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# The Kumulipo, Native Hawaiians, and well-being: how the past speaks to the present and lays the foundation for the future

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## ABSTRACT

A traditional Native Hawaiian text, the Kumulipo, provides the basis for re-thinking well-being in the Hawaiian context and the relationship between Native Hawaiian cultural practices and Western leisure practices. Grounding the analysis in Indigenous and subaltern scholarship, we describe alternative paths for developing relationships within a pluriverse that opens opportunities to re-think Western leisure.

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The Kumulipo,<sup>1</sup> a cosmogony and genealogical chant, is a multi-layered, timeless and sacred text of Kānaka Maoli [Native Hawaiians]<sup>2</sup> that knots together Kanaka ‘Ōiwi [*Lit.* people of the bones] ontology, epistemology, spirituality, politics and social-physical worlds. Throughout time it has and continues to furnish Kānaka Hawai‘i [people of Hawai‘i] with a foundation that affords: an evolutionary explanation pre-dating Darwinian theory; a genealogy designating ruling families as well as kinship between humans, akua [deities] and all natural beings and forces; interrelationships between ‘āina [land, earth] and kai [sea] relevant to sustainable food, healing and ecological interdependencies within Ka Pae Hawai‘i [Hawaiian Archipelago]; and testimony to Hawaiian sovereignty and governance (Kame‘eleihiwa, 1992). The Kumulipo speaks to the Kanaka Maoli episteme and experiential strands as embedded in their relationship with the cosmos, their Nā Kai Ewalu [Eight Seas], the natural world and each other. Hawaiian thinking, being and mo‘olelo [story, legend, history] reveals genuine interrelations and affection for the different members of what is called the universe (Charlot, 2005).

As we consider the Kumulipo, Kānaka Hawai‘i and their understanding of ‘well-being’ alongside Western conceptualizations of it and leisure, we liken ourselves to writers as modelled in ‘ōlelo [Hawaiian language] newspapers. As Kānaka transcribed oral knowledge into a written form preserving it for future generations, they often did not sign these articles thereby acknowledging how this knowledge came from many Kānaka, sometimes preceding them by generations. Similarly, we are indebted to Kanaka Maoli scholarship and translation, grateful for their generosity and deep cultural knowledge that guides our work as we attempt to decolonize leisure scholarship. In exploring these issues, we write from several overlapping positions. As settlers and nomads, we write from both lived experiences within tribal lands and alongside urban Indigenous peoples, and years of reading diverse academic and popular Indigenous literature. Fox has also trained and worked professionally with Navajo, Pueblo and urban Indigenous people in the U.S. and Canada. Cumulatively, these experiences have shaped an appreciation of ‘place’ and ‘culture’ as essential for the lives of Indigenous people.

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Mōhala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua. [*Lit.* Unfolded by the water are the faces of the flowers. Flowers thrive where there is water, as thriving people are found where living conditions are good.]

We suggest that associating Western concepts such as ‘well-being’ and ‘leisure’ with Kānaka Maoli, or other Indigenous peoples, requires careful thought around differences and languages. Sami scholar Kuokkanen (2008), when discussing Indigenous scholarship and practices, employs *episteme*, an expansive and flexible concept encompassing aspects of epistemology, philosophy, cosmology, ontology and religion, along with the various practices emanating from, yet not limited to them. Within Indigenous contexts these dimensions are especially known as inseparable and interconnected. Moreover, she argues, *episteme* transcends normative conceptualizations of epistemology, and should not be conflated with either a single body of knowledge or rationality. Indigenous *epistemes* allow fluidity by bringing together multiple discourses and intellectual traditions if only momentarily, like the confluence of a river, without getting stuck in rigid categorizations or dichotomies. For example, the pronoun, *oia*, includes she, he or it; its meaning is ultimately ascertained through context. Such fluidity highlights experience, intuition and communication across various forms not typically valued in Western knowledge systems.

Taking seriously Silk’s (Silk, Caudwell, & Gibson, 2017) call for a dynamic, self-reflexive and transdisciplinary leisure studies engaged in ‘debates surrounding ontology, epistemology, political intent, method, interpretation, expression and impact’ (p. 160), we engage with Kanaka concepts and models of well-being. To this end we begin with an overview of the Kumulipo and ‘ōlelo as they shape Kanaka concepts of health and well-being. We then bring Western concepts of well-being and leisure alongside Kanaka Hawai‘i models and experiences of health and well-being to demonstrate differences. Finally, we conclude with emerging theoretical positions that decentre Western ontology and direct us toward Indigenous scholarship supporting worlds and knowledges produced through disparate ontological commitments, epistemic contours and practices of being, knowing and doing.

### He Pule Ho‘ola‘a Ali‘i, He Kumulipo [A prayer to consecrate ali‘i]

The Kumulipo was known to be chanted by Puou, the High Priest of ancient worship, to Captain Cook in the 1700s (Lili‘uokalani, 2016); it was first written down under Mō‘i [high chief, sovereign, monarch<sup>3</sup>] Kalākaua, and subsequently translated by his sister Queen Lili‘uokalani in the late 1800s. The Kumulipo details the Kanaka ‘Ōiwi concept of the universe (McDougall, 2014) and its creation across 16 wā [sections or eras]. It incorporates two independent functions: (1) a chant about the earth’s creation; and (2) a prayer that sanctifies the chief (Archer, 2016). The first seven wā, transpiring within Pō [creative darkness; night], account for the creation of elements, plants and animals occurring in increasing size and complexity. Human beings are birthed as Pō transitions to Ao [day], marking ‘the time and space of anthropomorphic gods, human creation and cultural production commencing with the relationship between the first siblings’ (p. 73). In contrast to Western dualisms with their inherent structural hierarchy, Pō and Ao thus act as a non-opposing dualism or complementary pair birthing life into harmonious balance (McDougall, 2014).

Humans, akua and beings-other-than-humans are conceived as emanating from the same family lineage, and where, as the younger siblings of all that is birthed before them, Kānaka Maoli have ‘the kuleana [right, privilege, responsibility] to serve our older siblings. We observe, listen, and learn from them. In return, they care for us and provide us with nourishment’ (Kumuhaki, n.d.). Humans are thus envisaged as a small part of a vastly complex system that includes ‘aumakua [family or deified ancestors assuming shapes of animals, plants, rocks, clouds], kīno lau [forms taken by a supernatural body], natural forces (e.g., winds, rains, rainbows), flora and fauna, the stars, the ocean and ‘āina among many (Kilikoi, 2010). This land-human-gods genealogical relationship is consequently one of procreation and complementary pairs enmeshed within layers of cosmogonic genealogy (Johnson, 2000) tracing the lineages of ali‘i nui [high chief] to creation forces. Here the different connotation of *relationship* within a Kanaka Maoli *episteme* is important:

To comprehend the psyche<sup>4</sup> of our old Hawaiians it is necessary to enlarge the implications of the word ‘relationship’ beyond the limitations of the ‘interpersonal’ or social. The subjective relationships that dominate the Polynesian psyche are with all nature, in its totality ... sensed as personal (Handy & Pukui, 1998, pp. 117–118).

Such interdependent relationships are illustrated in the genealogy of Wākea [Sky father and ancestor of the ali‘i], father of Hāloa, the first kanaka portrayed in the Kumulipo. Wākea takes Ho‘ohökūkalanī, daughter of Papahānaumoku [Earth mother goddess], as a lover. From that pairing, a stillborn male child was born and from his burial location grew the first kalo plant – Kānaka Hawai‘i’s nutritional staple. He (i.e., the kalo plant) was given the name ‘Haloanakalaukapalili.’ Ho‘ohökūkalanī became pregnant again and birthed a healthy boy who was named Hāloa in honour of his elder sibling and became the first kanaka – all Kānaka Maoli trace their roots back to Hāloa and through that relationship are related to the kalo, ‘āina and the rest of the natural world (Beckwith, 2007; Malo, 1903/1997).

### The power and significance of mo‘okū‘auhau

Kānaka Maoli’s use of mo‘okū‘auhau [genealogical succession], part of their intellectual tradition pre-dating European and American arrival, has a complexity that is beyond our paper’s scope. However, we employ mo‘okū‘auhau to highlight the difference between the Western concept of well-being and its relationship to leisure, and ‘ōlelo concepts *resembling* well-being and leisure. Marie Alohalani Brown (2016) argues: ‘The kuamo‘o [backbone] of Hawaiian culture is mo‘okū‘auhau. We perceive the world genealogically – everything is relational ... as an ‘Ōiwi theoretical and philosophical construct, it stands for relationality’ (p. 27). Mo‘okū‘auhau is also a methodology, epistemology and political power (Kame‘eleihiwa, 1992). Indeed, Brandy Nalani McDougall (2014) suggests that as a practice and cultural product, mo‘okū‘auhau is maintained as *both* sacred practice/texts *and* historical methodology/archives routinely consulted by ali‘i (chiefs, monarchs)<sup>5</sup> to guide their care of the land and people. The most complete and preserved mo‘okū‘auhau holding critical import for Kānaka Maoli is the Kumulipo. Like other Indigenous sacred texts, it ‘teaches new-old ways of interpreting history, using Indigenous methodologies to account for and include multiple meanings and figurations, and realities’ (p. 761).

Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa (1992) describes mo‘okū‘auhau as an unbroken chain linking the living to cosmological forces and mana [spiritual power, authority] that emerged in Pō, thereby anchoring Hawaiians within their universe. Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu (2012), who unpacks some of the kaona [hidden meanings] of mo‘okū‘auhau, suggests its simplest English translation is genealogy, where mo‘o signifies succession, story, tradition, or lineage; kū means to stand, stop, anchor or moor; while ‘auhau denotes the femur or humerus bones of the human skeleton. A kaona, with its deeper signification in ‘ōlelo, invokes the succession of the bones and mana of ‘Ōiwi ancestors, connecting them all to Nā Kai Ewalu as their bones ‘are buried in the ‘āina, establish [their] place to stand tall, [their] place to protect and defend’ (p. 138). She further suggests the Kumulipo secures ‘Ōiwi to their akua, kūpuna [ancestors] and ‘aumākua – all part of an extended Kanaka Maoli mo‘okū‘auhau.

Woven within the complementary pairs of the Kumulipo are the mana, sustenance and life force of Kānaka Maoli. Of course, ‘āina, to be healthy and productive, requires mālama [to care for] from akua, ali‘i and maka‘ainana [*lit.* the people that attend the land; commoner]. The continued importance of the Kumulipo thus lies in the cultural foundation it provides, while offering understanding of who they are today as ‘Ōiwi, and how they will exist into the future (Kumukahi, n.d.). The connection between the Kumulipo and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi well-being becomes apparent:

Within the listing of names and forms, Kumulipo whispers a message to us: It tells us that the creator of this mele comes from a rich tradition of observation and great respect for all life ... Our well-being depends on

our ability to maintain the natural relationship with our elder siblings. In other words, we are family with our entire environment. We need to ensure that all life continues and that our actions do not hurt our 'ohana [family, extended family]. (ibid.)

An individual's mo'okū'auhau was essential for a political claim, such as the election between Queen Emma and David Kalākaua (1874). Kalākaua, unlike Queen Emma, was not directly related to Mō'i Kamehameha who unified the islands; he thus needed to demonstrate his competence to rule during a tenuous period in the Hawaiian Kingdom. Kalākaua sought to demonstrate mana, na'auao [enlightened wisdom] and pono [excellence, well-being, prosperity] through publishing the Kumulipo for public readings, emphasizing '*Hooulu ka Lahui*' [Increase the Lāhui], restoring hula to the public realm and creating celebrations that fed his people (e.g., Hawaiian version of his Coronation and 50th Jubilee) – all 'leisure-like' activities from a Western perspective.

### Western concepts of leisure and well-being

In a recent *Leisure Studies*' issue both Gibson (Silk et al., 2017) and Collins (2017) draw attention to leisure scholars' underwhelming engagement with well-being, despite the field's widely accepted assumption of leisure's contribution to health and well-being (see Mannell, 2007). While both authors acknowledge ways in which leisure's impact on health and well-being have been considered (e.g., life satisfaction, quality of life (QOL)), they conclude leisure studies examinations of well-being have been secondary when compared to other disciplinary fields (e.g., public health, positive psychology (PP), sport); in spite of, in Gibson's estimation, the pressing social issue well-being has become. Similarly, they also identify the leisure field as having an important role to play in shaping policies and practices related to well-being that to date have been absent.

While public health has the longest standing consideration of well-being, the broader academy's interest in it began to grow significantly in the 1990s (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; White, 2016), crossing several disciplines (Downward & Dawson, 2016), and intertwined with other aspects such as QOL, happiness, meaning-making, work, economics and leisure (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Iwasaki, 2006; Zawadzki, Smyth, & Costigan, 2015). This, in turn, has contributed to its acknowledged definitional challenges (Dodge et al., 2012; White, 2008). Despite this diversity, there are equivalences in the qualities suggested by well-being, notably its: inherent positive connotation,<sup>6</sup> holistic stance and centeredness in the individual and their perceptions and experiences of life (White, 2008). This latter quality has stimulated considerable research focusing on subjective well-being (SWB), QOL and life satisfaction within health sciences, psychology and social indicators scholarship.

Dodge et al.'s (2012) review of the well-being literature highlights a number of theories three of which are SWB, psychological well-being (PWB) and Martin Seligman's PERMA model. SWB is conceptualized as encompassing people's emotional responses (i.e., the pleasant/unpleasant affect balance) and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999). Oishi, Diener, Lucas, and Suh (1999) posit satisfied basic biological needs are significant predictors of SWB across diverse cultures, and with their fulfilment psychological and leisure needs may become important sources of SWB (Diener et al., 1999). Contrastingly, Ryff and Singer (2008) suggest PWB embodies six wellness dimensions: self-acceptance, life purpose, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth and autonomy; unlike SWB, PWB entails perceptions of engagement with life's existential challenges (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). Finally, Seligman, the founder of PP, more recently has shifted its focus from happiness to *well-being*, with its building blocks being positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (i.e., PERMA) that foster human flourishing (Dodge et al., 2012). Conspicuously characteristic of this scholarship is the Western conceptualization of the autonomous self, hegemonically valorized over collective and interdependent values (Panelli & Tipa, 2007).<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to well-being conceptualizations reflecting ‘the strong undertow of individualism’ (White, 2016, p. 13) is scholarship critiquing such research, policy and/or practice for its relative neglect of identity, culture and the biophysical environment as significant health and well-being determinants (Panelli & Tipa, 2007); and the tendency to conceive environmental and social concerns as independent of each other (Parkes, 2011). In response to such critiques, ‘ecological’ models of well-being have been forwarded (Butler & Oluoch-Kosura, 2006), particularly within the transdisciplinary field of ecohealth (Wilcox et al., 2004). Here the interdependencies of the health of humans, wildlife and ecosystems assume centre stage (ibid.) with the latter conceived as the life-supporting underpinnings of health and well-being (Parkes, 2011). Yet, even here the environment is often regarded as in the service of humans thereby reproducing the dominant anthropocentric focus of much western research, including well-being (Butler & Oluoch-Kosura, 2006). Here we concur with Stephens, Parkes, and Chang (2007) who argue ecological, health sciences and social science research have much to learn from holistic Indigenous epistemologies handed down through the centuries (e.g., the Kumulipo) affirming the interrelationships amongst ecosystems, health and well-being.

In his review of the leisure, health and well-being literature Mannell (2007) notes that despite a lack of comprehensive leisure theories explaining these relations, five themes can be identified through which leisure’s impact on health and well-being has been explored: (1) as constructive distraction; (2) as pleasure, fun and relaxation with both short and cumulative benefits; (3) as personal growth resulting from serious leisure’s contribution to self-determination and competence; (4) as identity formation and affirmation that may foster psychological growth; and (5) as cultivating coping resources to address life stressors. Mannell further acknowledges the Western lens underpinning much of this research, and thus cautions against cross-cultural generalizations particularly given ongoing debates about the universality of behavioural science principles and theories. And while he gestures to the development of social-psychological approaches embedded in Indigenous cultural values and traditions, he simultaneously observes the lack of emergence of alternative Indigenous, non-Western approaches.

It is fair to say that much of the leisure-well-being research has been: quantitative and shaped by PP; explored to elucidate how leisure has contributed to or mediated SWB or PWB across a variety of leisure activities (Downward & Dawson, 2016; Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2014); and directed at examining the relationship between leisure-based meaning-making and well-being (Alea & Bluck, 2013). Like the broader well-being literature, it has equally been subject to the ‘undertow of individualism,’ making it susceptible to critique for its contribution to the formation of enterprising selves (McDermott, 2014). Equally, it has been relatively quiet regarding the relationship between well-being and the environment and/or non-human beings as mediated through leisure.

Despite Mannell’s (2007) caution against the unquestioned use of Western behavioural science approaches cross-culturally, considerable research using such methodologies have nevertheless been employed with Indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US (e.g., Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012). This is despite both Indigenous concerns raised globally about representations of their well-being within settler-states; and their demand for the meaningful and substantive inclusion of their voices and epistemologies in analyses of their well-being and the factors identified as impacting on it. This is particularly the case with quantitative socio-economic and demographic data that fail to account for the longstanding impact of colonialism. Such conventional measures often render inconspicuous many positive, enduring and protective factors associated with Indigenous ways of life not amenable to such analyses (Prout, 2012). Meanwhile less acknowledged is well-being research and theorizing articulating approaches embodying Indigenous epistemologies, cultural competency, place-based frameworks and relational realities that include other-than-human entities (e.g., Panelli & Tipa, 2007). Such scholarship has also called for decolonizing approaches to research methodologies, theoretical development and collaboration (Ka’opua, Tamang, Dillard, & Kekauoha, 2017).

## Kanaka 'Ōiwi translations of well-being and leisure

Language is a medium of culture, structures relationships, and makes the world meaningful in particular ways. 'Ōlelo contains no words commensurable or easily translated as 'leisure' or 'well-being.' The appearance of the meaning of the English words in 'ōlelo are examples of **loan displacements** whereby 'native terms [are] applied to new cultural phenomenon similar to something in the native culture' (Hoffer, 2002, p. 6). For example, well-being was repurposed within four existing 'ōlelo words and associated meanings that are wide-ranging:

**Ola:** life, health, livelihood, healed, the body will be preserved after death.

**Maika'i:** Good, handsome, beautiful, morality, good health, congratulate, improve, grateful.

**Pono:** Goodness, moral qualities, prosperity, welfare, equity, true nature, human rights, legality; (2) properly, examine carefully; (3) resources; (4) purpose, plan; (5) hope; (6) careless, informal.

**Ahona:** well, fortunate, improved.

Leisure is equally problematic for Kānaka 'Ōiwi. Linguistically, as a concept historically focused on non-work time, opportunity, activity devoid of context and connected to the individual,<sup>8</sup> leisure is incommensurable with the categories inherent in 'ōlelo. Second, it does not intrinsically include relationships beyond humans, notably all that is within the universe. Third, settler leisure is often complicit with environmental, economic, political and social injustices, and military intrusions (Gonzalez, 2013). Indeed Kaholokula, Nacapoy, and Dang (2009) highlight the complicity of Western leisure practices in the continued pressure on Kānaka to assimilate: 'Essentially, practices that do not promote tourism or create the façade of happy natives are not encouraged' (p. 124). Finally, and most importantly, there are at least 60 'ōlelo words that capture elements of settler leisure and/or include aspects intermittently considered in mainstream leisure research. The most relevant are:

**Nanea or Walea:** Of absorbing interest, enjoyable, tranquility, relaxed; *lei making is pleasant; relaxing at ease with the gentle voices of the birds.*

**Le'ale'a:** Fun, gaiety, amusement, fond of pleasure only, frivolity.

**Luana:** Enjoy oneself, pleasant surroundings and associates, live in comfort and ease, be content; *just enjoying ourselves.*

**Kili'o'pu:** Absorbed in an interesting, happy pastime, as love-making; contented; *what pleasure was love-making for the two of us last night.*

**Kukahekahe:** To while the time away in pleasant conversation, jesting, laughing. *Lit. to stand flowing.*

Notice that loan displacements are framed within the Hawaiian episteme and do not capture the full range of Western leisure. Furthermore, translation is a process of choosing the appropriate definitions based on context and cultural knowledge. The above examples also illustrate the translation challenges encountered when working with 'ōlelo (see Fox & McDermott, 2017; Fox & McDermott, 2019), which crosses a broad range of states of being, relationships and activities located within terrestrial places and spiritual domains (e.g., see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFT-M18N2A4>). Therefore, given Kanaka and Western epistemes differences, and without a strong comparative structure (Lincoln, 2018) that does justice to the complexity of Hawaiian practices, we are reluctant to make comparisons; especially since Kānaka Maoli both resist the application of leisure to their practices, and typically experience the negative consequences of leisure upon their bodies, 'āina and sovereignty. To us, then, the need to honour and begin analyses of 'well-being' and 'leisure' from a Kanaka 'Ōiwi episteme becomes obvious.

## Kanaka ‘Ōiwi models of well-being

Ka Pae ‘Āina sits within Oceania, a geographic region encompassing Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and Australasia. Language, navigational techniques, cultural practices and mo‘olelo connect Indigenous peoples across Oceania. Their models for well-being emphasize the importance of lived-experiences within their natural, spiritual, cultural and social worlds (McGregor, Morelli, Matsuoka, Rodenhurst, Kong, & Spencer, 2003; Panelli & Tipa, 2007). McGregor et al. (2003) identify four multifaceted, systemic and interdependent relationships contributing to Kanaka Hawai‘i well-being: ‘āina, ‘ohana, community and Lāhui [*lit. a great gathering of people; closest word for ‘nation’*]. Mokuau (2011) adds that well-being is also contoured by a collective, holistic cosmography of the individual and world indivisibly interconnected by birth. Manifest within these well-being characteristics is the spirit of the Kumulipo. While it is beyond our paper’s scope to provide an in-depth assessment of McGregor et al.’s ecological Native Hawaiian well-being model, we highlight aspects that differentiate it from settler understandings of well-being and indicate its relevance to leisure.

### ‘Āina well-being

Kānaka Maoli perceive ‘āina as something sentient, to be respected and cared for. As detailed in the Kumulipo, ‘āina is essential to their cultural and spiritual identity, connecting family lineages to ancestors of particular locales, and genealogically binding them (McGregor et al., 2003) to Wākea and Papahānaumoku (Kilikoi, 2010). At the core of this connection to ‘āina is a deep and enduring sentiment of aloha ‘āina [caring/love for the land] dating back to the beginnings of the Ka Pae Hawai‘i, underscoring their episteme whereby they originate from and serve as stewards of the land ‘and in return, are recipients of its bounty’ (Mokuau, 2011, p. 105). Native Hawaiians seek ways to connect with ‘āina through, for example, reclaiming fishponds, gathering medicinal herbs, land-based pedagogy, planting traditional foods or fishing. While settlers may place these ‘activities’ within ‘leisure,’ Kānaka Maoli conceive them as part of their relationship with ‘āina and other Kānaka Maoli that involve subsistence, familial, political and environmental responsibilities, with elements of luana or kukahekahe woven throughout. Not only does this connection to ‘āina strengthen a deep sense of cultural identity supporting well-being, but recent Kanaka episteme-based research details the connection between the deterioration or restoration of the ‘āina and associated changes in human health and well-being (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, 2009; Trifonovitch, 2019).

Similarly while working a lo‘i kalo [flooded taro plot] may not resonate with settler leisure, returning to the ‘ōlelo definitions of well-being suggests qualities such as morality, uprightness, proper conduct and prosperity that are associated with Hawaiian well-being. According to McGregor et al. (2003), tending a lo‘i kalo also supports kuleana and lōkahi [unity, agreement, harmony]. For example, University of Hawai‘i graduate students reflected on their participation in restoring a lo‘i kalo as a way of developing cultural identity, mutual dependency, a melodic and slow rhythm and a deepening relationship with ‘āina (Mokuau, 2011). All these examples also highlight the tensions that arise when Kanaka Hawai‘i well-being, as indivisibly connected to ‘āina, is juxtaposed to Western leisure practices reliant on its commodification (e.g., tourist resorts, golf courses, ziplines, snorkel cruises, etc.) with their attendant and well-documented environmental impacts.

### ‘Ohana and ahupua‘a well-being

McGregor et al. (2003) suggest the fundamental social unit of the lāhui is ‘ohana, where ‘oha signifies the root of the kalo plant and na means plural or many. Like the shoots of kalo, ‘ohana members all come from the same root (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1972); everything originates from ‘ohana as ‘an individual alone is unthinkable within the context of Hawaiian relationship(s)’



(Handy & Pukui, 1998, p. 75). At the core of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi values, ways of knowing and being is a deep sense of *familial relatedness* and *relationship with the ‘āina*. McGregor et al. (2003) also underscore the centrality of relationships as strengthening the lāhui through both people growing food for each other and ceremonial-spiritual practices; families are inclusive of kupuna, ‘āina, plants, animals, akua and kino lau; while deep connections to ancestors, kumu and immediate family foster transmission of knowledge and being. Because Kānaka view the universe holistically, clearing the land and ‘auwai [ditch, canal] segue into planting kalo. When harvested, it is pounded into poi which is shared, eaten and enjoyed with family and friends (McMullin, 2010). A healthy ecosystem thrives and sustains healthy Hawaiian ‘ohana, communities and the Lāhui. Settlers would recognize in such moments ‘leisure activities:’ people enjoying each other’s company, children playing games, ‘talking-story,’ intergenerational sharing of food with hula, music and pule [prayer] (Handy, Handy, & Pukui, 1972/1995). It is not clear, however, that Kānaka Hawai‘i would categorize these activities similarly.

Ancient Hawai‘i lacked village units, which is not to suggest there was no community. Kānaka ‘Ōiwi communities were dispersed ‘ohana concentrated geographically and tied by ancestry, birth and sentiment to a particular locality of the ‘āina through the ahupua‘a system (Handy & Pukui, 1998). An ahupua‘a was a land division usually extending from the uplands to the ocean with socio-economic ramifications for food production, housing, water, spirituality and governance. The ali‘i managed the ahupua‘a by ensuring the area was productive, directing communal activities, and contributing to the lōkahi of relationships between maka‘āinana, ali‘i and mō‘i ensuring everyone had access to various foods (McMullin, 2010). Many ahupua‘a names are still present in modern Hawai‘i, and Kānaka resituate themselves in uplands to shoreline organizations (Eshraghi, 2018).

In rural Hawaiian communities today, subsistence economies based on traditional knowledge and practices provide viable alternatives to western economic models, and foundations to protect natural resources and habitats, thereby sustaining Hawaiian culture and well-being (McGregor et al., 2003). Growing kalo, for example, on one’s land or collaboratively makes it affordable – kalo contributes to the community’s well-being physically but also spiritually and culturally given its symbolic nature as the: basis of Kānaka health and survival, value of caring for ancestors and family, and relationship they feel towards to each other and ‘āina (McMullin, 2010). In urban areas, reclamation of fish ponds (e.g., He‘eia), restoration of traditional water and food systems (e.g., ‘Aihualama in Ke ahupua‘a ‘o Waikiki for wetland kalo cultivation), or non-profits focused on the education and promotion of food sovereignty (e.g., Hui Aloha ‘Aina Momona) are examples of ahupua‘a and communities moving toward well-being (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, 2009). At the same time, it is important to attend to how Kānaka Hawai‘i distinguish between a ‘healthy person’ and a ‘healthy Native Hawaiian’ who attends to balance and lōkahi. With lōkahi, health blends with well-being to include work, play, spirituality, ‘āina, ‘ohana and Lāhui, that implicitly contrast to Western values emphasizing individualism and productivity (McMullin, 2005), including of the self through leisure pursuits.

### Lāhui well-being

Today Kānaka Hawai‘i represent a small portion of Hawai‘i’s population struggling against formidable odds to have their needs addressed at the state and federal levels. Yet, ‘We are not American citizens, we are Kānaka Maoli’ signs remain visible at many contemporary demonstrations. Enhancing well-being and increasing ‘leisure’ requires attention to the well-being of the Lāhui, whose sustenance is engendered through, for example, commemorations, hearings, community gatherings, testimonies, Hawaiian-language schools and protests that re-invigorate cultural elements essential to its survival. Given Kānaka Maoli’s relational and interconnected episteme, Western conceptualizations of ‘leisure’ and ‘well-being,’ with their emphasis on the discrete self, contribute little to these priorities. If the Lāhui is to be sustained and the next

generation to flourish, priorities such as revitalizing ʻōlelo, establishing Hawaiian pedagogy, supporting food sovereignty, ensuring affordable homes and protection/care of ʻāina are essential.

McGregor et al. (2003) entitle their well-being model *HOʻOULU LAHUI ALOHA [Raising a Beloved Nation]*. Lāhui-sustaining endeavours that Mōʻi Kalākaua re-ignited in the 1800s still continue today with Kānaka participating in practices considered leisure space-time by settlers (e.g., hula, voyaging, lua, hoʻopāpā [a word or battle of wits art form]). Established in 1810 the Hawaiian Kingdom existed for 83 years until its **illegal** overthrow. Before occupation, the Mōʻi navigated the imperial arena safeguarding the Lāhui while inserting the Hawaiian Kingdom into the modern, international world *and* bringing the knowledge of ancestors into the present and future (Gonschor, 2019). Though the United States banned ʻōlelo and made Hawaiʻi a state after its occupation, rendering Kanaka ʻŌiwi consciousness as nearly forgotten and/or existing underground (Beamer, 2008), nevertheless there have always been those who opposed and contested these political acts (Osorio, 2002). Small groups of Hawaiians were/are like ʻanoʻano [seed] or kipuka [variation or change of form, like oasis within a lava bed]<sup>9</sup> that kept/keep the Lāhui alive. Since Hawaiʻi's annexation nā hui [clubs, associations, societies] have sustained Hawaiian culture and practices; groups that McGregor et al. (2003) term cultural kipukas that have kept the Lāhui alive.

While settlers failed to see the value of Kalākaua's public re-introduction (after many years of settlers' attempted banishment) of hula, oli [chant] and mele [song] in 1883, these cultural kipukas allowed others to ensure these traditions survived. For example, Charles W. Kenn, a Hawaiian-Japanese-German Hawaiian Activities Director, renewed Native Hawaiian games in the 1940s and became a lua [Hawaiian martial artist master]. He eventually critiqued settler programs (e.g., Aloha Week) for their commodification and trivialization of Hawaiian culture (Charles W. Kenn Collection, Bishop Museum Archives). The Merri Monarch (a sobriquet for Kalākaua) Festival, initiated in 1963, reclaims Kalākaua's vision with this annual week-long event culminating with a three-day prestigious hula competition.

As historically imagined, leisure is connected to the Greek word σχολή [skholḗ], the philosophers Aristotle and Plato, and philosophical and political dialogues. While this historical conceptualization is problematic (Anastasiadis, 2006), σχολή would not seem strange alongside Native Hawaiian focus on political activities; nor would Pieper's (1952/2009) conceptualization of leisure as contemplating and celebrating a people's relationship with gods or creation forces and the universe. Kānaka Maoli coming together and enjoying themselves sustain the Lāhui, and by extension ʻāina, ʻohana and community in diverse ways: (1) advocating for language-immersion schools or developing community programs for learning ʻōlelo in distinctly local ways (e.g., *Cards for 808* game or online groups), all the more important given research that suggests learning one's language contributes to better health and stronger cultural identities (Reyner, 2010; Whalen, Moss, & Baldwin, 2016); (2) halting the usage of the island of Kahoʻolawe as a bombing range, leading to its designation as the Kahoʻolawe Archaeological District; (3) protecting the volcanic mountain Mauna Kea, and stopping live-ammunition practices throughout the islands; (4) sailing, in 1976, the legendary voyaging route between Hawaiʻi and Tahiti in a traditional double-hulled canoe with non-instrument navigational methods (Finney, 1994). Nainoa Thompson then guided (2013–2017) the *Hōkūleʻa* on the *Malama Honua Worldwide Voyage* of 47,000 nautical miles to share their message of caring for the earth; or (5) celebrating annual commemorations (e.g. Queen Liliʻuokalani's birthday, *Onipa ʻa Kākou* [the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi], Hoʻokuʻikahi Puʻukoholā Heiau [Unification of Hawaiʻi by Kamehameha I]). Such endeavours both emphasize how the past informs the present to establish a firm future, and illustrate how Kānaka Maoli's unthinkable individual alone (Handy & Pukui, 1998) is always interdependently held within their ʻāina, ʻohana, community and Lāhau. It is during these kinds of endeavours, times and places that ola, pono, ahona and nanea, leʻaleʻa, luana and kukahekahe occur concurrently.

The state of Hawaiʻi's main income stems from tourism and militarism (Bacchilega, 2007; Gonzalez, 2013), and the focus on them leaves few resources for Native Hawaiian needs: social

services, housing, land resolutions, sovereignty, burial protection, ecological management and medical care. While there are significant increases in their population, they still represent only 6% (Native Hawaiian) and 21% (mixed Native Hawaiian) of the total population (Goo, 2015). As a group they have the lowest median income, face a higher risk for homelessness and poverty, have less access to land that can be cultivated and struggle in the public education system which is underfunded for Native Hawaiian children (OHA, 2015). These realities are in turn reflected in factors McGregor et al. (2003) identify as related to the Lāhui and thus Kānaka Hawai‘i well-being, including political sovereignty (e.g., Native Hawaiian access and land rights); economic life (e.g., traditional subsistence practices, natural resources); national land base (e.g., chiefly land trusts, ancestral/family land, stewardship); historically constituted stable communities (e.g., intact Kanaka Hawai‘i communities, Hawaiian Homelands); and language, culture and spirituality. All of these relationships are under siege and require activism. Kānaka ‘Ōiwi have often critically assessed and employed a strategy of selective adaptation to navigate changes within their world (Beamer, 2008). Given the problems facing the Lāhui, we would expect a range of Kanaka Maoli responses. We suggest that a consideration of these relationships can only enhance understandings of ‘well-being’ and ‘leisure’ that sustain an active cultural association with ‘āina, a personal relationship with all that is in the world, and various ‘ōlelo concepts related to leisure and well-being.

### Living in a pluriverse

While the rationalist, neo-liberal and scientific global order makes it difficult to conceive of the Kumulipo, and more broadly the Kanaka Maoli episteme, as providing relevant information for the modern world, a myriad of societies and forces suggest alternative ways to inhabit the earth and cosmos are successful. Since the era of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Kānaka Maoli have chosen various ways to embody and enact the wisdom of their kūpuna – ranging from subsistence living to political activism (Kaholokula et al., 2009). They are also examples of cultural kipukas, pockets of regenerative Hawaiian communities of cultural survivance and revitalization with implications that transcend Nā Kai Ewalu.

The emergence of scholarship and conceptions of a *pluriverse*, in contrast to the hegemonic, one-world *universe* ‘myth,’<sup>10</sup> conjure earth as home to many different worlds with different histories and epistemes. They articulate earth as a living whole emerging out of the manifold of interconnected biophysical, human and spiritual relations coexisting in time and space (Blaser & de la Cadena, 2018). A pluriverse equally intimates multiple ontologies and worlds to be encountered rather than multiple perspectives of *one* world; it moves beyond simple tolerance of difference to a coexistence without submission to one reality, but in incommensurability. The challenge is to consider how these incommensurable worlds can coexist in relational terms (Querejazu, 2016). This is neither straightforward nor easy because it requires considerable existential time precariously balanced on the edge between a ‘Western universe of leisure’ and the potentially incommensurable Indigenous epistemes and practices; and a willingness to abdicate any predominate moulding and ordering activities. It requires being in unknown territory without a map or knowing what the outcome or relationship will be. Blaser and de la Cadena (2018) and Escobar (2018) propose the pluriverse as a tool to: (1) make alternatives plausible to one-worlders, and (2) provide resonance to those other worlds that interrupt the one-world story. We would add that it supports creative thinking for reconceptualizing concepts, such as leisure or well-being, as tentative or inclusive; keeping them in play as mutually-entangled and co-constituting but as distinct worlds on this sphere we call earth. Our current work (Fox & McDermott, 2019) suggests more research and collaboration with Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, specifically, and Indigenous people generally, is needed to understand the complex and incommensurable relationship between Western leisure, well-being and Kanaka Maoli/Indigenous practices.

## Conclusion

Kānaka Maoli are genealogically tied to all living beings as chanted in the Kumulipo which shapes Hawaiian lives today through lōkahi and pono. Furthermore, there is an ‘inherent relationship between practices of healing and wellbeing, experiences of wellness and strength, and Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty and kinship across the expanse of the Great Ocean and its shores’ (Eshraghi, 2018, p. 83). Reflecting the Hawaiian episteme of interdependent relationships, McGregor et al.’s (2003) model of well-being is grounded in ‘āina, ‘ohana, ahupua‘a and lāhui. It contributes to a growing body of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi scholarship embodying their cultural competency, place-based frameworks and relational realities. This includes other-than-human entities, rendering conspicuous positive, enduring and protective factors associated with Kanaka Maoli ways of being that are not amenable to and/or are ignored within Western well-being perspectives; conceptualizations that inherently privilege the autonomous and independent self over collective and interdependent values that is fundamentally at the core of Kanaka Maoli being (Panelli & Tipa, 2007; Prout, 2012).

The ‘ōlelo words used as loan displacements for ‘leisure’ focus on absorption in specific activities that revolve around relational experiences of pleasure, tranquility, sensoria and relaxation, and presume a context, responsibility and care for ‘āina, ‘ohana, ahupua‘a and lāhui. Practices such as hula, voyaging, restoring a fishpond or kalo patch are embedded in cultural practices and rhythms of interdependency, including luana and nanea. Without a comprehensive analysis of the ‘ōlelo archives and deep cultural knowledge (e.g., about the Kumulipo), leisure scholars would misinterpret and/or impose Western concepts on Hawaiian words, concepts, knowledge and practices. We tentatively suggest there is much to discuss around the intersection of leisure and Kanaka Maoli practices, even as it requires leisure scholars to enter the unknown territory of incommensurable worlds that is characteristic of the pluriverse. One in which Native Hawaiians may refuse to comply with settlers’ entitlement to see, know, translate, own and exploit Indigenous practices (Garneau, 2012).

If we, as settlers, are to understand this episteme we will need to decolonize our scholarship, learn with humility, transform the violence of colonial entitlement and fragility, and enter Indigenous spaces of relationships as guests. Grounding our interpretations and analyses in Indigenous scholarship, historical texts and language can engender fruitful conversations and world-making (ibid.) for reconceptualizing Western understandings of leisure and well-being that have historically and continue to privilege anthropocentric and individualist ideologies. More specifically we believe that Kanaka Maoli episteme, moored in an interdependent relationality, offers important insights to negotiate the produced effects of such ideologies.

Our reliance on Indigenous authors underscores our commitment to learning what they are willing to share in service of their sovereignty. We acknowledge the limits of our knowledge, especially ‘ōlelo; hence our reluctance to apply Western scholarship that risks imposing settler colonial logic and conventions, even if they have unintentionally been applied. While resemblances appear to exist between Kanaka Maoli practices and the English word leisure, those similarities emanate from a Western colonial viewpoint. Western leisure, beginning with the early sailing ships and men’s desires for sex (Arista, 2018) through today’s tourism culture, has been harmful to Kānaka Maoli, ‘āina and Nā Kai Ewalu. To provide an effective and *respectful* comparison between the two requires, at the minimum, fluency in ‘ōlelo and cultural practices, and comparative criteria that are either different from or interrogates Western leisure (Fox & McDermott, 2017; Fox & Klaiber, 2006). With a deeper engagement and embodied initiation to ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, aesthetics, knowledges, cultural wisdom and ceremonial-political structures, the Kanaka Maoli episteme offers a genealogical and relational perspective on all that has been created in the universe; an alternative to individualism and an exclusive focus on human communities; and a holistic view of life that would enhance the conversation and scholarship of leisure.

## Notes

1. The Kumulipo is like the Bible, the Qur'an, or Bhagavad Gita: it may be read as a historical record with different recognized versions. King Kalākaua's version was entitled *He Pule Ho'ola'a Ali'i, He Kumulipo* [A Prayer to Consecrate Ali'i, A Kumulipo]. The title acknowledges it as one version of the genealogy and sacred text. Queen Lili'uokalani translated Kalākaua's version, entitling it, 'An Account of the Creation of the World According to Hawaiian Tradition.' We follow McDougall's (2014) practice of using 'the Kumulipo' (not 'a Kumulipo') to speak generally and inclusive of all versions and to stress their authority as sacred Hawaiian texts. We relied on Queen Lili'uokalani's translation and McDougall's insightful work for this analysis.
2. We use Kanaka Maoli, Kanaka Hawai'i, Kanaka 'Ōiwi, Kanaka, Kanaka/Kānaka, Native Hawaiians, and Hawaiians interchangeably. Kānaka is the plural form and alone means man, person, people. Because we live and work in a world of multiple languages we also do not italicize 'ōlelo words for political and ethical reasons. Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel Elbert's *Hawaiian Dictionary* (Pukui & Elbert, 1957/1986) is used throughout for translations of Hawaiian words.
3. Translation involves communicating the author's intent, cultural context and multiple meanings if relevant. For example, *mō'i* can be translated as 'king,' but 'king' does not connote a cultural system where everyone is relationally connected to each other and the 'āina, or strive for *lōkahi* [unity, agreement, harmony amongst each other. This relational system tends to be more reciprocal and endearing, rather than hierarchical and extractive.
4. Handy and Pukui's (1998) use of *psyche* aligns with the Greek word *psychic* referring to the soul, versus interpretations found in other scholarship (e.g., psychology or psychiatry).
5. Ali'i, ali'i nui, and *mō'i* are gender-neutral terms to describe the ruling class, even if the individuals did not rule per se.
6. The WHO (2006) definition of health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being sought to ameliorate earlier definitions of it as simply the absence of disease. Haworth (2003) has described well-being research as offering an alternative complement to much of the harm-based health research. This scholarship has also enabled a de-medicalization of health (Dodge et al., 2012). This positive connotation, however, also signalled what governments would focus on to improve health: self-responsible individualism.
7. Given our discussion's engagement with Kanaka Maoli relationality to the universe, it is important to bear in mind the constructed nature and historical trajectory of the Western modern, individual, self upon which leisure and well-being research are based. As Bordo (1987) details, the invention of the *self* is part-and-parcel of the Enlightenment narrative and its liberal humanist philosophy, casting the self as a discrete entity no longer continuous with the universe as was the case up to the Middle Ages.
8. This is based on analyzing leisure phrases and several collocates between 1810 and 2000 for spoken and written English material in the Corpus of Historical American English (corpus.byu.edu).
9. When eruptions occur in volcanic rainforests kipukas are left and from which spores and seeds disperse regenerating the native flora across the lava (McGregor et al., 2003).
10. Querejazu (2016) suggests 'the ultimate "truth" of one-world, one reality and one universe is also a myth'; the effect of which has been to hide many worlds and realities.

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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