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Mindfulness and Native Hawaiian Contemplative Practices

Thao N. Le, Breanne Fong, Kehaulani Lum,
and Bruce Keaulani

Within the Buddhist tradition, mindfulness is considered a meditative practice that is grounded in a solid foundation of ethics (wholesome thoughts, speech, action) that can yield liberating insights into the nature of self and all phenomena (Bodhi, 2011). Mindfulness in the context of Hawaiian culture can be construed as awareness and focused attention (*mākia*) grounded in relational ethics that supports generational wholesome living and livelihood.

Native Hawaiian epistemology proposes that everything is interconnected and interdependent, thus requiring everyone to be guided by the principles of *aloha* (love with kindness, humility, unity, pleasantness, and patience), along with reverence and respect driven by a deep understanding of the intertwined relationships between human-nature-ancestral spirits. Additionally, directed effort and mental/emotional discipline are prerequisites in order to refine one's character (to become embodiment of *aloha* and reverence), and this discipline/effort is exercised through the many different forms of Native Hawaiian contemplative practices, including oral (speech), stillness

T. N. Le (✉) · B. Fong
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, USA
e-mail: thaole3@hawaii.edu

B. Fong
e-mail: bfong4@hawaii.edu

K. Lum · B. Keaulani
Living Life Source Foundation, Honolulu, USA
e-mail: bkeaulani@kaitogakko.org

(mind/heart), regenerative/movement (body), and relational (actions). These contemplative practices are both mindfulness practices as well as mindfulness being a constituent component of these practices. A true chief (*ali 'i*) is one who has mastery, sovereignty over him/her/their self, and can bring forth abundance due to their connection and attunement with spirits and the natural/physical world.

This chapter is an attempt to describe mindfulness from a Native Hawaiian perspective, and starts with a brief overview of Native Hawaiian epistemology to ground the essential values of *aloha* and *ano* (reverence) as guiding principles of relational awareness; i.e., we only know and exist due to being in relationship, even across spheres, and thus must think, speak, and act with *aloha* and *ano* which is *pono* (right wholesomeness). It is this relational awareness that undergirds Native Hawaiian contemplative practices, several of which are briefly described in this chapter as illustrative examples of how mindfulness is embedded. We contend that for appropriate cultural adaptations of mindfulness, introducing or incorporating current contemporary conceptions of mindfulness (e.g., mindfulness as present moment awareness without judgment, Kabat-Zinn, 1990) or mindfulness as an aspect of a third-wave therapy within a respective culture, it behooves therapists and counselors to consider how mindfulness may already be reflected, practiced, and incorporated in the culture. It is also a respectful acknowledgment that mindfulness practices in Native Hawaiian cultures and other Indigenous cultures have existed for many centuries and may have been obscured for various reasons, including the effects of Western colonization (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Finally, we draw on brief studies to reveal how nascent and humble our knowledge remains and to urge scholars and researchers interested in mindfulness within Native Hawaiian and Indigenous cultures and communities to explore further.

Native Hawaiian Epistemology: *Kumulipo*, *Mo 'okū 'auhau*, and Relational Awareness

The *Kumulipo*, one of the oldest creation chants, serves as a valuable source of information on the foundation of Hawaiian culture (*The Kumulipo*, 1987). For Native Hawaiians, the *Kumulipo* is a genealogical creation chant that details the *mo 'okū 'auhau* (genealogy) of the earth, ocean, and land and essentially the beginning of how consciousness was formed in the world. This 2,102 line chant describes how natural systems of the Earth work and details the way the ancestors perceived and experienced the world through

the *pilina* (relationships, connections) they shared with other entities, both human and non-human natural and spiritual elements (Wilson-Hokowhitu et al., 2019). The *Kumulipo* was created for an *ali 'i* (chief) named Kalan-inui 'iamamao and relatively marks the rise of consciousness in Hawaiian culture and the rise of religious and political practices for the blessing of *ali 'i*. The *Kumulipo* reflects the epistemological (how we know) and ontological (nature of being) perspectives that can be found in similar ways across other Indigenous cultures. It lays the foundation of values and virtues that are important for Native Hawaiians and the practices including mindfulness toward skillful and harmonious living centered on cultivating relationships, especially the all-inclusive connection from the spirits/heavens (the immaterial) to the material, encompassing *'āina* (the land or sea that feeds one) and human beings.

According to the *Kumulipo*, there are three *papa* (houses) in which knowledge can be categorized: *Papahulihonua*, *Papahulilani*, and *Papanuihānaumoku*. *Papahulihonua* focuses on natural earth processes, such as geology and volcanology, and *Papahulilani* focuses on atmospheric processes, such as the cycles involving clouds, winds, stars, moon, sun, and planets. *Papanuihānaumoku* focuses on living things, such as practices involving birthing, well-being, and social and political relationships (Wilson-Hokowhitu et al., 2019). The *Kumulipo* begins with the birth of the earth, heavens, and cosmos:

O ke au i kahui wela ka honua, O ke au i kahuli lole ka lani, O ke au i kuka'ikaka ka la, E ho'omalamalama i ka malama,

which can be interpreted as “At the time when the earth became hot, At the time when the heavens turned about, At the time when the sun was darkened to cause the moon to shine” (Beckwith, 1951). The sacred chant then continues with the birth of the primordial slime, from the “*ko 'ako 'a* (coral)” and all other living organisms, to “*ka haluku, ka haloke, ka nakulu, ka honua nauueu* (the roaring, advancing, and receding of waves, the rumbling sound, the earthquake,” until, finally, the humans appear (Beckwith, 1951). These natural processes can be interpreted in multiple ways when viewing them from the three houses of knowledge. With respect to earth, the *Kumulipo* emphasizes awareness of a human's responsibilities *kuleana*- which is the privilege that one has to be in certain spaces and how one benefits from resources of that space, along with the duty to take care of that space.

As a crucial philosophical and spiritual source for Hawaiians, the *Kumulipo* supports the epistemological idea that human awareness and understanding can only arise from the connectedness and relationship among human, land,

heavens, and ancestors (Meyer, 2003). Further, as the *Kumulipo* describes the *mo 'okū 'auhau* (genealogy) of the earth, it is also a reflection of the importance to understand one's own *mo 'okū 'auhau*, and to recognize, appreciate, and revere the causes and conditions for one's existence and upbringing, and most importantly, the *kumu* (teachers) and *kūpuna* (ancestors, elders) in one's life. *Mo 'okū 'auhau* emphasizes this relational awareness that supports having *pono* (right) perception.

Within the human dimension, knowing one's *mo 'okū 'auhau* refers to multiple genealogies and lineages that conditions one's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual being. Key to this are the concepts of *'aumakua* and *kumupa 'a* (ancestral deities of the family) (Meyer, 2003). From this knowledge emerges *kuleana*, one's privileges, rights, and responsibilities that encompass honoring, revering, and respecting harmony with family and environment, both past and present. Native Hawaiians perceive past and future as experienced in the present moment as a divine presence (Meyer, 2003), as highly relational and conscious rapport with ancestors, and that paying attention requires awareness of the sixth sense that is beyond thought, thinking ways, and the phenomenal world (Meyer, 2003).

Pono Perception: Aloha and Pilina

Pono has many different meanings, but the main interpretation is “to be good, to be just, to be morally upright” (Chun, 2011, p. 145). In Hawaiian epistemology, knowledge can be delineated into two forms: mere information and proper, righteous, directed knowledge (*'ike*). Knowing that two plus two equals four or knowing that a coconut tree is different from an oak tree is mere information. Knowing that one should not hunt certain species at certain times of the year or knowing that the stars can be used to direct oneself when sailing is directed knowing; it is purposeful. Directed knowing is also a skill that varies among individuals. There are certain “goodness-of-fit” conditions for directed knowledge. Goodness-of-fit knowledge (*pono*) is when actions reflect the understanding that everything, from heaven to earth, is deeply interconnected, that one's action conditions the next action, in perfect order, with causes and consequences in a dynamic play occurring in an ever-unfolding pattern. There are no actions that do not take place in a complex web of events. If there are fitting conditions and we understand that actions all have effects on other people, as well as on all other living beings and the natural world, then it reflects an arguably relational ethic orientation: we know that our actions affect the world around us, and we ensure that our actions fit the surroundings, and that we are *pono*; our actions are *pono*. Thus,

this right perception (*pono*) is a deep consideration and embodiment of this relational awareness.

For Hawaiians, being *pono* also reflects a harmonious balance and unity (*lōkahi*) between *na 'au* (mind, gut), *kino* (body), and *'uhane* (spirit), requiring attunement of the interconnections among *kānaka* (humans), *honua* (Earth, natural world), and *akua* and *'aumakua* (spiritual world) (Lloyd et al., 2023). *Kānaka* depend on the *honua* for life in that the *'āina* provides food, shelter, and medicine for people to sustain themselves as well as other practical uses, such as creating implements for daily life. In turn, *kānaka* take care of the *honua* and *'āina* that provides for them, developing a reciprocal relationship where the livelihoods of *kānaka* and *honua* are interdependent. The *akua* and *'aumakua* are connected to both *kānaka* and *honua* in that they may take the metaphoric form of a plant, animal, sound, natural element, or even a person. Through these forms, the *akua* and *'aumakua* guide *kānaka* on the right path to *pono* and *lōkahi* (Kealiikanakaoleohaililani et al., 2021). These relationships naturalize how interdependent these entities and elements are with each other and the cruciality that they all coexist in balance. When *kānaka*, *honua*, *akua*, and *'aumakua* are in balance, there is harmony, in which people respect each other, the *honua*, and the *akua* and their respective *'aumakua*. All natural ecosystem cycles are attuned to each other, and *kānaka* engage in traditions and spiritual practices that are aligned with the needs of the *honua* and honor and respect the *akua*.

A common Hawaiian proverb, or *'ōlelo no 'eau*, “*Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono*” translates to “The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness” (Pukui, 1983). The saying was derived from King Kamehameha III's 1843 speech when power was restored to the Hawaiian Kingdom by the British government after five months of illegal occupation (Gould et al., 2019). This meaning of uprightness sets the precedent of *pono* for people to be morally just, honest, fair, and respectful in their choices and behavior in everyday life. Intuitively, mindfulness is thus naturally enacted in those who engage in *pono* mindsets, as they have an increased awareness and thought process in their actions, considering any ethical implications on themselves and their relationship with the environment, other people, and/or the *akua* and *'aumakua*.

It should be noted that there is no *'ōlelo*, or Hawaiian word, specific to the terms “values, virtue, morals, or ethics” (Gould et al., 2019). Gould et al. (2019) use Chun (2011)'s work to illustrate that values in the Hawaiian worldview are illustrated through practices, enabling a multitude of different interpretations for one term that includes literal, metaphorical, and spiritual/

hidden meanings. Nevertheless, he suggests that *pilina* (relationship, connection) is a core Hawaiian value that supports *pono* perception in that Native Hawaiians do not see a separation between themselves and the ‘*āina* (land, that which feeds, ecosystem). The natural environment is but an extension of themselves, emphasizing the thread between *kānaka* and ‘*āina*—that their physical, spiritual, and cultural well-being are inextricably tied. *Pilina* with one’s environment, thus, conditions and trains one’s intention to honor *pilina* with others.

Aloha can be loosely translated as ‘hello’ or ‘love,’ and in its deeper practice is a core concept, belief, value, and way of life for Hawaiian culture and well-being. *Aloha* can be understood through five values represented by each of its letters: *Akahai* (kindness, tenderness), *Lōkahi* (unity, harmony), ‘*Olu ‘olu* (agreeable, pleasantness), *Ha ‘aha ‘a* (humility, modesty), and *Ahonui* (patience, perseverance) (Le & Shim, 2014; Lloyd et al, 2023). These values essentially call for one to be aware of the past and present and be mindful of one’s actions, thoughts, and words so that one can enact love, respect, and compassion toward others, all essential for *pono* and *pilina*. In fact, the “Aloha Spirit” law (Hawaii revised Statutes, Section. 5–7.5) formally establishes and promulgates *aloha* as the guiding philosophical principle in Hawai ‘i and for Native Hawaiians. In essence, *aloha* means to be kind, agreeable, harmonious, patient, and humble in thought, speech, and action, emphasizing the aspect of mindfulness that strives for wholesome living and livelihood.

Tree of Hawaiian Contemplative Practices

Indigenous worldview and language inclusive of Native Hawaiian culture are highly contextual, dynamic, and change over time, expressed in both traditional and contemporary ways (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Within a particular practice, there could also be many schools, styles, and ways of practicing, each with different purpose and intent, depending on the setting and epoch. Borrowing from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s Tree of Contemplative Practices, we propose the following Tree of Native Hawaiian Contemplative Practices to illustrate the types of practices that could be considered Native Hawaiian mindfulness practices and/or integrate mindfulness construed as *mākia*, focused attention and awareness, toward a relational ethical aim. We borrow this visual image framework from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society’s Tree of Contemplative Practices to show the different aspects of mindfulness/contemplative practices (relational, movement, stillness, etc.) as practiced and promulgated in Native

Hawaiian culture. Mindfulness as a processual practice is an intentional act conducted over a period of time in which one brings keen awareness to thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations (Myers et al., 2012), or as activities that “promote a state of heightened and receptive attention to moment-by-moment experience” (Flook et al, 2010). As a process, there is intention (one’s aim/purpose), attention (sustained awareness), and attitude (e.g., kindness, patience, acceptance) (Shapiro et al., 2006). Our description of Native Hawaiian contemplative practices is illustrative and not meant to be representative of all the Native Hawaiian schools and traditions; however, our intent is to highlight some of the contemplative practices that explicitly or implicitly consider mindfulness as a constitutive component, or could be considered a Native Hawaiian mindfulness practice.

In the figure (see Fig. 28.1), the *Kumulipo* and *mo ‘okū ‘auhau* define the roots of the tree realized by *kāhuna* (priests) and *kūpuna* (elders) that give rise to the various branches of practices where *kānaka maoli* (Native Hawaiians) can practice and cultivate mindfulness and become embodiments of *aloha* and *ano*.

Stillness Practices: *Kilo*

Kilo means to attend, to pay close attention, to watch with keen intention (*Nā Kilo ‘Āina*, n.d.), requiring a deep subtle awareness of the energetic pulses of one’s surroundings, 360 degrees. The Master Navigator Nainoa Thompson explained this seeing in the celestial navigation of the traditional voyaging canoe, Hōkūle‘a, “Every day, a navigator needs to make 5,000 observations, of a wave or a bird or a star, and make 500 choices about trim, course, steering, and then make two decisions at sunrise and sunset” (Randall, 2023).

Hence, *kilo* is a skill that requires cultivation. With practice, *kilo* aids in understanding oneself, and one’s environment and this benefits oneself and others. Being attuned to the natural elements and the experiences occurring in one’s external and internal environments is essential to *kilo*, as one must be physically, emotionally, and mentally aware in that moment. It is also crucial that one can engage in sustained attention, and not be distracted or experience scattered attention, in order to detect *hō ‘ailona*, or natural signs, that can guide toward the right direction, that leads one and others to safety and to well-being (McGregor, 2007).

Intentionality is a core feature of *kilo*. Before one’s attention is directed outward, one first directs one’s attention inwardly to examine one’s intention. This examination ensures that one’s thoughts and emotions are *pono*,



Fig. 28.1 Tree of native Hawaiian contemplative and mindfulness practices

as any subsequent actions and behaviors will have impact and consequences outwardly. As discussed earlier, being *pono* requires assuring that one's actions align with the proper needs of the environment, and that they are wholesome and in balance for both human and non-human living beings, as well as the Universe. As it requires one to be extremely aware and intentional, *kilo* is inevitably part of many traditional Hawaiian cultural practices. For instance, fishing requires one to *kilo*—to constantly be aware of one's environmental conditions to determine if fishing should be done that day or to be aware

of the current moon phase and season, which dictates the type and number of fish that should be caught at that time. Because of this, at certain times, a *kāpu* (restriction) is placed on native fish, like *‘ōpelu* (mackerel), to allow productive spawning and to ensure their active feeding, to improve the abundance and fertility of their offspring (Winter et al., 2018). People are thus compelled to recognize their impacts on the fisheries and the environment and be more conscious of when and where they choose to fish or hunt. Ethics and intentionality then set a dynamic in which one perceives and processes information in both their inner and outer environments to inform behavior and action.

Stillness Practices: *HĀ*

In Le and Shim's (2014) article, they suggested that mindfulness could facilitate discovering, recovering, and uncovering the knowledge of the aloha response (being *pono*), which is the wisdom of the ancestors, and that the *HĀ* practice when practiced consistently and diligently allows for aloha to manifest. *HĀ* refers to breath and with *alo*, meaning presence, *aloha* may be construed as presence in the breath.

Veary (1989) encouraged getting into silence in order to connect as “silence allows you to tap the source of your being, the still, all-knowing center” (p. 29). *HĀ* is such a practice that resonates with mindfulness in emphasizing the importance of breath, silence, and deep listening. *HĀ* (breath) exercises are commonly used as a way to tap one's energy source and to connect deeply, to one's essential nature and to others. There are however several variations of *HĀ* (breath) exercises each with a specific purpose (James, 1994; Kahn, 2004).

Kahn (2004) described three traditional Hawaiian breath forms: *Noho Pū* is a passive meditative contemplation that opens the pathway to *Hō 'ike*, realization; *A 'ala HĀ* is an active meditative contemplation that uses repetitive *o 'ono* chants to manifest personal desires and enhance health through revitalizing and toning the internal organs; and *Ho 'ōmana*, storing breathwork, is the third form that builds necessary *mana* (energy, personal power) to overcome life challenges (Kahn, 2004).

In a traditional form, *HĀ* exercises are marked by deep inhalation through the nose until one's lungs are full, followed by exhaling through the mouth whispering the word 'Ha-' until one has fully exhaled (James, 1994). Although there are a variety of techniques for conducting *HĀ* exercises (James, 1994; Kahn, 2004), they are purposeful in preparing oneself for

another activity, such as chanting or meditation (James, 1994). The intention of these breathing exercises is to facilitate relaxation and stillness of mind, or to enhance health and well-being. This requires focused attention on the breath, and with an open, receptive, and patient attitude.

Hā is also the breath of life spirit that opens the space to *maluhia* (solemn awe and stillness) connecting one to the ancestors and accessing the frequency of *aloha*. Morrnah Simeona, a Living Treasure of Hawai‘i and *Kahuna Lā ‘au Lapa ‘au*, taught breathing exercises as the opening practice for entering into *maluhia*, through the slow, deep inhale and exhale of the breath. *Hā* is also the same breath that sounds the blowing of the *pū* (conch or triton shell) announcing the arrival of the heavenly chief, the sharing of *honi* (kiss), the life force that passes on knowledge from one generation to the next, and a type of prayer, *hāloa*, in the long exhale (Pukui, 1983). *Hā* is also present in *Hāloa*, the name of the first human, and *hāmau*, which describes silence.

Regenerational Practices: *Mālama ‘Āina, Aloha ‘Āina*

As described earlier, Hawaiian culture is fundamentally based on the deep connection that *kānaka maoli* (Native Hawaiians) have with the natural environment, or the *‘āina, kai* (land, sea or that which feeds), sky and beyond (Gould et al., 2019). All relations and ways and beings can be traced back to *kānaka’s* instinctive and observational attunement with the natural elements and surrounding resources. In the Hawaiian dictionary, there is no word for “nature,” in the sense of “outdoors.” As a result, Native Hawaiian culture has many mindfulness practices that could be considered as regenerative/regenerational.

Mālama ‘āina and *aloha ‘āina* are two of several foundational regenerative Hawaiian practices that incorporate mindfulness in terms of being fully conscious, aware in terms of the senses and one’s relationship with the earth and natural elements. *‘Āina* can be translated as ‘land’ or ‘that which feeds,’ corresponding to not just the food we consume to nourish our bodies physically but also the things that nourish us emotionally, such as connecting with others and the land. *Mālama* can translate ‘to take care of,’ so *mālama ‘āina* can mean ‘to take care of the land,’ or ‘to take care of that which feeds.’ Examples of *mālama ‘āina* can range from planting native species, removing invasive species, or harvesting crops for food or medicine. Thus, these tasks could be perceived merely at surface level, but in an intentional context,

mālama ‘āina can prompt one to develop a close relationship with the environment and space one lives in, are connected to, and/or feel a responsibility to take care of. To *mālama* ‘āina thus also encompasses *aloha* ‘āina, as one’s *aloha* (love) for the ‘āina can be what motivates them to *mālama* it. Mindfulness inherently is ingrained into these core concepts as loving and caring for one’s environment requires one to be conscious and aware of the ‘āina one is stewarding, inevitably prompting development of *kuleana*, the responsibility to love, care, and honor the ‘āina (Borrelle et al., 2021). This encourages reciprocity and emphasizes the interconnectedness and responsibility to take care of the spaces individuals frequent for current and future generations.

Regenerational Practices: *Lā ‘au Lapa ‘au*

Practices like *lā ‘au lapa ‘au* (medicinal, herbal healing) and making *lei* (garland) also require one to pay attention to one’s mind and emotional state, as well as to the plants that one is harvesting so that the product is imbued with positive *mana* (energy). *Lei*-making is a practice of both intention and attention throughout the whole process. Before making the *lei*, the function or purpose for the *lei* is first acknowledged. There is then acknowledgement of the *lā ‘au* (plants) used as *lei*-making material, recognizing that the person or entity for which the *lei* will be given is to be infused with *aloha* and honor (Alencastre, 2017). One should thus be intentional with the *pua* (flower) they pick for the *lei*, usually honoring the place and landscape from which the *lā ‘au* is obtained, which may be asking permission through *oli* (chant) or *pule* (prayer) to enter the place for safe and effective harvesting. Then, gratitude in the form of another *oli* or *pule* may be offered after leaving the place. As one weaves the *lei*, loving feelings and thoughts are practiced, cultivated, with the intention of infusing the *lei* with positive energy that will transfer to the wearer. The entire process of making *lei* is thus done with much careful attention to one’s thoughts, emotions, and mind state, with wholesome intention being imbued in each phase (Alencastre, 2017).

Similarly, with *lā ‘au lapa ‘au* (medicinal, herbal healing), good intentions are cultivated first before picking the *lā ‘au*, keeping in mind the person and function of healing being directed toward the individual(s). There is an intentional dedicated length of time in terms of making sure the healer’s intention is *pono*, and into understanding the root of the illness or injury that is being treated, which also includes the mental and emotional dimensions and not solely the physical attributes or health. *Lā ‘au lapa ‘au* practitioners also incorporate spirituality into the practice, in which they may perceive themselves

as conduits for *Akua*, God, or some higher entity working through them to heal the patient (Judd, 1998).

Relational Practices: *Ho 'ōponopono*

In interpersonal relationships, there can be conflicts and misunderstandings, whether short-lived or long-standing, that disrupt harmony, internally and externally. *Ho 'ōponopono* is a traditional Native Hawaiian practice to cultivate, mend, and ensure wholesome *pilina* (relationship, connection). *Ho 'ōponopono* is commonly known as the practice of making things right with individual or group conflicts and is typically a lengthy, intentional process to ensure that one is *pono*, which can mean “to be good, to be just, to be morally upright” (Chun, 2011). *Ho 'ō* means to enact something, so *ho 'ōponopono* can be broadly translated to ‘to make things right.’ Traditionally, this practice was done before any medicine was taken, as a mental cleansing was perceived to be necessary before one could receive medical treatment. Being highly conscious of one’s thoughts, feelings, and words and how that impacts others is necessary for conflicts to be resolved among all parties. In this process, prayer, self-scrutiny, thoughtful confession, repentance, mutual restitution, and forgiveness are practiced among groups of individuals involved (Paglinawan & Paglinawan, 2012).

Not only does *ho 'ōponopono* operate on the cognitive level (information gathering) and level of interpersonal relationships, but it is also considered a deeper level of healing in which one must dig deeper into the causes/conditions for the conflict/ill-ease, one’s attachments to perceptions, memories, sense of self, and practice letting go. This practice urges one to look at the *kaona*, the deeper layer or hidden meaning behind one’s thoughts and actions (Paglinawan & Paglinawan, 2012), thus being deeply mindful, aware. In acknowledging this, Paglinawan and Paglinawan (2012) contend that we open our minds to learning about ourselves, the processes in which we think and behave in multiple contexts: physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally to the natural and spiritual worlds. Consequently, dreams may also serve as a way to bridge these different contexts and can provide insight and guidance in certain life situations. For example, Paglinawan and Paglinawan (2012) expressed how they interpreted a client’s dream of their grandmother wearing a black *mu 'umu 'u* (dress, loose gown) as not a sign of death, but of a beloved family member urging the granddaughter that something is amiss in her life, that *ho 'ōponopono* is needed. Resultantly, the granddaughter (the client) was able to undergo the process of *ho 'ōponopono* and transform her life

for the better because of this revelation. Through the intentional engagement with her dream and willingness to be vulnerable, the client's story emulates the aspects of mindfulness in terms of focused attention (family member's garments) and relational awareness (her relationship to her grandmother and how the dream's message translates to her reality).

Morrnah Nalamaku Simeona was born to Kimokeo and Lilia Simeona. Her mother, Lilia, was a lady-in-waiting to Lili'uokalani and one of the last recognized *Kahuna Lā 'au Kahea*, or priest who heals with words. Morrnah was recognized as a *Kahuna Lapa 'au* (priest healer) in Hawai'i and taught her updated version of *ho'oponopono* throughout the United States, Asia, and Europe. Morrnah Simeona was named a Living Treasure of Hawai'i in 1983, and the *ho'oponopono* process that she taught is based on the universal concept of repentance and forgiveness, where it is practiced first, mindfully within oneself, and then the family, relatives, ancestors, other persons, places, things, or situations. It was important to Hawaiians of old that the individual had balance, right understanding (*pono*), and peace of mind within oneself first and foremost, recognizing that harmonious relationships with others require being in harmony within oneself. Thus, mindfulness is required in order to cleanse all the dimensions of one's being, including mental, emotional-physical, and spiritual. In this process, the main purpose is to become whole within oneself—to connect with the transcendent within oneself, thereby being able to embody and express the Spirit of Aloha which is kindness and compassion in all directions. Morrnah stated that “peace starts with me and no one else” (Scarborough, 2023).

Relational Practices: *Kuahu*

Ho 'o means “to make or do” and *mana* is spiritual energy and power, or sacredness, so *ho 'omana* can be translated as “to make or foster spirituality or spiritual power” (Gould et al., 2019). As with several facets of Hawaiian worldviews, sacredness plays an integral role in Hawaiian culture and practices, and consistent with *pono*, it guides people's decision-making and behavior. A relational practice to connect with the spiritual world is a *kuahu*, an altar. The altar includes different *kinolau* (form, an item such as a plant, rock, craft, etc.) that an individual brings for a specific reason that is meaningful to them. Typically, there is a theme associated with the *kuahu*, an intention set by the *kumu* (teacher), *kupuna* (elder), person or group leading the *kuahu* (Kealiikanakaolehaililani et al., 2021). For instance, it could be

as simple as *kinolau* associated with fishing, or perhaps it might be *lā 'au* (plants, herbs) associated with physical or mental health.

Similar to *ho 'ōponopono*, *kuahu* bridges multiple worlds by prompting the individual to analyze the different *ki 'i* (images) in the different *kinolau* and the *kuahu* in general. *Ki 'i ākea* denotes the images and connections we have universally or around the globe, which can enhance our ecological identity that may encompass one's personal self, the natural environment, and spiritual beings. For instance, the *kuahu* may include *kalo* (taro), which can mean different things to many people, with one being a symbol of the birth and creation of *kānaka* in Hawai'i, as *kalo* is a *kinolau* of Hāloa, an important ancestor of Native Hawaiians. In discussing the creation story for Hawaiians, this might also relate to other creation stories for other countries or cultures in which humans derive from plants or the natural world. *Ki 'i honua* refers to the themes and connections we see within a region, culture, or community. For example, *la 'i* (ti leaf) as a *kinolau* could signify its use in Hawaiian arts such as *hula* (dance) or *lei* making. Then, there is *ki 'i 'iaka*, which is the image and connections that one makes to their personal self, such as a *pōhaku* (rock) from the river where one would go frequenting as a *keiki* (child) (Kealiikanakaoleohaililani et al., 2021). Ultimately, reflecting on the *kinolau's* different *ki 'i* allows one to be more conscientious and learn more about how they connect to different plants and other objects brought to the *kuahu*. *Kuahu* incorporates conscientiousness and relational awareness aspects of mindfulness by encouraging self-reflection and intentional connection as one needs to focus on the “what” of being presented on the *kuahu*, whether that reflects personal, communal, or global intentions.

Relational Practices: *Papakū Makawalu*

Connecting the relational with the oral practices is *papakū makawalu*. *Papakū makawalu* strategically organizes *'ike* (knowledge) and modes of learning so that one can understand a Hawaiian topic, concept, experience, and/or practice more in depth, in relation to the cosmos, nature, and ways of being in general. Implementing *papakū makawalu* into one's understanding of the world thus prompts one to practice and increase their level of awareness and explore the different meanings that a chant, story, or song may have. This framework can be analyzed in two parts: “*papa*,” which can mean foundation, topic, or subject, and “*kū*,” which can mean core or nucleus, resulting in *papakū* meaning core foundation or main topic. *Makawalu* can be translated

to “multiple perspectives” or “tumultuous movement” and thus can be interpreted as the action of breaking down and analyzing the different parts of the *papakū* (subject). Consequently, *papakū makawalu* overall can be conveyed as the practice of breaking down a topic, whether that be an *oli*, *mo ʻōlelo*, or even a single word, into different components to understand the multitude and variety of meanings of that topic. We can then apply *papakū makawalu* to understanding lines of the *Kumulipo*. For instance, line 44 of the *Kumulipo* states: “*He nuku, he wai ka ʻai a ka la ʻau,*” which Beckwith (1951) translates to “Earth and water are the food of the plant.” However, the line can be broken down and analyzed by looking at each word, as Hawaiian words tend to have more than one meaning. Looking solely at “*nuku*,” this can mean “beak, snout, tip, end,” as well as “scolding, raving, ranting, grumbling” (Nā Puke ..., n.d.). Thus, this line can also be interpreted more in depth in looking more closely at “*nuku*,” providing imagery of the plant’s *nuku*, or its end/tip, receiving the water and earth as nourishment or perhaps can be interpreted as the plant “grumbling” or being hungry for the earth and water that will sustain it. Any of these connotations are plausible and further indicates how interconnected the natural elements are with each other and people, as food provides life and in turn, humans grow plants to live and thrive and the cycle continues. The *Kumulipo* thus increases our mindfulness and awareness of the importance of how different living things are being born and their functions and connections to us humans—making us think more about our relations with the *ʻāina*, ancestors, and future generations. Consequently, this causes us to be more actively and intentionally engaged with our environment, emphasizing the importance of values, such as respect, reciprocity, and stewardship. For example, Thiermann and Sheate (2021)’s review elaborates on this correlation between mindfulness and sustainability. Mindfulness can enact a sustainable mindset and pro-environmental behaviors by bringing awareness of one’s values and recognition of well-being and how that is impacted by the environment. They further argued that mindfulness within environmental sustainability practices can lead to societal and political change.

Papakū makawalu can be used to refine not only lines of chant but also individual words like *aloha*. As described earlier, *aloha* can be broken down into ‘*alo*,’ meaning face or presence, and ‘*hā*,’ meaning breath, emphasizing the importance of staying focused on the present. Thus, this can be understood as “face to face, sharing breath or spiritual energy” as breath contains one’s *mana* (power, energy) (Gould et al., 2019). Several ‘*ōlelo no ʻeau*’ (traditional sayings) reflect the pervasiveness and potency of *aloha* like ‘*ōlelo no ʻeau*

#2836: “*Ua ola loko i ke aloha*” which translates to “Love gives life within. Love is imperative to one’s mental and physical welfare” (Pukui, 1983).

Oral Practices: *Oli*, *‘Ōlelo No ‘eau*, and *Mo ‘olelo*

Like many Indigenous cultures, Native Hawaiian culture is traditionally an oral culture where knowledge, wisdom, and understanding were transmitted down orally through generations. As such, there is much richness and abundance with respect to oral practices including *oli* (chants), *mele* (songs), *mo ‘olelo* (story-telling), and *‘olelo no ‘eau* (traditional “wise” sayings). Indeed, for Native Hawaiians, language is powerful. One important aspect of the language is the *‘olelo no ‘eau*. The term *‘olelo no ‘eau* is composed of two words: *‘olelo* means speech, language, or word; *no ‘eau* is clever, skillful, or wise. Literally, the phrase could mean “wise words” (Nā Puke Wehewehe ..., n.d.), although it is often translated into English as proverbs. Central to *‘olelo no ‘eau* is *kaona*. *Kaona* refers to a deeper meaning that is simultaneously hidden and in plain view. It pertains to the use of symbols, including literary devices such as allusions, metaphors, and puns. The symbols that *kaona* utilize are not universal and specific to the Hawaiian context, and can be further complicated by the fact that many Hawaiian concepts have no English equivalent. By nature, the meaning is flexible, fluid, and dependent on context of usage. Yet, they remain crucial in present time by linking the Hawaiian people to the *mana ‘o* (thoughts, expression) and worldview of their kūpuna (elders/ancestors), such as the state motto expressed earlier by King Kamehameha III.

Evidence of mindfulness can thus be observed in the content and themes expressed in *‘olelo no ‘eau* and *mo ‘olelo* by encouraging individuals to pay attention to their thoughts, speech, and actions. For example, “*I ka ‘olelo no ke ola, I ka olelo nō ka make*: In language there is life, in language there is death” (Nāmāhoe, 2007). The meaning is that words have the capacity to either heal or destroy, so one must be very aware and attentive to the words that come out of the mouth. On the other hand, *‘olelo no ‘eau* #2837, “*Ua ola no i ka pane a ke aloha*: There is life in a kind reply. Though one may have no gift to offer to a friend, a kind word or a friendly greeting is just as important” (Pukui, 1983). This reflects the importance of kind and generous speech.

Another example is #1202, “*I ke alo no ka lawai ‘a la a pūkē hewa na leho, haki wale na kakala*: It was right in front of the fishermen that the cowry shells came together violently and the spikes broke off,” and #1228 “*Iliki ke*

kai i ka ope'ope la, lilo; i lilo no he hawawā: The sea snatches the bundle and it is gone; it goes when one isn't watchful" (Pukui, 1983). Both of these sayings emphasize the importance of paying attention to one's livelihood.

Storytelling is a universal practice, and particularly strong among Indigenous cultures like Native Hawaiians. Stories in Hawaiian are a medium to transmit generational memories, lessons, and values, containing repositories of ancestral knowledge and gifts. *Mo 'olelo* as mindfulness practices can also be expressed as *mele* (song), *hula* (dance), and *oli* (chant).

Movement Practices: *Hula, Lua*

Mindful movement pervades throughout Native Hawaiian cultural practices. We discuss two examples here: *lua* (Hawaiian martial arts) and *hula* (dance expressing chant, song, or story). Being in the *lo 'i kalo* (taro patch) is a deeply embodied sensory experience; the ooze of wet mud between one's toes, shins deep in cool fresh water, back bent forward, gently balanced in prostration to the plant that many Hawaiians revere as their great progenitor. The choreography of planting sacred food and the practice of the classical dance known as *hula* each bring participants to focus on body sensations which can only exist in the present moment (i.e., the mind may wander to the past or future, but the body as is the breath only exists in the present). Embedded in this moment is also the felt awareness of connection to the land, to nature, to one's ancestors and *hula* lineage.

Dr. Pualani Kanaka 'ole Kanahale, *kumu hula* (hula teacher) and venerated carrier of ancient knowledge, reveals that "Hula has a primal cadence that reminds you that you belong to the cycle of this island, these islands. It eventually takes you from these islands to the world, to the universe. If you do hula, you belong to the universe" (Kanahale, 2005). To Kekuhi Kealiikanakaoleohaililani, Dr. Kanahale's daughter, and her colleagues, *hula* "was born from kin-centric-based stewardship relationships with nature [Emerson 1909]"; an environmental dance "composed of chants and the intricate use of the entire body that celebrates *akua*, while supporting the sharing of oral history and observational data" (Kealiikanakaoleohaililani et al., 2021).

In terms of genealogy, Laka, the patron of the *hula*, is revered by practitioners and is credited with spreading hula worldwide. On her *kuahu* (altar) sits a block of lama wood wrapped in turmeric-colored *kapa* (barkcloth), manifesting the goddess, herself, and a *lei* of maile (another of her bodily manifestations). Honorants surround her with fresh and fragrant foliage of the forest such as the palapalai and pala'ā fern, and lehua flowers. Prayers and

chants are offered to bring dancers into the sacred moment, with an outcome of “setting spiritual intentions in a community of practice; reframing nature as kin and not commodity; reinforcing that humans and nature are inextricably dependent on one another; providing a venue for the conscious and subconscious integration of conventional, Indigenous, and local knowledge...and enhancing learner capacity to develop intimate connections with place and each other” (Kealiikanakaoleohaililani et al., 2021).

While unified in ancient roots, the practice, perspectives, music, and movements of contemporary *hula* may vary by lineage, place, and resources. In proper practice, *kumu hula* respect one another and their individual variations. Right action is at the center of increased research demonstrating that *hula* offers meaningful health benefits (Kaholokula et al., 2021). A discussion of the brilliant motions and intentions by esteemed *Kumu Hula* ‘Iolani Luahine articulates that the spirit of *hula* is sharing and *aloha* (Hula Preservation Society, 2018). As practitioners strive to perpetuate the practice, integrity, stewardship, and protection of *hula*, mindful practice begins with understanding. The Huamakahikina Declaration, signed and supported by 200 lineally acknowledged *kumu* from around the world, offers readers a compelling entrance into the realm of this sacred practice (Huamakahikina Declaration, 2021).

Lua, the sacred art of protection and intense spiritual training, is another example of mindful movement. *Lua* is an ancient practice steeped in secrecy (*kapu*) and the nature of duality, “for the *lua* student, training methods were difficult, demanded patience, discipline, commitment, understanding, full cooperation, humility, and strict obedience” (Paglinawan et al., 2006). The primary focus of *lua* is to be sound in mind and body, through a holistic rigorous practice of proper diet, exercise, knowledge of anatomy, and connection to ancient deities who granted success through *ano* and *pule* (prayer). After years of perseverant training under a reputable *‘olohe lua* (skilled *lua* master), when properly observed, the art of *lua* nurtures the practitioner to restore balance to any situation, turning negative to a positive, just by their presence (Paglinawan et al., LUA Art of the Hawaiian Warrior, 2006).

“I ka nāna no a ‘ike. By observing one learns. I ka ho‘olohe no ka ho‘omaopopo. By listening, one commits to memory. I ka hana no ka ‘ike. By practice, one masters the skill” (Pukui et al., 2002). Evidently, both *hula* and *lua* are practices taught by a *kumu* and thus demonstrate the importance of oral transmission in that the way the practice and *‘ike* are being taught to students must be done in an intentional, accessible way. Students then inherently practice mindfulness in their capacity to listen to their *kumu* and translate their

learnings to honing their skills and bring awareness to their inner and outer environments in order to progress.

Research Studies

There have been very few studies that have explored or included mindfulness as a point of study with Native Hawaiians or within the Hawai‘i context and community. Most recently, Lloyd et al. (2023) conducted a study on Mindful Forgiveness that combined both mindfulness practices along with the forgiveness process by Dr. Fred Luskin for staff, participants, and family in The Practice Center’s Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha peer support group program (Lloyd et al., 2023). Accordingly, Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha is a practice based on aloha in which one consciously releases negative feelings and animosity toward one who has hurt them. This differs from *ho ‘oponopono* in that Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha incorporates both Hawaiian and Western perspectives in helping one to accept and cope with their negative emotions. Participants engaged in peer support group sessions that integrated Hawaiian cultural values of *aloha* (love), belonging, and community and practices to improve self-healing and acknowledge the source of their distress. A weekly two-hour session of peer support group time was carried out over six weeks with the focus of helping the participants to develop skills to self-heal, liberate negative feelings, center their thoughts and feelings on the present, and being more aware of distress cues. Overall, the results revealed the sessions of Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha assisted participants to develop coping skills toward negative emotions and to react in a productive way. Their findings through observation, *mo ‘olelo*, and the pre/post surveys show promise regarding a culturally adapted mindfulness approach for the Hawaiian community. Pre/post survey data showed participants increased their mindfulness skills, such as focus/attention and staying in the present moment, as well as developed a greater understanding of forgiveness and their capacity to let go of negative, harmful emotions. Further, they were able to find peace within themselves and others and enhanced their empathy, self-forgiveness, and self-love (Lloyd et al., 2023).

Chinn (2015) explored the concept of “ecological mindfulness” by examining Hawaiian newspapers, traditional cultural practices, and *‘olelo no ‘eau* (Hawaiian proverbs, sayings). Ecological mindfulness refers to how mindfulness can accompany making environmentally-conscious and responsible behavior; it encourages one to take into account how one’s actions may affect current and future generations. Chinn (2015) explored how Hawaiian

language newspapers included *mo 'olelo* (stories, history) to not only detail the narrative of traditional Hawaiian stories that have been passed down, but to also perpetuate place names and meanings. This allows readers to become conscious of historical, cultural, and spiritual significance of places, natural elements (e.g., winds, rains), or whatever topic the *mo 'olelo* is about. For instance, Chinn (2015) discussed the *mo 'olelo*, the Wind Gourd of La 'amaomao, in which a young man named Kuapaka 'a, who knew and chanted the names of winds, was able to control them. With this information, the winds could be mapped using ArcGIS maps of *ahupua'a*, traditional land divisions, enabling the winds to be visually depicted, using knowledge from geography and *'olelo Hawai'i* (Hawaiian language). Thus, Chinn (2015) ultimately showed how useful implementing culturally conscious approaches to contemporary practices like mapmaking (like GIS technology) can produce a thorough, comprehensive perspective of place and landscape. In addition, Chinn (2014) explained how *'olelo no 'eau* # 531 "*He ali i ka 'āina; he kauwā ke kanaka*" developed an overall awareness of human dependence on the *'āina* and natural resources in general. This proverb translates to "The land is a chief; man is its servant" (Pukui, 1983) and indicates how being mindful of the processes in our ecosystems is vital to taking care of and sustaining these natural systems that sustain us as humans. Further, *'olelo no 'eau* #360 "*E nihi ka helena i ka uka o Puna; mai pūlale i ka 'ike a ka maka*," translates to "Go quietly in the upland of Puna; do not let anything you see excite you. Watch your step and don't let the things you see lead you into trouble ... also said to loved ones to imply, 'Go carefully and be mindful'" (Pukui, 1983). This *'olelo no 'eau* highlights the importance of how we should be aware of how the environment impacts us and in turn, how our behavior impacts on the environment.

Lastly, Le and Jackman (2022) reported on the findings of mindfulness course that emphasized the virtue/value of *aloha* with 45 undergraduate students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and noted that students reported gains in personal insights around harmonizing relationships, both within themselves and with others. They argued for additional incorporation of *mo 'okū 'auhau* to facilitate students gaining greater awareness about how the conditioning forces of ancestors, family, culture shape their own conscious and unconscious habitual patterns of thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. Along similar lines, as a *mālama 'āina* project, *mo 'okū 'auhau* and *aloha* were incorporated into the ecological restoration of a royal Hawaiian fishpond with 10 Native Hawaiian high school students. Over a year period, students completed a brief online survey of their mental and emotional state before and after their engagement at the fishpond (Le et al., 2023). The largest

gains noted for mental state was being focused and happy in terms of an emotional state. Collectively, these few studies suggest that Native Hawaiian cultural practices may indeed facilitate development and/or components of mindfulness, particularly among those with Native Hawaiian ancestry.

Mindfulness and Cultural Adaptation

It is increasingly being recognized that human development occurs historically and dynamically with multiple ecologies of association (Thorne, 2018). As such, humans are open systems and development involves an orchestrated process of mind–body–world continuum (Steffensen, 2013). As an open system ecology, awareness and actions are embodied, enacted, and extended across individuals, artifacts, and environments (Atkinson, 2010). An open systems approach is particularly relevant to current discussion of mindfulness and mindfulness research. For instance, one of the core principles of evidence-based programs, to which mindfulness-based interventions are accelerating toward, as a form of scientific legitimacy, is to minimize the relevance of situatedness and place (context including socio-cultural) in skills acquisition. These are considered potential “noises” and “confounders” that need to be constrained and eliminated, so that the “essential ingredient” can be distilled and identified. This is especially important because fidelity is a crucial aspect of scientific legitimacy. While this approach has its place and value in the scientific disciplines, imposing fidelity can be problematic for cultural adaptation. For instance, Native Hawaiians experience truth as something that is not only relational but also co-determining, forever in a dynamically, fluctuating process, without predetermined strict guidelines, such as those often promulgated by Western standards of evidence-based truths, but instead requires attending to the multifold dynamic of individuals, context, place, and time. Thus, all learning and skill acquisitions are embedded within phenomenologically rich and embodied experiences in the world (Meyer, 2003), that not only include the present moment, but simultaneously incorporate past and present with future.

Hawaiian culture supports many types of contemplative practices to cultivate mindfulness. This allows for greater goodness-of-fit to the particular individual, for a particular context and time. As Le and Shim (2014) articulated, many traditional/spiritual Hawaiian practices already share commonalities with mindfulness; as such, mindfulness-based training, as a more structured and systematic practice, can be easily translated and adapted into Hawaiian communities. However, such adaptation requires respect to the

existing culture's epistemological and ontological stance, and the ways that ethics, virtues are culturally practiced. This arguably would engender greater therapeutic alignment, efficacy, and effectiveness.

We hope that our sharing encourages others interested in cultural adaptation of mindfulness and/or awakening from cultural suppression to take into consideration the culture's philosophical underpinnings and their contemplative practices that support ethical and virtuous behavior toward a liberative and wholesome life.

As with countless other Indigenous groups who have been culturally suppressed due to colonization and imperialism, cultural resurgence/revitalization has become widespread as they fight to restore their autonomy. Thus, it is no surprise that other Indigenous cultures also inherently exercise mindfulness in their values, traditions, and practices, especially in their relationship with and deep passion to take care of their natural environment. The intimate and reciprocal relationship between humans and nature is a foundational underpinning across all Indigenous cultures and thus, mindfulness as a core concept/value in these cultures is essential to ensuring that this relationship is fostered and maintained with good intentions. By looking at how Native Hawaiians incorporate mindfulness in some of the practices discussed in this chapter, we can draw parallels to other Indigenous cultural practices, showing how other Indigenous communities, such as Native Americans, strongly value how interconnected human well-being is with that of the natural environment. For instance, the seventh generation principle is common across Native American groups, who make decisions, especially those that directly impact the environment, with the future seven generations in mind. Further, Potawatomi botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer elaborates on how Indigenous knowledge can be weaved with Western knowledge to make culturally informed environmental management decisions (Kimmerer, 2013). Kimmerer (2013) uses the three sisters garden metaphor to not only demonstrate the metaphorical weaving of knowledge systems, but also how attuned one can be to their natural environment and the abundance it brings when you can nurture the relationships between different entities—in this case, plants in a garden. As with Indigenous cultures, including Native Hawaiian culture, there is no separation between people and the natural environment—*kānaka* and *ʻāina* are one, intertwined, and interlinked. Perhaps the process of cultural adaptation is less about adaptation, but a revival and renaissance movement of contemplative practices that are already inherently present in the culture, and just needs to be re-awakened and remembered.

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