

The Lived Experience of Native Hawaiians Exiting Prison and Reentering the Community: How Do You Really Decriminalize Someone Who’s Consistently Being Called a Criminal?

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The overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i’s criminal justice system is among the most stunning of ethnic/racial disparities in the state. To describe the human impact of Native Hawaiians involvement in the criminal justice system, the authors interviewed persons with criminal histories, correctional officials, social workers, and others. Findings reveal systemic challenges to prison exit and community reentry, including lack of services stipulated for release and upon reentry, marginalization associated with cultural trauma, resource deficits, and stigma. The

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National Association of Social Workers encourages social work leadership in policy formulation and service development. Suggested are strategies for influencing community attitudes, program access, and culturally-grounded services.

BACKGROUND SIGNIFICANCE

Native Hawaiians are descendants of the aboriginal people who inhabited the Hawaiian archipelago prior to western contact in 1778 and who exercised sovereign governance prior to the 1892 illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom by the United States of America (U.S.) (Office of Hawaiian Affairs [OHA], 2010). The 2000 U.S. Census (2002) enumerates 401,000 Americans of Native Hawaiian ethnicity in the U.S. (0.1% of the total U.S. population), nearly 60% of who reside in the State of Hawai'i. Compared to the state's four other major groups (Caucasians, Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese), Native Hawaiians are burdened persistently by a multitude of alarming disparities or differences in socioeconomic and biopsychosocial conditions, including poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and disproportionately high rates of disability and premature mortality associated with chronic health conditions (Kaholokula, Nacapoy, & Dang, 2009; Ka'opua, Braun, Browne, Mokuau, & Park, 2011).

The overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the state's criminal justice system (CJS) is among the most stunning of ethnic/racial disparities in Hawai'i. Native Hawaiians comprise about 24% of the general population, yet account for approximately 39% of the people under custody of the Hawai'i Department of Public Safety (OHA, 2009). Of the state's major ethnic/racial groups, Native Hawaiians are the only group who experience overrepresentation in the CJS. This disparity affects individuals, families, and communities. The average household size in Hawai'i is larger than that of U.S. and multifamily households are common (U.S. Census, 2002). Given their cultural tradition of collectivist relations, Native Hawaiian households tend to include relatives of several generations (Kana'iaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005). Thus, the incarceration of an individual member carries the potential to cause emotional and economic hardship for the multigenerational family system and, by extension, may ripple through multiple community networks. For Hawaiian Homestead communities and neighborhoods with a high density of Native Hawaiians, CJS involvement may intensify the sense of historic, cultural trauma and ongoing marginalization.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Low educational levels, unemployment, and poverty are associated with CJS involvement. National data suggest a relationship between low educational

attainment and incarceration, with a particularly robust correlation at the nexus of ethnicity and low socioeconomic status, which is notably reflected in marginalized communities of color (Western, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2003). Further, people in prison tend to have higher unemployment rates and lower wages prior to their arrest; the U.S. Department of Justice reports that approximately one-third of people in jail were unemployed prior to arrest, compared to 5.8% of the general population (Maseelall, Petteruti, Walsh, & Ziedenberg, 2004). As a group, Native Hawaiians are less likely than Hawai'i's other major ethnic/racial groups to have completed post-secondary education or training, have higher rates of unemployment regardless of gender or age, if employed are more likely to have service-oriented positions rather than professional or managerial ones, and less opportunity to higher paid employment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). State data documents that Native Hawaiians have the lowest mean family income in Hawai'i and with adjustment for differences in the state's relatively high cost of living, the median and per capita income of Native Hawaiians are substantially lower than comparable national figures (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2005). As a group, Native Hawaiians have the highest percentage (16%) of people living at or below the poverty level. Approximately 37% of the state's homeless population are of Native Hawaiian ethnicity (Hawai'i Homeless Outreach and Medical Education [H.O.M.E.] Project, 2009). Although the association between education, employment, and socioeconomic statuses with imprisonment does not necessarily mean that poor, less educated, or unemployed people commit more crime, it is possible that significant barriers to employment in the conventional job market may elevate Native Hawaiians' risk for CJS involvement.

Over the last two decades, there has been a growth of Native Hawaiian health research with emphases on the social determinants of disparate health and wellness outcomes, the development of interventions that build on Native Hawaiian strengths, and adherence to community-based participatory research (CBPR) approaches (Ka'opua, Park, Ward, & Braun, 2010, Ka'opua et al., 2011). To improve Native Hawaiian well-being, these researchers underscore consideration of upstream (systemic) factors, which notably include the group's history of cultural trauma, or the cumulative effects of negative physical, sociocultural, political, and economic changes on current disparities. Concomitantly articulated are the strengths of traditional Native Hawaiian cultural values (e.g., *kokua* or help without being asked) and practices (e.g., *ho'oponopono*, a holistic healing and reconciliation process) that might be integrated into interventions offering the prospect of holistic wellness. The current body of health research informs, though not completely, efforts to address the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the CJS.

The need to better understand the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the CJS, led Hawai'i's state legislature to pass House Concurrent Resolution 27 ("Requesting a Study," 2009), which requested a study of disparate treatment in Hawai'i's CJS, empowered OHA with study oversight, and

mandated cooperation from state agencies. The overall study purpose was to describe the impact of disparate CJS involvement and incarceration on Native Hawaiians. The resulting study, *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System* (OHA, 2010) involved CBPR approaches (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003) and used a multimethods design (Creswell, 1994). There were three study arms: (a) document analysis of public records, relevant policies, published and private materials; (b) quantitative analysis of extant criminal justice data, and (c) qualitative analysis of interview data. These methodological strategies were used sequentially to triangulate the phenomenon of Native Hawaiians' disproportionate CJS involvement. The document analysis (OHA, 2010) traced the evolution of laws in Hawai'i from the period of pre-western contact to contemporary times. Notably, the analysis indicated that the traditional Native Hawaiian system offered places (e.g., *pu'uhonua* or refuge) where violators could seek redemption and processes (e.g., *ho'oponopono*) for restoring justice to those harmed, seeking forgiveness, release from relational transgression, and reintegration within mainstream life. Suggested were the ways in which similar practices might inform the contemporary idiom of offender rehabilitation. The quantitative study arm involved a secondary analysis of data collected by the Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center over the period of 2000–2008. Results revealed that the disproportionate impact of the CJS on Native Hawaiians accumulates at each successive intercept with the system, even as type of offense, gender, age, and other salient variables are controlled. Furthermore, when given a determination of guilt, Native Hawaiians are more likely than other ethnic/racial groups to receive a prison sentence, longer sentences, longer probation terms, and to have the highest percentage of people transferred for incarceration to out-of-state facilities. Results from the document and quantitative analyses guided the research questions for the qualitative study arm.

Na Kuana 'Ike (NKI; OHA, 2010) is the name given to the qualitative study arm. In Hawaiian, NKI means "the perspectives" or "knowledge" gleaned from one's positionality in a system. NKI sought to complement and clarify results from other study arms. Its specific aim was to elicit perspectives on the human impact of incarceration. To describe the human impact, *na kupuna* (elders) on the Community Advisory Board (CAB) emphasized elicitation of *na mo'olelo* (stories, narratives), which were understood to be consistent with the Native Hawaiian tradition of sharing knowledge through face-to-face, personal account. Other CAB members encouraged NKI researchers to seek the perspectives of individuals who were differently positioned in their CJS involvement. Former inmates, correctional officials, and others were suggested. A wealth of information was collected. The current article presents findings from an analysis conducted subsequent to the publication of the full report (OHA, 2010) and addresses the specific questions of: What barriers do Native Hawaiians encounter in CJS exit and in community reentry? What strategies are suggested to reduce these disparate outcomes?

METHOD

A brief survey and semistructured interview questions were developed for gathering basic sociodemographic data and participants' lived experiences, respectively. With approval from the University of Hawai'i Committee on Human Studies, NKI was promoted in agencies offering furlough, treatment, and other re-entry programs. Participants were enrolled using purposive and snowball or chain referral sampling methods (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). Prior to enrollment, the principal investigator (PI) provided information on what participation involved and invited participation in a single, 90-min interview session. Individuals agreeing to participate signed a written consent. Three graduate research assistants (two female) completed training in ethical conduct of human studies and NKI protocols prior to conducting interviews with the PI or on their own. The final sample was comprised of 35 individuals (10 men and 10 women with histories of incarceration, five correctional officials either currently employed or retired, four family members of those with incarceration histories, four community advocates/volunteers, two social work providers). About 82.8% ($n = 29$) of the sample reported Native Hawaiian ethnicity, which included 17 participants with incarceration histories. Non-Native Hawaiians with incarceration histories indicated having partners and/ or children of Hawaiian ethnicity. Interviews were analyzed at the individual and group levels with continuous comparison within and across groups. The research team used a 13-stage analytic procedure that combined elements of grounded theory and content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Methodological procedures are displayed in Table 1.

FINDINGS

NKI participants shared their lived experiences (first-hand accounts, personal construction of meaning, impressions) of Native Hawaiian involvement in the CJS. Despite participants' diverse backgrounds and positions in the CJS, there was general concordance pertinent to the research questions. Notably, correctional officials and those with histories of incarceration identified similar challenges that seemed associated with Native Hawaiians' overrepresentation in the prison system, barriers to exiting the system and reentering the community, and strategies that might offer the prospect for success in sustaining community reentry.

What Barriers Do Native Hawaiians Encounter in CJS Exit and Community Reentry?

Three major themes were detected as barriers to exiting prison and staying out of the CJS: (a) challenges encountered at critical points of engagement

TABLE 1 Methodologic Procedures

Procedure
1. Research questions, interview questions, and study design developed, with a view towards complementing and clarifying analysis of statistical data. Study questions and design discussed with members of the full study team and Community Advisory Board (CAB).
2. Study receives approval from institutional review board.
3. Study promotion proceeds with guidance from the project advisory board that assists in identifying key agencies and individuals for participation.
4. Prior to study enrollment, researchers meet with all potential interviewees to provide information on 'what' study participation involves. Potential harms and benefits of participation and participant rights are discussed. Time is given to address individual and group concerns prior to enrollment.
5. Interviews are conducted only after written informed consent is secured to conduct and audiotape.
6. All interviews are conducted by Principal Investigator (PI) and/or one of three graduate research assistants (GRA) trained and supervised in research protocol.
7. All interviews are audiotaped and transcribed <i>verbatim</i> by transcriptionists.
8. Transcripts reviewed and independently coded by PI and a GRA. A single interview is continuously analyzed and compared with interviews from participants of the same group (e.g., content of a former pa'ahao's interview compared with those from other former pa'ahao) and with all participants (e.g., content of former inmates compared with that of correctional officials).
9. Emerging themes noted and discussed at weekly meetings of the PI and GRAs. Monthly feedback shared with CAB and other researchers, who ensure accuracy of interpretation.
10. The PI and GRAs continuously collect interview data until a point of data saturation is reached, with saturation defined as researchers no longer hearing new information.
11. A final coding system of themes, subthemes, and characteristic actions is developed and used to code all interview transcripts.
12. Sections of transcripts are filed by themes and sub-themes.
13. Written analysis linked to data from other study arms and to published literature.

with the CJS, which notably included lack of timely access to services necessary to fulfill court-stipulated conditions for release; (b) unresolved individual and group trauma, including victimization prior to entering the CJS, individual and group trauma experienced in the CJS, and intergenerational historic or cultural trauma; and (c) persistent systemic and social discrimination in community re-entry, including return to socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, with high rates of crime, un- and under- employment, and social stigmatization of people with criminal records.

CHALLENGES AT CRITICAL POINTS OF CJS ENGAGEMENT

Results from the secondary data analysis of criminal justice statistics (OHA, 2010), indicated that Native Hawaiians comprised 25% of those arrested, yet comprised 36% of those sentenced to prison. Also, Native Hawaiians received longer terms than members of other ethnic groups. Participants identified key intercept points and situations that might function as barriers to prison exit and reentry.

DEFENSE

Although participants acknowledged that there were many hardworking public defenders (PD), they speculated that Native Hawaiian disparities might be attributed, at least partially, to representation by the Office of the Public Defender. Factors of Hawaiian ethnicity and class background (self-identified low socioeconomic and educational statuses) were associated with reliance on PDs, as suggested by a correctional official:

If more Hawaiians get into the system, maybe it's because they are poor, cannot afford an attorney, and have to use a public defender. As a group, *na pa'ahao* perceived PDs as disinterested functionaries. A woman with a history of incarceration explains the common perception of public defenders: "The public defender wasn't for the public. We, *pa'ahao* call them the 'public pretender'. The first thing they want to do is take a plea. What you don't hear is, 'What can I do for you? How can we work this out?' It's more like: 'This is what they're offering. I think you should take it.'"

SENTENCE SETTING

In Hawai'i the paroling authority sets the minimum standard, which is also the first day upon which an individual is eligible for parole. The paroling authority is not able to go beyond the maximum number of years set by the judge. Formerly incarcerated Native Hawaiians consistently experienced as "unfair" and "arbitrary" decisions made by the parole board. They believed that the lack of clear criteria delayed their return to the community. Individuals with incarceration histories recall, "The parole board fluctuates. It's the luck of the draw" and "I tried to find out from the board 'what' I needed to qualify for parole. They wouldn't release that information to me. If you don't have your programs set up in your plan, they goin' defer you ... that causes discouragement, loss of hope."

CORRECTIONS

Interactions between people in prison and adult correctional officers (ACO) may contribute to increased time spent in prison. Infractions may be subjectively determined by an ACO, with infractions influencing the chance to participate in programs leading to eligibility for release. Examples are provided by a correctional official and ex-offender, respectively: "There are so many stories about staff getting sexually involved with inmates ... [and] getting special treatment which caused problems" and "In our lingo, the only thing that is consistent is the inconsistency!"

Differential treatment based on Hawaiian ethnicity was suggested by men with incarceration histories and was associated with serving time in prisons on the "mainland" (North American continent). Racial discrimination under the guise of "zero tolerance" policies and programs is suggested by a

Native Hawaiian man who served time outside of Hawai'i: "They get this thing up there, a punishment program. We away from home, stressing out about our families, about dead time. One little thing—zero tolerance. Boom! I down in the hole. The majority of everybody in that program is our boys [Native Hawaiians]."

FURLOUGH/PREPARING FOR COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY

Lack of access to programs was the most frequently expressed concern voiced by na pa'ahao, as well as by those working within the CJS. Lack of timely access to programs and services resulted in more time behind bars. Those directly involved in the CJS as offenders and correctional officials referred to this as "dead," "stagnant," "bad," or "unproductive time." The paucity of services in the state is explained by a correctional official: "You can come in for drug charges and get 10 years. And you are not gonna get treatment until your last two years, the end of your eighth year. That's the way it's designed. What do we do with long-termers serving "dead time"?"

The duality of being eligible, yet unable to obtain a placement in drug treatment and other programs stipulated as conditions for release was experienced as tantamount to being a commodity with "limited shelf life." Such "human warehousing" was a source of frustration, outrage, and discouragement for inmates who wished to "prepare" themselves for eventual release and for correctional officials entrusted with managing the environment. Male and female "long termers" describe their experiences in coping with "dead" time:

We go through culture shock. There isn't enough to prepare us.

Dead time, stagnant time, more time. The State gives us these requirements to do, but don't have the means for you to do your programs.

It's hard to fathom in your mind what it's like to be doing stagnant time, sitting on your bed for 24 hours. You feel like a dollar sign with a revolving door back to prison.

The lack of program resources also was a challenge for correctional officials entrusted with managing the incarcerated. An adult correctional officer explains:

When inmates are confined to their cells that's the worse way to house a long-termer. They just sit there, vegetate, and eventually, can lose it mentally. It's not a good place to work either because you can become a part of that negativity.

Coping takes dedicated effort. A pa'aahao (male) suggests how he survived stagnant time by nurturing optimism but notes that not all are able to stay hopeful. The experience of trauma precipitated by witnessing others "lose it" is inferred: "I tried my best to do the good and keep my mind straight, strong. If you start deteriorating mentally and physically, you are going to "lose it". Most of my friends died in prison."

MULTIPLE AND UNRESOLVED TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

The accounts of na pa‘ahao, family members, and those working or volunteering within the CJS reveal multiple layers of individual and group trauma experienced by Native Hawaiian men and women with a history of incarceration. The effects of unresolved trauma experienced prior to incarceration were exacerbated by subsequent victimization in the CJS. Multiple and unresolved traumatic experiences could enhance among na pa‘ahao, the perception that they were not “normies.” This perception could function to dis-incentivize efforts to live conventional, mainstream lifestyles. A social work treatment provider observes an often witnessed dilemma for individuals seeking community reentry: “The term ‘reentry,’ assumes that you’re entering somewhere you’ve already been. Often, released inmates are entering somewhere they’ve never been. It’s like culture shock. Our lives don’t look fun to them [yet] they realize at some level that their lives have become self- destructive.”

INDIVIDUAL TRAUMA PRIOR TO CJS INVOLVEMENT

Traumatic events occurring across the lifecycle from early childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood are detailed in the narratives of na pa‘ahao. The stories of na pa‘ahao are characterized by lives of profound “hardship” prior to CJS involvement. Frequently described were experiences of childhood trauma, alienation from family and educational, social services, and conventional occupational systems. Such experiences were remembered with considerable pain and viewed as critical junctures when an individual “turned away” from the source of marginalization. Examples are shared by a Native Hawaiian man and woman, respectively:

I never fit into school because of abuse. I turned away. At 14, I went to detention home. I was 17 when I had my daughter and the only way I knew how to support her was through crimes. At 21, I committed a real heinous crime and served 25 years in prison. (Native Hawaiian man)

Because of the incest, my family disowned me. I fell through the cracks of the system. From the age of 13 years, I was already on the streets. To survive, I ate out of rubbish cans, picked up cans for recycling, started selling drugs. (Native Hawaiian woman)

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA, PRE-CJS INVOLVEMENT

The systemic nature of traumatic events experienced by Native Hawaiians in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities is suggested by a Native Hawaiian man with a history of incarceration: “I was raised in a plantation camp. I turned to drugs to escape the hardship.” Non-pa‘ahao respondents speculated that Native Hawaiians’ collective history of cultural trauma was

a contributing factor to CJS involvement. Experiences of socioeconomic disadvantage, living on the margins of conventional western society with limited access to venues for health and well-being were viewed as antecedents of western colonization and its concomitant effects of land alienation and cultural/linguistic genocide. In many instances, the systemic consequences of poverty and social/political disadvantage were observed as being passed on from one generation to the next. Multi-generational family incarceration was noted. Systemic explanations are posited by a correctional official:

Native Hawaiians are overrepresented in the system. The crime might be committed in the city, but the people are from Hawaiian communities where families get into dysfunctional activities. I think goes back to cultural trauma that Hawaiians as a whole have.

The need to look beyond the association of cultural trauma and individual criminal behavior is emphasized. Suggested is the need to address historic and current policies and practices that criminalize Native Hawaiians. A community advocate/volunteer explains,

It is often explained that Hawaiian involvement in the system is related to cultural trauma. These explanations posit that Hawaiians respond to cultural trauma with crime *versus* the way that policies and practices have been used to criminalize Hawaiians. The context for criminalization needs to be addressed.

TRAUMA EXPERIENCED WHILE INCARCERATED

Na pa'ahao, correctional officials, and volunteer/advocates report post-traumatic stress symptomatology precipitated by exposure to violent and unexpected events occurring within the prison, as well by the sense of helplessness arising from a desire to help suffering inmates and staff. The Hawai'i State Department of Public Safety contracts prisons in other U.S. states to hold people under Hawai'i custody; data from 2005–2008 (OHA, 2009) indicate that Native Hawaiians as an ethnic/racial group are disproportionately represented among those transferred and have the highest rate of transfer to out-of-state prisons. Trauma resulting from such transfers may occur, regardless of ethnic group membership or cultural affiliations. However, for Native Hawaiians, transfer to prisons on the North American continent gave rise to a unique cascade of losses arising from disruption of *ola pono* (holistic wellness), as enunciated in traditional Hawaiian culture and referenced in contemporary times as the Lokahi Triangle (Rezentes, 1996). From this paradigm, *lokahi* (harmony) is achieved through three interdependent relationships, namely, self in relation to others, humans in relation to the 'aina (land, homeland), and humankind to spiritual sources. Separation from the land may cause ma'i

ho‘oka‘awale (separation sickness), as reflected in disruptions of the physical body, disconnection from ancestors and living kin, and extrication from the everyday relationship with the spiritual world which resides in the ancestral land. The psychosocial/spiritual consequences of separation due to out-of-state transfer are described by an advocate/volunteer and two former inmates, respectively:

It gets cold on the North American continent. When our pa‘ahao are sent away that cold enhances their sense of disconnectedness, the sense of unsettled spirit: “The whole experience was traumatizing. I spent three months in the infirmary” and “People feel so sad away from their families and from the ‘aina [Hawai‘i as homeland].”

PERSISTENT SYSTEMIC AND INDIVIDUAL DISCRIMINATION IN COMMUNITY REENTRY

Upon release to the community, those with histories of incarceration frequently reported higher levels of marginalization and social alienation than they had experienced prior to incarceration. After coping with “dead time”, serving sentence, and being released into the community, Native Hawaiian men and women with histories of incarceration described their “reward”—being “labeled” and discriminated against as “ex-cons.” The Legal Action Center (2004) evaluated U.S. states and the District of Columbia on legal barriers facing people with criminal records; the State of Hawai‘i is rated fourth lowest in legal barriers. Although Hawai‘i has modified federal regulations in a number of critical areas (e.g., hiring practices, eligibility for food stamps, public housing), legal barriers and negative community attitudes were experienced by na pa‘ahao and suggest that changes may not have gone far enough to assure successful reentry. Systemic “roadblocks” to reentry are exacerbated by loss of connection to families and community networks. A formerly incarcerated Native Hawaiian man observed,

There are roadblocks for us. I was incarcerated on the mainland and lost my family. Plenty of us no more no place for go when we’re released. The beach becomes home. No more financial support. No more vehicle. Maybe cannot get license. No more job. These things can drive us to criminal activities to survive.

Stories such as these are far from unexpected, especially in an environment of high un- and underemployment. “Stagnant time” spent in waiting for services, productive time spent in earning community release is replaced by “hard times”: “Economy stay down. Maybe you can find one job, but the pay’s not going to be what you need to live in Hawai‘i, where it’s expensive for live. You can work two jobs and still live on the beach ... hard times!”

What Strategies Are Suggested To Reduce Disparate Outcomes?

Study participants made recommendations to decrease or eliminate barriers to CJS exit and community reentry. Many of these recommendations focus on changes that might occur at specific points of intercept with the CJS; these recommendations propose change strategies at the level of the law enforcement, judicial, and correctional systems. Other proposed strategies involve modifying community norms and practices. Some suggestions reflect paradigmatic shifts in the way justice is promulgated or the ways in which fairness and reason are applied when laws are broken. Indigenous Hawaiian practices offering the prospect of “forgiveness” were identified as potentially helpful in reentry. Recommended strategies reflect five themes: (a) need to increase timely access to services for those already in prison, with particular attention to services stipulated for release and expanding services for family strengthening programs, trauma-informed care, jobs training, and other psychosocial issues prevalent among those affected by incarceration; (b) importance of culturally responsive approaches, with inclusion of evidence-based practices that build on resiliency factors inherent in the indigenous culture; (c) need for community education to decrease stigma associated with CJS involvement; (d) need to establish a collaborative specifically charged with eliminating Native Hawaiian disparities in the CJS, with representation of stakeholders from conventional, mainstream systems (e.g., judiciary, law enforcement, corrections) and community stakeholders (e.g., representatives from communities with a high density of Native Hawaiians, former *na pa'ahao*); and (e) leveraging change that focuses less on punishment and more on treatment, education, and healing processes for all.

INCREASE TIMELY ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR THOSE ALREADY IN PRISON

Robustly advocated by all was the need for *na pa'ahao* to have timely access to services, with attention to substance abuse treatment and other services stipulated as conditions for release and services for family strengthening, individual/group trauma, and jobs training. In the present environment of fiscal constraints, partnerships with churches, businesses, and other organizations may be a means for augmenting needed services. Correctional officials were enthusiastic about the potential of partnerships:

Offender re-entry is our goal. Workforce development is our focus. We've reached out to community organizations. One construction company started out building a place for our *pa'ahao* to meet with their children. *Pa'ahao* helped. The experience was positive for both sides. Now this company hires ex-offenders.

For long- and medium-termers, we've looked for ways to ready a person for treatment. We have a volunteer who is a kumu hula (teacher). In her professional life, she's a psych social worker in trauma care. She weaves trauma recovery into teaching hula and culture.

INTEGRATE CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES IN ALL SERVICES

Frequently emphasized was the need for intervention approaches that reflect traditional Native Hawaiian values and practices. Study participants offered recommendations on how indigenous knowledge traditions might serve as a foundation for reducing CJS involvement and impact. A Native Hawaiian woman explains:

It's important to know who you are, where you came from—especially, for individuals like myself with traumatic backgrounds ... it's a kind of healing to imua [move forward].

Community advocate/volunteers enunciate the values of spirituality and sacredness inherent in Native Hawaiian traditions and posit that integration of spiritual values and practices may support na pa 'ahao in living a life of "pono" [morality, righteousness], in coping with the negative effects of incarceration and community reentry.

Sacredness is the root of my beliefs in rehabilitation approaches. Through teaching about cultural practices, we introduce an understanding of sacredness. The more sacredness we give pa'ahao through culture, the more we are teaching them to be pono.

We want to nurture and help them heal. Indigenous people have processes for working through issues. Hawaiians have processes like ho'oponopono.

A Native Hawaiian correctional official suggests that traditions of ho'oponopono (holistic healing and conciliation process) and pu'uhonua (sanctuary) may be helpful in developing understanding between na pa'ahao and communities:

Traditionally, Hawaiians had the pu'uhonua. If you violated the law and were successful in getting to the pu'uhonua, no one could touch you. While you stay there, you learn to live a forgiven life. There were processes like ho'oponopono to bring you back in, to help people heal and get to a point of forgiveness for what has happened in the past.

PROMOTE COMMUNITY EDUCATION THAT FACILITATES POSITIVE REENTRY

Another correctional official reinforces the importance of forgiveness and emphasizes community education: "How do you really de-criminalize someone who's consistently being called a criminal?! You reach out to the community. Educate. Let them get exposed to ex-offenders."

ESTABLISH COLLABORATIVE CHARGED WITH ELIMINATING NATIVE HAWAIIAN DISPARITIES

Those with employment or volunteer experiences in the CJS pointed to the need for systemic solutions. They suggested forming a collaborative responsible for examining local policies and practices, and then, directing the work of reducing disproportionate contact of Native Hawaiians. Models aimed at reducing ethnic/racial disparities in other states were mentioned. Features of exemplary models focused on: (a) establishing a committee comprised of conventional mainstream stakeholders (e.g., judges), as well as community stakeholders; (b) having dedicated staff to coordinate, organize, assist in presenting relevant data as the latter emerge; and (c) having venues for providing technical, financial, and/or in-kind support from government and non-profit entities.

REDUCE/ELIMINATE DISPARATE OUTCOMES FOR NATIVE HAWAIIANS THROUGH LEVERAGING CHANGE FOR ALL

In addition to targeting efforts for reducing Native Hawaiian disproportionality in the CJS, recommendations were made to reduce incarceration and CJS contact for all people. Correctional officials, treatment/social service providers, and community advocates/volunteers made recommendations for changes that might occur at specific intercept points in the CJS trajectory.

REDUCING ARRESTS

Arrests were viewed as the gateway to the CJS. It was suggested that law enforcement officials consider issuing fewer/no citations for certain offenses, particularly low-level, non-violent offenses and those related to homelessness.

RELEASING MORE PEOPLE PRETRIAL

Release with specific attention to treatment diversion for individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues was recommended. Use of screening tools and risk assessments with proven psychometric properties were suggested as a means to add confidence to release decisions made by the court. A person with a history of incarceration states:

They get plenty pa'ahao on drugs. They belong in treatment, not in prison.

PROVIDING TRAUMA-INFORMED SERVICES

Traumatic experiences at the individual and group levels were frequently cited as barriers to successful community reentry, as well as at other points of CJS intercept. Providing trauma-informed care, especially those using

culturally responsive approaches may divert people away from the CJS. A forensic social worker explains,

“For the majority of women, the pathway to crime is usually unresolved trauma and use of drugs to deal with unresolved trauma that leads to addiction, crime, and incarceration. Policy-wise, there is a need for trauma-informed services that give women a positive sense of self and self-efficacy.”

CONSIDERATION OF CREDITS FOR “GOOD TIME” TO REDUCE TIME SERVED

The state’s paroling authority was viewed as “arbitrary” and “fluctuating” by study participants. In comparison to other states, Hawai‘i gives the paroling authority a significant amount of authority to set minimum sentences. Although guidelines (e.g., nature of offense, degree of injury or loss, prior offense history) are used in sentence setting, other nonspecified criteria may be used to make sentencing decisions. Suggested was the need for a policy to offer good time credits (e.g., sentenced individual may apply to have their minimum sentence reduced after serving one-third of their sentence).

SHIFT PROBATION AND PAROLE MODALITIES OF SUPERVISION

Service and support modalities already are viewed as a priority by the State of Hawai‘i’s Parole Services. Suggested were service and support modalities consistently used across all types of supervision and offered at offices located in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities with a high density of Native Hawaiians. Also, suggested were mentoring programs coordinated in cooperation with a nonprofit group. The family member of a formerly incarcerated individual explains, “Women come out but aren’t supposed to interact with each other. Where then do you go for support?! Mentoring networks might help.”

FULLY IMPLEMENT ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

Community-based programming was viewed as a hopeful alternative. Alternatives might promote access to families, jobs, and education, as well as social services offering the prospect of holistic support and improved life outcomes. A correctional official advocates for holistic and community-based alternatives that include attention to culture and gender-sensitivity:

You’ve got to be holistic. For example, when there’s substance abuse, often there’s underlying trauma which is an issue for women and men. But it’s really difficult for the men to bring this out. You need to think gender and culture, treatment, and pathways to community integration. You need to think about these things as though they were digits of the hand. All digits have to be working together for the hand to work best.

TABLE 2 Barriers, Recommendations, Social Work Implications

Barriers to exit and reentry	Recommendations	Social work implications
Challenges encountered at critical CJS intercepts, with longer sentences and “stagnant” when incarcerated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those incarcerated, increase timely access to services. • To reduce time served, promote use of “good time” credit. • Shift probation and parole modalities of supervision to service and support, with offices in Native Hawaiian communities. • Establish a collaborative to eliminate Native Hawaiian disparities. Include community stakeholders, as well as those involved in the CJS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take an active role in legislative process. • Convene, facilitate, and/or participate in coalitions of diverse stakeholders. • In convening coalitions, include persons with incarceration histories, public officials, community groups, social work organizations, and university researchers. • Develop research to substantiate issues targeted for advocacy. Tailor dissemination of findings to influence intended audience.
Multiple, unresolved traumatic experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop trauma-informed care using evidence-based models of practice and involve Native Hawaiian stakeholders in cultural tailoring of approaches. • Develop multiple methods for measuring trauma & treatment outcomes. • Provide training to CJS personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance development and delivery of trauma-informed care, using evidenced-based models of practice, with attention to trauma experienced at the individual and group levels. • To ensure culture- and gender-responsiveness, include those with histories of incarceration and local community leaders.
Persistent discrimination, stigma, & marginalization at re-entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide community education. Include ex-offenders as educators. • Promote dialogue on community-based alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and participate in community forums to elevate dialogue on developing solutions to eliminate stigma and discriminatory practices.

Note. CJS = criminal justice system.

Table 2 summarizes barriers to exit and community reentry along with strategies to reduce disparities and implications for social workers, as suggested by study team members and social workers serving on the study's community advisory board.

DISCUSSION

Typically over 50% of our client population is Native Hawaiian. Why? I think the key is the system, part of the bigger picture of a marginalized

people who don't have resources and fall through the cracks. (Forensic social worker)

Social marginalization involves processes by which identifiable groups are persistently relegated to the outer edges of mainstream social systems and political-economic power; factors such as ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, and cultural practices serve as functional criteria for marginalization (Tilly, 1999). Although our research questions focused on prison exit and community reentry, participant narratives from NKI evidence the continuous social marginalization of disadvantaged Native Hawaiians in mainstream society, as reflected in (a) their social relations prior to entering the CJS (e.g., poor/working poor families, involvement in juvenile justice system), (b) their lived experiences within the structure of the criminal justice system (e.g., perceptions of the public defender as the "public pretender" who was "not for pa'ahao" [inmates], transfer to North American prisons which led to family separation and loss, lack of access to stipulated services that extended time in prison time), and (c) upon community reentry (e.g., state limitations on eligibility for Food Stamps and public housing, online access to an individual's criminal history, social discrimination, stigma as "ex con"). After serving prison time, the prospect of successful integration in mainstream society for many remained daunting. The lived experiences of Native Hawaiians exiting the CJS and reentering the community generally are consistent with experiences of other ethnic/racial minority groups living in the United States (Mauer & King, 2007; Western et al., 2003).

Cultural themes specific to Native Hawaiians as an indigenous people also are revealed. The severe overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i's criminal justice system conspicuously mirrors the overrepresentation of Alaska Natives in Alaska and Native Americans states in which there are many tribal reservations, Indian communities, and ancestral lands (e.g., Minnesota, North Dakota; Poupart, Redhorse, Peterson-Hickey, & Martin, 2005). An increasing number of Native Hawaiian and other indigenous scholars and activists posit that disparities of social health and well-being in general and of incarceration in particular, are influenced by the occurrence of historical, cultural trauma and its inter-generational transmission through the mechanisms of collective remembering and ongoing, systemic marginalization (Braveheart & DeBruyn, 1998; Lane, Bopp, Bopp, & Norris, 2002; Sotero, 2006). For Native Hawaiians, cultural trauma is associated with a cascade of collective losses and historic social marginalization precipitated by land alienation. Beginning in the 19th century, western-imposed laws and policies shifted land tenure from one of collective stewardship by native people to that of private ownership which favored the interests of an elite group of western businessmen (Bushnell, 1993; Ka'opua et al., 2011). This shift assured the rise of westerners' plantations and eventually, led to the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1892 and U.S. annexation in 1898. As na maka'ainana (common people who tended the land) were alienated

from the land—the source of their spiritual, social, and economic well-being—they migrated to more urban areas where many became wage laborers or part of a marginalized underclass of debtors, paupers, and prisoners, with the latter frequently, convicted for private property, tax- and alcohol-related violations (Brown, 2011; Keahiolalo-Karasuda, 2010). Negative stereotypes of Native Hawaiians as incompetent, immoral, and/or lazy functioned to dismember indigenous governance, socially denigrate/outlaw cultural ways of being, and criminalize native identities.

In NKI narratives, cultural trauma was frequently cited as an important social context for understanding Native Hawaiian disparities. Cultural trauma was (re)experienced particularly when inmates were transferred to facilities outside of Hawai'i. Separation was experienced as *ma'i ho'okawale* or sickness caused by the alienation of individuals from families and from Hawai'i as physical home, ancestral homeland, and the place of connection with spiritual sources. In the lived experience of incarceration, Native Hawaiians reported the need to “connect” with their land and culture as a means to healing and sense of belonging. Recommended are community-based, family-focused, and culturally responsive strategies to address systemic barriers at the mezzo and macro levels. These recommendations are consistent with recommendations and models developed by/for indigenous people living on the North American continent (U.S. Department of Justice, National Reentry Resource Center, 2011).

Findings are limited by methodological biases and may not be representative of all Native Hawaiians with histories of incarceration, correctional officials, social workers, advocates/volunteers, or family members. Limitations include (a) use of a self-selected sample which may advantage the perspective of those with particularly negative experiences, marginalization, a proactive sense of self-agency, and/or an agenda for change; (b) use of a retrospective, cross-sectional study design that reflects a particular blend of cultural-historical factors and therefore not representative of all cohorts across time; and (c) data collection involving interviews that are subject to social desirability, recall, and accuracy biases. Future research might prospectively track and compare inception cohorts of multiethnic/multicultural individuals followed from earlier points across the trajectory of CJS involvement. These limitations notwithstanding, the study has a number of important strengths. NKI was one of three study arms; use of multiple methods decreases the likelihood that results from any one study arm are an artifact of method. Further, accuracy in interpretation of NKI interviews was ensured through discussion and consensus agreement of the full study team and CAB. Prior to NKI, the perspectives of Native Hawaiians with histories of CJS involvement have never been systematically gathered. Thus, findings offer a unique lens into this group's lived experience and participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share first-hand accounts.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Association of Social Workers affirms the profession's dual commitment to offenders and communities (Roberts & Springer, 2007), acknowledges the significant role social workers already play in the CJS workforce, and strongly encourages social work leadership in the areas of policy formulation and development of service delivery within a continuum-of-care framework (Wilson, 2010). Social work involvement in NKI suggest four ways in which members of our profession might contribute concretely to efforts aimed at reducing disparities in the CJS for Native Hawaiians and other groups. First, social workers may play a key role in leading advocacy efforts. In NKI, forensic social work advocates assumed active leadership in formulating legislation and lobbying its passage, thereby setting into motion research aimed at documenting disparities that might inform future policy and program development. A forensic social worker associated with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs convened and coordinated a multidisciplinary team of researchers (OHA, 2010), which included social welfare and Native Hawaiian researchers grounded in the ecological, strengths-based, and culturally sensitive perspectives core to social work. Second, social workers may influence policy and program development through participation on community partnerships and boards. In NKI, social workers in forensics, family services, and health/behavioral health participated as members of the CAB and as such, were charged with guiding the all research arms in the full study. To the CAB, members of the social work profession brought knowledge of policy at its nexus with frontline practice, as well as skills in culturally sensitive communication, accessing relevant social networks and use of CBPR approaches. Third, social welfare researchers may contribute to documentation, description, and dissemination of empirically derived knowledge for use in policy and program development, as well as in community forums. A social welfare researcher served as lead investigator of NKI and provided direction to all aspects of study design. The researcher, together with social work students and members of all study arms, worked to elevate professional and community awareness through educational forums. Fourth, social workers may serve as key informants, content experts, and study participants. In NKI, social workers from diverse positions of CJS involvement lent their voice to the interview study. These individuals shared valuable perspectives from their position as treatment providers, agency directors, CJS officials, and family members of persons who had been incarcerated. Collectively, these efforts advanced dialogue on the question: "How do you really de-criminalize someone who's consistently being called a criminal?" Social work leadership contributed to furthering the agenda to address Native Hawaiian disparities and exit- and reentry-related barriers that disproportionately affect Native Hawaiians, but that also affect the incarcerated population, regardless of ethnic group membership. It is through such leadership and participation that social workers

working in partnership with state and private agencies, community-based organizations and policy advocates, might invest together in developing strategies to reduce disparities and ultimately, promote social justice for all.

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