditions (seven subscales = Lifestyles, Customs, Activities, Folklore, Causes-Locations, Causes-Access, and Language Proficiency). The results strongly supported the internal consistency and validity of the measures for both the Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian groups. On the basis of the demographic data, partial support was offered for cross-cultural theories of ethnic identity. More consistent support was found for multiculturalism in Hawai‘i’s adolescents. Further research is needed to link these measures with indicators of psychological adjustment (e.g., depression, anxiety, substance use).

Indicators of medical health and social–emotional adjustment have consistently demonstrated the severe disadvantaged status of Native Hawaiians, the indigenous people of the Hawaiian Islands. These domains include low socioeconomic status (SES), suicide for young adults, child abuse and neglect, assaultive acts, antisocial behavior, alcohol and drug use, criminal arrests and incarceration, poor academic and school-related behavior, and higher mortality rates due to different medical conditions (e.g., Alu Like, 1985; Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, State of Hawai‘i, 1997; Department of the Attorney General, State of Hawai‘i, 1997; Kamehameha Schools/Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate, 1993; Office of Assessment Technology, 1987; Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 1998; Tsark, Blaisdell, & Aluli, 1998).

An important consideration is the role that ethnic factors play in the adjustment of Native Hawaiian people (“Hawaiian people” hereinafter). The present study is part of a larger effort by the Native Hawaiian Mental Health Research Development Program, the aims of which are to (a) construct an epidemiological map of Hawaiian adolescents; (b) develop a psychosocial model of risk, protective, and mediating factors (with the inclusion of ethnic identity) in the prediction of psychiatric symptoms and diagnoses; and (c) initiate the development of effective programs. A first step in discerning the role of ethnicity is to develop valid measures. The second step is to determine the associations of these ethnic constructs with indicators of psychological adjustment (Phinney, 1990; Singh, 1997). The scope of the present study is to address the first step, which is to report on the psychometric properties of a newly constructed Hawaiian Culture Scale—Adolescent (HCS-Adolescent) Version, and to determine how concepts from this scale are related to one another and to basic demographic measures. A subsequent effort will ascertain the association between these ethnic variables and psychosocial adjustment.

Cross-Cultural Concepts, Ethnic Identity, and Adjustment

There are several distinctions that should be made between ethnic concepts. Ethnicity connotes a multidimensional construct