

Flavors From the Stewpot: Scholarship, Research, and Career Development in Hawaii

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Iulu no ka lala i ke kumu (The reach of a tree's branches depends on its trunk): this 'ōlelo no'ēau, or proverb, may also metaphorically reference the role of predecessors in our strength and direction. Connections to our predecessors and place continue to be of cultural significance in Hawaii. They remind us that we have a role and responsibility to those who came before us, to our community, and to future generations. These bonds of interconnectedness define the relations important for wellbeing and growth. We need to recognize the holistic aspects of this knowledge, promote pursuit of knowledge, understand diversities of our connections, and apply these elements in practical ways. This framework enables us to provide service and support to the communities in Hawaii, as well as extend this knowledge outward from academia and in conjunction with the community, into the Pacific, throughout the world, and among underserved populations. It takes a visionary with a nurturing heart and a brilliant mind to initiate the scholarship, research, and career development programs that are optimally positioned to address these important challenges facing psychiatry. It is within this context that we celebrate the many contributions of Dr. John ("Jack") F. McDermott, Jr., to our department and our field.

Scholarship Based on the Stewpot

People and Cultures of Hawai'i was first published in 1974, and then again in 1980, as a text to educate mental health workers about the multiple ethnic groups in Hawaii.^{2,3} Notably, this first contribution was released nearly two decades before such concepts were included in the *DSM*.⁴ Culture is a filter through which people process their experiences and events of their lives. It influences people's values, actions, and expectations of themselves as well as people's perceptions and expectations of others. As a state where no ethnic group is a

majority, Hawaii has often been referred to as a "melting pot." The melting pot analogy can also be considered cultural assimilation—the process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the dominant culture.

Dr. McDermott saw something different from a homogenizing "melting pot" and believed that Hawaii represented a distinctly positive exemplar of many ethnicities coexisting in harmony. Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their sociocultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context that empowers all within the organization or society. In 2011, Drs. McDermott and Andrade used the "stewpot" model as an organizing theme for their edited book, *People and Cultures of Hawai'i: The Evolution of Culture and Ethnicity*, wherein each ethnicity is a unique ingredient covered by a unifying sauce.⁵ This iteration built upon the previous versions to expand our understanding of the contributions of culture to the mental health of the people of Hawaii.

This perspective aided in developing culturally tailored intervention programs such as the Hawaiian Cultural Values Program for Hospitalized Youth,⁶ which promotes positive cultural identification as well as multicultural sensitivity.

Research

Not surprisingly, our departmental research has focused on health disparities. The vast majority of our departmental research was initiated and/or inspired by Dr. McDermott, including: findings of the National Center for Indigenous Hawaiian Behavioral Health, the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center, and

Hawaii's Caring Communities Initiative for Youth Suicide Prevention. A critical synthesis of previous research indicates that the pioneering work from the department's first major grant has supported, directly or indirectly, more than 100 peer-reviewed journal articles. These included the first articles to research mental illness among Native Hawaiian and Filipino youth in Hawaii, as well as the potential mechanisms (particularly related to cultural identification and cultural conflict) for these disparities.

For example, Andrade et al. (2006) reported significantly higher rates (32.7%) of psychiatric diagnoses (particularly anxiety disorders) among Native Hawaiian youth. These rates were comparable to high-risk adolescent prevalence rates in other studies and nearly three times higher than the community youth prevalence rate.⁷ Yuen et al. (2000) demonstrated that Native Hawaiian adolescents had significantly higher rates of suicide attempts (12.9%) compared to other adolescents (9.6%) and that Hawaiian cultural affiliation (rather than ethnicity)—in addition to low socioeconomic status (SES), depression, and substance abuse—was a marker for suicide attempts.⁸ However, Goebert et al. (2000) found family support to be a strong protective factor for Hawaiian youth, especially regarding internalizing symptoms.⁹ Using data from a different local project, Guerrero et al. (2009) found that among Filipino youth in Hawaii, Filipino cultural identification appeared to be a protective factor against poor school performance and behavioral and emotional difficulties.¹⁰ Viewed collectively, these studies indicate that there is a need to better understand the dynamics of cultural adaptation in optimizing prevention and care for indigenous/colonized youth and youth from voluntary immigrant backgrounds.

Supporting Dr. McDermott's vision, these studies have improved prevention and care for at-risk youth in Hawaii; furthermore, these research programs have launched the careers of faculty from under-represented minority backgrounds who have furthered Dr. McDermott's legacy.

Career Development

Child and adolescent psychiatric services are in critically short supply in Hawaii, as they are throughout the world. In 1969, Dr. McDermott was recruited to help reorganize psychiatry into a department in the medical school and develop what would become a four-year accredited residency program. He also founded the child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship program and chaired the Department of Psychiatry from 1969 to 1995. Dr. McDermott was tirelessly committed to growing the workforce and improving diversity in our specialty. These goals were optimally accomplished through his dedication to recruitment, mentorship, and advancement of psychiatric and mental health research careers for indigenous people and immigrants in Hawaii.

The Department of Psychiatry has the distinction of having one of the highest rates of promotions/tenures out of all of the clinical departments in our medical school—a reflection of quality mentorship. Many of his mentees have gone on to serve as leaders in psychiatry locally, nationally, and internationally. Additionally, two of his mentees, Drs. Andrade (former chair) and Guerrero (present chair), have been inducted as fellows in the American College of Psychiatrists. But mentorship cannot be measured by such metrics alone. Like a good stew, it starts with a family recipe, flavored by each of the ingredients, then slow-cooked to allow the essence of each to be enhanced, and finally seasoned by understanding, strength, and experience to allow chances to be taken to improve the taste.

Take Home Summary

- Make time to develop close bonds with mentors.
- Take intellectual risks based on solid foundations.

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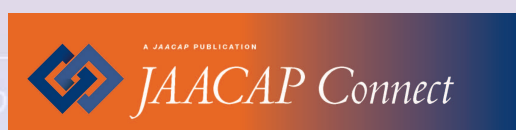
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