The Social, Political, and Culture Implications of the Practicing of Native Hawaiian Healing:

La‘au Lapa‘au (Herbal Medicine) and

Lomilomi (Massage Therapy)

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Poverty and Prejudice

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Introduction

This paper is based on research I conducted during Summer of 2003 in Hawaii using my President Scholar’s Intellectual Exploration Grant. The resources I use throughout this report are mainly from interviews of Native Hawaiian La’au healers that I conducted during my research. I also have several sources from books found only in the Hawaii Medical Library, which I made copies of when I was in Hawaii. I combined these resources with current web articles as well as interesting related topics brought up in the lectures from EDGE. This is the first time that I am submitting a report using the data gained from my summer research.

Growing up in Hawaii and being part Native Hawaiian, I have a personal passion and enthusiasm regarding the Hawaiian culture and the ambition to perpetuate it as well as understand its near extinction and newfound reawakening. My personal background also plays a major role in my knowledge and fascination in this specific research project. My Uncle, Charlie Soon, has Type II diabetes. For years he had been going to various hospitals in Hawaii seeking help. After the amputation of two toes and two fingers as well as being in a constant state of pain, he was ready to give up on everything. One day, Papa Henry Auwae, a man who was considered to be the only living po’okela, or master, of Hawaiian medicine, met my Uncle Charlie and invited him to come see him. Uncle Charlie, not knowing anything about Papa Auwae or the type of medicine he used, went with some hesitation. Ever since that meeting my Uncle has changed completely. Although he still goes to the hospital, he also uses Hawaiian herbal medicine and treatment, La’au Lapa’au. My uncle’s testimony is what inspired me to research Native Hawaiian Medical Treatments last summer and is continuing to inspire me to conduct more detailed research on the combination of La’au Lapa’au and western medicine this summer and next year.
As a pre-medicine student, this research is important to me because I’ve always been interested in the study of medicine and medical treatments with a focus on cultural, spiritual, and historical elements. As a Human Biology major, this passion is reflected in my Area of Concentration, which is Ethno-medicine where I study how ethnicity and race have an affect in medical practices and vice versa.

I have taken various courses that have provided me with experience and knowledge to aid me in my research project. The research paper I wrote in my Program in Writing and Rhetoric course, Narratives of Discovery, concentrated on the arrival of the first missionaries to Hawaii and the affects this arrival had on the Native Hawaiian culture. This research paper provided the backbone to my President Scholar research proposal as I kept in mind the effects that Native Hawaiian culture change has had on Native Hawaiians today. In Mass Communications I learned the intricacies of interpersonal communication and the different aspects to keep in mind when communicating with others. This class provided fundamental techniques to keep in mind when interviewing people. The Human Biology core also aided my interest and background in this project as we learned how culture and medicine affect each other.

Recent classes I’ve taken which have also aided my interest in this project are Sociology 141A: Social Class, Race/Ethnicity, and Health as well as HumBio 130: Biology, Technology, and Human Life. The former, which applied to my area of concentration, ethno-medicine, increased my awareness of how social, political, and cultural aspects must be taken into account when looking at health disparities of different groups of people. The latter revealed to me the ethical issues needed to be taken into account when dealing with new technologies or medicines. In the case of my project, I will focus on the ethical issues that need to be
addressed with the introduction of two types of medicines being combined and the implications that may be raised from this newly introduced method in hospitals.

The Ethics of Development in a Global Environment (EDGE): Poverty and Prejudice, has also been an extreme motivational tool in the topics this paper addresses. Lectures such as “A World of Indigenous People,” led by Winona Simms, and “Mexican and Mexican Americans, Health Care Disparities”, led by Dr. Oscar Cervante, are examples of resources which made me think of related issues relevant to Native Hawaiians, such as cultural identity and health barriers due to social and political implications within different cultures. By combining previous research as well as current research throughout this class, I was able to construct this report.

**Purpose**

Because this was a pilot study and a stepping-stone for further research, my goal was to get a general view of Native Hawaiian medical practices, La’au Lapa’au (herbal medicine) and Lomilomi (massage therapy), as well as to explore the concerns and key issues relevant to current practitioners of traditional Hawaiian healing. This will allow me to conduct a more in-depth research project in the future by having relevant background information.

The purpose of this project was to answer the following research question: How do cultural, spiritual, and healing aspects interplay with each other in the Native Hawaiian Medical Practices, La’au Lapa’au and Lomilomi? Along with this question were two sub-questions to be answered. Sub-question 1: How have these medical practices been passed on throughout history, and how are they being passed on today? Sub-question 2: What are the benefits and disadvantages of combining La’au Lapa’au with Western medicine?
This research is significant because, outside of Hawaii, little is known about the current practice of Native Hawaiian herbal medicine, La’au Lapa’au. Also, the possible benefits of the combination of these two medical practices should be explored and elucidated. If this combination should have any negative outcomes, these should also be investigated and noted for others’ knowledge. My particular research brings forth the personal accounts of individual La’au healers and their personal experience of how the tradition was passed down to them, how they pass it down now, and what their perspectives are of La’au Lapa’au’s future and the possible combination with Western medicine.

**Materials and Methods**

The two modes of analysis I used to research these questions were literature search and semi-structured interviews of traditional practitioners. In my literature search, to see what published research and work had already been done on the topic I was exploring, I used three documentation resources: professors, practitioners, and articles. I conducted semi-structured interviews, which followed a general list of topics but were ultimately open ended and varied depending on the interviewee and their personal experiences. The results were a collection of practitioners’ personal accounts and opinions on the various cultural aspects and medical effects these types of practices have and how the two affect each other. The results also include accounts on how diversity of beliefs and social conditions play a role in these medical practices.
Results and Discussion

History:

According to Kekuni Blaisdell, M.D., a professor of medicine at the University of Hawaii and co-founder of E Ola Mau,¹ this history of traditional Native Hawaiian Lapa’au (Hawaiian medicine) can be divided into three periods: the pre-Western era; the period of Western contact from 1778; and the modern period, including both the loss as well as re-awakening of traditional Hawaiian practices. Prior to Western contact, Hawaiians were in relatively good health. Being very active people with little stress, they ate what we would consider “organic” food and encountered no environmental pollutants. There were healers that were skilled and able to heal any minor ailments, and due to the islands’ location of geographic isolation, Hawaiians were not subject to the severe illnesses experienced on the continents. Because of this, the Hawaiians were completely unprepared for diseases including syphilis, gonorrhea, tuberculosis, smallpox, cholera, measles, and dysentery that they encountered as a result of Western contact starting with the Cook expedition in 1778. At this time there were no European cures for these diseases, and although the Europeans already had immunity and resistance to these diseases, the Hawaiians were completely vulnerable. Thus in the eighteenth century, these epidemics swept over the Hawaiian Islands killing hundreds, even thousands, at a time. (Abbott, 97-8)

In 1893, Queen Lili’uokalani yielded under protest to the United States, and the Hawaiian monarchy was overthrown by American business interests. At this point in time, the Hawaiian population had dwindled from an estimated 800,000 in 1778 to 40,000 in 1893. Five years later Hawaii was annexed by the United States. Within a century of the first Western contact, an organization of Hawaiian health professionals

¹ An organization of Hawaiian health professionals
Hawaiians had lost their land, their spirituality, and their culture. Although in 1919 the Territorial Legislature established a Hawaiian Medicine Board to license La’au Lapa’au practitioners, two out of the three board members were white and limited the practices of La’au Lapa’au practitioners by prohibiting them to use the Hawaiian names for native herbal medicine but rather to only use Western scientific names. In 1959, Congress proclaimed Hawaii a state, and then soon after in 1965, the Hawaiian Medicine Board was abolished. La’au Lapa’au practitioners were no longer licensed. Lomilomi practitioners were licensed only under the Board of Massage. (Blaisdell, 3-4)

In 1985, E Ola Mau Health Study, which was the first comprehensive health assessment of Hawaiians in Hawaii, was completed and became the basis for federal legislation. In 1988, the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act was passed by Congress allowing traditional practitioners to once again practice legally. As incredulous as it is to think of how much of the Native Hawaiian’s culture and way of life was so rapidly destroyed and so much lost, it is equally remarkable how modern Hawaiians, as well as other interested people, have been able to be a part of a cultural re-awakening since the 1970’s, preserving what information they can and taking new pride in their almost lost culture. (Abbott, 131-3)
Traditional Role of Healers:

There were two essential categories of disease recognized by Hawaiians: *mawaho*, illnesses caused by forces outside the body; *maloko*, illnesses caused from within. The first group consisted of illnesses resulting from ill will, anger, or jealousy of another person; from the displeasure of *kupua* (ghost or spirit, spirit guardian *‘aumakua* (spirit guardian), or *kupuna* (ancestor); or from the work of a *kahuna ana‘ana* sorcerer (sorcerer). Relief from such illnesses was sought through prayers and offerings, as was the initial response to any kind of illness.

*Maloko*, or illnesses arising from within, required the cures and treatment by healers. When symptoms of such a disease appeared, people turned for help to *kahuna haha* (medical diagnosticians), *kahuna lapa‘au* (medical doctor), and *kahuna laʻau lapa‘au* (herbalists). *Kahuna haha* specialized in recognizing the internal organs and assessing the functioning of the various body parts while *kahuna lapa‘au* and *kahuna laʻau lapa‘au* were responsible for the cures.

A *kahuna laʻau lapaʻau* began his training at the age of five in the house of an elder expert in this field. Oftentimes this would be his father or another man. As he grew up, he received comprehensive instruction about the medicinal plants, their value and effect in the body, where they grew, how to gather, prepare, and administer them. Their knowledge spanned three disciplines we consider separate today—botany, pharmacology, and medicine. They consistently recognized and identified plants, knew their characteristics, and contributed importantly to the high level of Hawaiian plant
taxonomy, all of which fall in the realm of botany. As pharmacists, they were experts in preparing the plants, needing to select them according to their maturity and season as well as mix them in proper proportion. As physicians, they were responsible for prescribing and administering them. (Abbott, 98)

Ancient Hawaiians revered a great variety of gods. These gods were highly feared and respected as they were believed to possess great spiritual power, or *mana*. They could also take on different shapes and forms. Nature was also very highly valued as it was looked upon as a living, sacred aspect in everyone’s lives. They were also living places for the gods. The god Ku was believed to dwell in the mountains, Lono in the clouds, and Kanaloa in the sea. Spirits could also inhabit certain living organisms such as animals, sea creatures, trees, and plants. Because of this high regard for nature, healers would often explain to plants why they were being picked and ask permission of stones to move them from their place in *heiaus*, or sacred site of worship. This love and respect for the land and nature was the Hawaiian’s belief in reciprocity: the land has nurtured and provided shelter and food for the people; therefore, the people must protect and preserve the land as well. ([**Healing Island**, 3]

Along with La’au Lapa’au, lomilomi massage is also a traditional Hawaiian healing practice. Lomilomi requires very rigorous training in both physical and spiritual aspects. In lomilomi, a bond of trust must be built between patient and healer. Auntie Margaret Machado, a renown lomilomi therapist, explains that aloha is one
of the key elements in lomilomi where “alo” means the presence of “ha,” or the breath of life. As she so eloquently instructs her students, "Hawaiian lomi lomi is a loving touch." There is so much more to this massage therapy then the correct movements. It is an art that also works to connect with the patient and relieve him or her of any stress or tension.

Passing on of tradition:

Kaipo Kaneakua is a kupuna who specializes in Lomilomi La’au Lapa’au, Opu Huli (realignment of the internal organs), and Na Ke Ki No Ma’i (sickness of the body). He described how he was taught while growing up by members of his family. Traditionally, kupuna would not teach anyone older than 5 years of age. The child usually started learning when he or she was two years old. The teachings were very strict as compared to the softer, more patient teachings done today. He was taught never to ask questions but rather to constantly observe and learn by watching and listening to his elders. Everything was perpetuated and passed down by word of mouth, so he would be responsible for memorizing all that he learned. Kaipo had 16 family Kupunas to learn from on Molokai, Kauai, Niihau, Big Island, and Oahu. He now is often called the “medicine man of Maui” and teaches workshops on Maui giving lectures on
ho'oponopono, human and spiritual anatomy, diagnosis, natural Hawaiian herbs, and Lomilomi Kupele, a form of Hawaiian massage that is with the soft touch.

Today, there are many different ways that the methods of practicing La‘au Lapa‘au and Lomilomi are being passed on. In an interview with Aunty Alapa‘i, she explained how she had many teachers throughout her life. Aunty Alapa‘i prepares and gathers herbs as well as prescribes different Hawaiian medical herbs for her patients. Her grandmother raised seven out of eight grandchildren in Waialua Valley and taught Aunty Alapa‘i how to identify, pick and gather different herbs. Papa Henry Auwae, who was a highly regarded Kahuna La‘au Lapa‘au O Hawaii, also trained her. She also claims to have learned a great deal from Bula Logan, who she now works with. As she told me about each person she learned from she explained that “not all knowledge is taught at one school.”

Bula Logan also had many teachers himself. He described that “practices have been passed on by kupuna^2 for preservation; it's a transfer of gifts.” He learned different medicines and how to prepare them while growing up. His teachers included his grandmother, who taught him about the use of herbs, as well as his aunty. Because his aunty was blind, Uncle Bula explained that she had a special sense of touch. His mother and father also did La‘au Lapa‘au. Papa Kalua taught him techniques in Lomilomi as he “understood how to unlock parts of the body.” His extent of learning did not end with his teachers either. He told me that the more he teaches, the more he learns.

Kai Koholokai, who gathers and provides Hawaiian herbs and supplements for other La‘au Lapa‘au practitioners, learned from his grandmother while growing up. Kai Kaholokai, along

^2 “Kupuna means elder. In old Hawaii, kupuna were respected as keepers of Hawaii’s wisdom and knowledge.” (Harden, 10)
with his wife Linda, founded Kai Malino Wellness Center, which produces Hawaiian herbal products with a traditional cultural base in Hawaii and the Indo-Pacific bio-region.

Kahuna Ikaika Dombrigues is an example of a descendent who was meant to practice from when he was born due to the fact that he was the first born in a family with a lineage of healers. His specialty is La’au Lapa’au, but he also practices spiritual, energy healing, restoring heiaus\(^3\), and sacred consultation. In an interview with Kahuna Ikaika, he explained that practitioner is a western term, so he uses the term healer. His wife, Leina’ala Brown-Dombrigues, is a Hawaiian Lomilomi Lapa’au Ke Kumu‘ola (teacher). Her specialty is Hawaiian Lomilomi Lapa’au. Ke Kumu Leina’ala was born into the legacy of the Kahuna Lapa’au La’a Kahea Ohana (family). Her mo’okuauhau generations come from La’au Kahea (Healing by Touch). This art was primarily kept within Ke Kumu Leina’ala’s family as her grandmother, Kahuna Lapa’au La’au Kahea TuTu Kalua passed on the spiritual knowledge to Ke Kumu Leina’ala’s mother who then passed on these gifts to Ke Kumu Leina’ala.

Ke Kumu ‘Ola Leina’ala Brown-Dombrigues
Kahuna Ikaika Dombrigues
Kahu Aunty Abbie Napeahi
(<http://lokahiola.org/>)

Kahuna Ho’ola Kawaiakuokalani Hewett, the Cultural Health and Education Director of the Waimanalo Health Center’s Ai Kupele Program, is also an example of a practitioner whose family could see his gift from birth. They could see that he already had mana (power) and ike (vision). Before Kahuna Kawaiakuokalani was born, his grandmother had a dream of what to name him. The name signified that he would be a great

\(^3\) Christian place of worship, shrine; some haiku were elaborately constructed stone platforms, others simple earth terraces. Many are preserved today. (Pukui/Elbert Dictionary)
healer blessed with certain gifts at birth needed to do La’au. He was the only protégé of Kahuna Emma Defries, one of the few surviving kahuna\(^4\) in the 1900’s who was recognized by both legislative bodies of the State of Hawaii for her healing work as a Kahuna La’au Lapa’au. She was a spiritual leader of the Hawaiian people as well as a leader for sovereignty of Hawaii. Kahuna Kawaikapuokalani believes that God gives the gift of healing to you, and that God chooses healers. His grandmother also taught him, and she only practiced for her family. She could interpret dreams pertaining to her family, and she taught Kawaikapuokalani that man can continue to learn and communicate with his ancestors through dreams. When he was younger, he did not understand the symbolism of his dreams, so his grandmother would interpret them. Now, dream interpretation is one of the many skills he uses today to help others.

Description: The noni is usually found as a large bush with a round fruit with a honeycomb pattern on it. The plant likes dry climates.

Uses: to treat cancer, tumors, heart problems, high blood pressure, kidney problems, skin infections; to cleanse the system; to heal muscle strains; to remove lice and fleas; treat hair loss in children. (Nagatoshi, 1)

Qualifications:

Qualifications of students range depending on who you ask. Some say the first grandson, or mo’okuna, is trained. Others say it is a gift that you are born with. Still some say it is your spirit and willingness to learn. (Bula Logan)

\(^4\) “Kahuna was the term used for elders who were preeminent in their fields. They were the best at what they did.” (Harden, 10)
Ke Kumu Leina’ala teaches at the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence in Lapa’au Wisdom and Healing Arts of Hawaii: Ke Aloha Mauli Ho’ola ‘O Hawaii Nei (The Compassionate Breath of Ha of Hawaii). The mission of the Center states the following:

To restore, protect, perpetuate, develop and advance the healing arts and sciences of the Native Hawaiian Indigenous Lapa’au healing practices of the Kahuna Lapa’au ‘O Hawaii, servicing the Native Hawaiian and Multicultural population throughout Hawaii Nei and the world. It is also bridging the old, and embracing the new for the generations of Hawaii Nei. (Leina’ala Brown-Dombrigues)

The prerequisites for Lomilomi Lapa’au training at this center include Introduction to Anatomy and Physiology, Basic Science for Occupation, Introduction to Hawaiian Culture, and Business Management and Marketing for Occupation. Traits that Leina’ala looks for in a student include his genealogy, which implies how much mana he possesses; however, the main trait she looks for is the student’s passion for learning these practices.

When asked if he thought each practitioner focused on each aspect of Lomilomi and La’au Lapa’au including the cultural, spiritual, and medical side, Kai Koholokai explained that he couldn’t speak for everyone. He explained that kupuna, however, would say that the main emphasis in these practices is the spiritual side to them. Pule, or prayer, is a powerful and very important component of these practices. It is also important for the practitioner to be ha’a ha’a, or humble. Many believe that in order to conduct these practices, one needs to have a gift, be from a certain bloodline. In a way, one is predestined to become a practitioner before he is born. Everyone has unique gifts from past lives. However, if someone doesn’t have the gift but is passionate about practicing La’au Lapa’au and Lomilomi, through dedication and determination it can be done. Whether one learns from one teacher or many, he can begin to
fine tune and make his own combination of what he learns. When asked if the people being treated require the spiritual side of these practices also, Kai Koholokai said that he doesn’t force them but rather suggests. He waits to treat them until they are ready.

**Spiritual Component:**

Kai Koholokai explains that “verbal communication is the lowest level of communication. Vibration, tone, that’s where it is, when the spirit talks to you. In the plant, the vibration comes, and you know.” Through meditation he sees more. He has a hunger to learn. In the stillness, between the thought, is when one is open for input.

Kahu Alalani Astara Hill was the Alaka’i and Haumana (chosen student) of Kahu Kawika Ka’alakea, who was a Kahuna pule, Kahuna La’au Lapa’au and Kahuna Ho’oponopono. In an interview with Kahu Alalani, she explained that in Hawaiian healing methods, such as La’au Lapa’au and Lomilomi, it is imperative for the practitioner to connect with her patient. When practicing Lomilomi and La’au Lapa’au, the main priority is to set things right mentally, emotionally both with themselves and with others. To do this, there needs to be a spiritual balance. Ho’oponopono, which literally means “to make right,” is a central practice to Hawaiian healing traditions. It is a therapy used by practitioners to reach lokahi, or harmony of mind, body and spirit, through spiritual intervention. To practice ho’oponopono, the patient meets with his family members. They pray and talk to each other in order to search their hearts for hard feelings or conflict in the ‘ohana, or family. The goal of the patient is to
come to a spiritual, mental, emotional agreement with the members of his family. The patient needs to set things right on all levels, not just physical. It is up to him to do his part even if others in his family don’t want to forgive. Kawaikapuokalani practices La’au Lapa’au, Lomilomi, and ho’oponopono, but considers ho’oponopono to be his specialty area of expertise. He believes that “God speaks through narrow channels.” Some people ask him to curse others, but he won’t because as a Kahuna Ho’ola, his purpose is to heal. Ho’oponopono is about forgiveness. “No matter what you’re doing, ho’oponopono, medicine, Lomilomi, pule, if your attitude and intent is aloha, unconditional love, there are no boundaries or limitations or restrictions.” (Kai Koholokai) It is through ho’oponopono that mana is gained from akua. (Bula Logan)

Kahuna Ikaika and Ke Kumu Leina’ala explained that as healers, they are facilitators and channels for Ke Akua in order to share divine aloha to others. Through the “Breath of Ha” knowledge, wisdom, and gifts are able to be passed on. They believe that through the power of prayer and thought, they are able to heal. Because of this, they can even heal at a distance. They also shared that along with being spiritually in tune with Ke Akua, it is important to also be aware of nature and its elements. Many times there will be signs to show the healer if his work is pono⁵. For example, when a rainbow is a complete circle, one’s mission is complete. Two rainbows signify that something important is coming. (Ikaika and Leina’ala Brown-Dombrigues)

When discussing the spiritual aspect of Lomilomi and La’au Lapa’au, many practitioners express that they pray to akua, the Hawaiian name for god. Traditionally Hawaiians revered many gods who could assume many different forms and possessed great mana, spiritual

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⁵ Goodness, uprightness, morality, moral qualities, correct or proper procedure, excellence (Pukui/Elbert Dictionary)
energy. When the New England missionaries arrived in 1820, the Hawaiians were converted to Christianity. Because of this, the question may be raised: What does the ‘spiritual side’ incorporate: traditional ancient Native Hawaiian ways or Protestantism?"

When speaking with Kai Koholokai, talking about spirituality implies everything is going back to the center of the circle. He explains that “it’s all 360 degrees. It doesn’t matter from which part of the circle you start from. You have a choice in how you get to the center. The important thing is that you get to the center.” Although it’s important to keep some guidelines in framework, it’s also imperative to not be isolated, separating the possibility or the creativity of healing. “If you stay within the guidelines of ha’a ha’a, respect, you’ll be looked after and be taken care of. We’re all universal citizens; we all have uniqueness; we can embrace them all. We need to incorporate all forms of medicine which come back to the same source. Only as you travel and embrace, evolve as a culture, can you have total balance, total trust, total spiritual alignment for self. Choose to evolve instead of recycle.” (Kai Koholokai)

*Combining with Western Medicine:*

There are many aspects of Lomilomi and La’au Lapa’au that Western medicine fails to address. Lomilomi and La’au bring completeness whereas physical limitation. One aspect, to address the core, or there will be a
physical unease. Spiritual imbalance, mental and emotional aspects all need to be set right on all levels for balance. Western medicine doesn’t address these issues. (Kai Koholokai)

Due to this dichotomy, blended medicine is an option to combine both Western medicine and Hawaiian medical practices in order to draw on the strengths of each. Mainstream Western medicine has shown to be operative in diagnosing diseases and treating serious injuries and infection; however, it has also proven to be less efficient when confronting chronic illness. More and more, patients are realizing the advantages of taking a more holistic approach to health. By using both practices, each patient can be helped on a more individual basis so that all health needs are addressed such as elements like exercise, diet, and the mind-body connection, which are often overlooked by Western medicine. (“Native Hawaiian Healing Practices”)

Conclusions

La’au Lapa’au and Lomilomi are practiced by many healers on all the islands of Hawaii. While some have learned from a Kahuna Nui and others from their relatives, each healer has a unique passion for the tradition. Every healer I interviewed displayed a deep sense of *aloha*, or love, and shared that aloha with me as they shared with me their personal convictions and stories. They demonstrated their selflessness as well as willingness to teach others and share knowledge as each healer took time to talk with me without any monetary compensation. They taught me the importance of these herbal healings not only medically, but culturally as well. The practicing of these healing traditions is also a social comment on the revival of the once dwindling Hawaiian culture.
Although there has been a culture reawakening and interest in traditional healing methods, there is still an overwhelming loss of information about the exact use of Hawaiian remedies, and most of the prayers to supplement these remedies are not known. Both good and bad can come from this. The good thing is that, just as everything else in this world, culture evolves. As it continues to evolve, there are no limits to the combinations and each practitioner’s uniqueness when practicing La’au Lapa’au and Lomilomi. However, it is crucial to not lose focus of the foundations of these practices and the importance to perpetuate this once dwindling culture. People must not take for granted these practices but rather continue to educate and be educated.

Another dilemma not to be overlooked is the option of combining La’au Lapa’au with Western medicine. Although there are many benefits that can come from this, it must be done cautiously. Many practitioners are worried that if combined with Western medicine in hospitals, La’au Lapa’au will lose much of what makes it so unique from Western medicine in the first place. They fear that the spiritual side will be lost, and the very foundation of these practices shattered.

My hopes are that more research will be put into these current issues. It is imperative that during this fragile time of revival that all the healers work together to perpetuate this once banned tradition. It is also crucial to study the effects of combining it with Western medicine so that the benefits as well as disadvantaged will be understood fully.

**Future Research**

I plan on doing more research this summer to further investigate the pros and cons of combining La’au Lapa’au with Western medicine and what implications this combination would
The goal of my research project will be to answer the following research question: What are the patients’ perspectives on the effects of combining La’au Lapa’au (Native Hawaiian Herbal medicine) and western medicine on their overall health outcome? Along with this question are two sub-questions. Sub-question 1: In what ways are the two practices implemented? Sub-question 2: What are the different advantages and disadvantages of the two practices on patient’s overall health? I will conduct this research mainly through interviews of patients throughout the islands of Hawaii who use both La’au Lapa’au and western medicine for their health.

The research presented in this report has given me valid preparation in designing as well as conducting interviews, using a tape recorder, keeping journals, dealing with human subjects including the completion of a Human Subjects Protocol. I was also able to experience not taking for granted the need to be culturally sensitive even though I am a part of the culture I am studying. All of this knowledge will better equip me for my upcoming research, which will need similar techniques. I was also able to get a general account on the varying aspects of the Native Hawaiian practices healers’ views of the advantages and disadvantages of combining La’au Lapa’au with western medicine. This was an excellent springboard for the research I plan to conduct this summer and next year.
Resources


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