

CHAPTER ONE

Dilemmas of an Indigenous Academic: A Native Hawaiian Story

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For the past several years I have been studying Native Hawaiian educational initiatives and the representation of Native Hawaiians in elementary and early childhood curricula in (post)colonial Hawai'i. While I have since completed that initial study, my relationship with the Hawaiian community where I first conducted my research continues. In fact, it seems that with each successive year, my work and research in this setting become more entangled, more complicated, and more politically sensitive. While I assumed that over time I would grow more comfortable with my role as an indigenous academic, to this day I continue to struggle with “unhomely” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9) feelings of “disconnection” (Smith, 1999, p. 5) as I proceed uneasily, partially as insider and partially as outsider within both the academy and my native community.

The unhomely¹ disconnection felt by indigenous academics who return to work in our native communities is not a new phenomenon. The problematic position of western-educated, indigenous intellectuals has been addressed by Franz Fanon (1963), Edward Said (1993), Gayatri Spivak (1990), and more recently by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). As Smith (1999) points out, there remains a very real ambivalence in indigenous communities toward the role of western education and those who have been educated in western universities. Likewise, there is a very real ambivalence in western universities about the legitimacy of indigenous knowledge and the role of indigenous intellectuals in the academy (Spivak, 1990).

Consequently, indigenous academics who attempt to work and research in our native communities assume a difficult position as we struggle

to meet the sometimes competing expectations of the academy and our home communities. For instance, in my experience I have found that while the academy expects that its members will speak from theory, Native Hawaiian communities expect that their members will speak from experience. While the academy expects that research relationships will be detached and objective, Native Hawaiian communities expect that these relationships will be intimate and enduring. While the academy expects that its members will contribute to the scholarly community through rigorous intellectualism, Native Hawaiian communities expect that their members will contribute through vigorous activism.

This chapter chronicles my attempts to reconcile the conflicting expectations placed on me as a Native Hawaiian intellectual through the development of a hybrid² Hawaiian/Western research methodology that draws from and speaks to both indigenous and western ways of knowing and being. In the Hawaiian tradition of *ha'i mo'olelo* or storytelling, I have chosen to write this chapter as a personal narrative. While I acknowledge the limitations of such a small-scale, personal story, it is my hope that its familiar themes and characters will invoke in my readers a set of shared understandings and meanings, and that in the process it will bring the abstract theoretical conversations surrounding indigenous research to an accessible level by generating discussions of what indigenous research methodologies might look like in practice.

HYBRIDITY AND METHODOLOGICAL PURITY

Consistent with the logic of postcolonialism and its declining emphasis on grand theories and narratives, my hybrid methodology, and thus my story, is intentionally eclectic, mingling, combining, and synthesizing theories and techniques from disparate disciplines and paradigms. Writing as a Native Hawaiian in the middle of the Pacific, far removed from the academic center of the metropolis, I do not attach myself to any one theoretical perspective, but instead draw widely from an assortment of structuralist and poststructuralist theorists, moving within and between sometimes competing or seemingly incompatible interpretive perspectives and paradigms. Consequently, you will find that my study has both a deconstructive playfulness as well as a Marxist sincerity. It engages with Michel Foucault's critique of the pervasive power of discourse as well as Karl Marx's concern with material effects. And, all the while, it consciously and unapologetically privileges Native Hawaiian values and concerns.

While some may liken my attempt to combine Marxist, poststructuralist, and Native Hawaiian insights and theories to trying to ride two (or, in this case, three) horses at one time (O'Hanlon and Washbrook,

1992), I believe that postcolonial studies demand such theoretical innovation and flexibility. In this (post)colonial era, where methodological purity can only be achieved by “sweeping marginalised narratives and perspectives once again under the carpet of class and capitalism” (Loomba, 1998, p. 253), I suggest we heed the words of Gyan Prakash who urges postcolonial intellectuals to “hang on to two horses, inconstantly” (1992, p. 184). Although I do not deny the possible contradictions between these various theoretical perspectives, I believe that if we are to meet the demands of postcolonial studies for both a revision of the past and an analysis of our ever-changing present, we cannot work within closed paradigms.

THE INITIAL STUDY: CURRICULAR REPRESENTATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The curricular representation of historically marginalized peoples and cultures is an important concern at all levels of education, particularly in the early years of schooling when children are first forming their conceptions of themselves and “others.” Thus, in 1996, I began my research by studying young children’s written comments and drawings about various races and ethnicities in the State of Hawai‘i. When studying the children’s written comments, I was particularly disturbed by their misinformed or stereotypical remarks about Native Hawaiians. For instance, one part-Hawaiian child portrayed Native Hawaiians as living in grass huts and subsisting on a traditional diet of *lau lau*, *lomi* salmon, and *poi*. Others described us as “old people who know how to survive [*sic*] in the wild” or “tanned, tall, built [*sic*] people” who “ware [*sic*] different costumes [costumes] and play nice music.”

While I was initially surprised that these children would describe Hawaiians in such distanced and stereotypical terms, after further study I determined that their comments were actually not as surprising as they may at first seem. Following the work of Michel Foucault (1970, 1972, 1979), I used a method of genealogical discourse analysis to demonstrate how these children’s surprising and stereotypical remarks draw from age-old colonial discourses about Hawaiians and other indigenous people. These discourses continue to hold sway over contemporary society and permeate our children’s textbooks, encyclopedias, world atlases, and various other aspects of our school curricula.

When I shared these concerns with classroom teachers in the local Hawaiian community, they smiled knowingly and assured me that there was already a state curriculum in place to address just this sort of problem. They were referring to the State of Hawai‘i’s Hawaiian studies curriculum, which mandates instruction in Hawaiian culture, history, and language at all public elementary schools throughout the state. The Hawaiian studies

curriculum was developed in the late 1970s in response to Native Hawaiian demands for increased visibility of our native people in our state schools and colleges. During this period, curricula from kindergarten to college nationwide were undergoing revision to reflect non-European and nonwhite contributions to history and culture. The Hawai'i state curriculum was no exception.

After speaking with these teachers about the Hawaiian studies curriculum, I was optimistic and relieved. I immediately dived into the program's instructional materials, expecting to find them full of positive images of Native Hawaiians that would serve to overturn the students' misinformed stereotypes. But after doing a close reading of the elementary Hawaiian studies textbooks and curricular guides, I began to get the sense that there was both more and less going on with this curriculum than appears on the surface.

A CRITICAL CLUE

My concern about the textbooks began with what Slavoj Žižek (1991) would refer to as a critical clue. It's something "odd," "queer," or "fishy," "that *in itself* is quite insignificant . . . but which nonetheless . . . denatures the scene of the crime and . . . renders the whole picture strange" (p. 53). In this case the critical clue came to my attention when I was inquiring into popular Hawaiian studies textbooks used by teachers in the early elementary grades. One of the titles that was referred to several times was *Hawaii the Aloha State*. After hearing the title from a number of different teachers I decided to borrow a copy of the book from our state library. But when I looked up the title in the computer catalog, I found that there were at least a dozen other books with exactly the same name. There was the classroom textbook (Bauer, 1982), and then several other similarly titled Hawaiian tour books. For instance, sitting side by side on the library shelf was the classroom textbook, a 1974 Hawaiian travel guidebook with the same name (*Hawaii the Aloha State*, 1974), and a 1985 tour book namesake (Seiden, 1985).

This critical clue spurred me to investigate the comparison further. As I did, the similarities between the Hawaiian studies textbooks and Hawaiian tour books became glaringly apparent. Building on Foucault's (1970, 1972, 1979) work in discourse genealogy, I incorporated the new historicism's (Greenblatt, 1989) technique of reading a text alongside an unlikely partner from another genre in order to identify historical discourses that the two have in common. Through this analysis, I discovered that the stereotypical images of Hawai'i and Hawaiians represented in these Western-authored textbooks are strikingly similar to the exoticized perceptions that were first projected on our people by early colonial voyagers and have since been perpetuated through Hawai'i's visitor industry.

By juxtaposing the Hawaiian studies classroom texts with Hawaiian tour guide books and documents used for the training of tourist industry workers, I explored how the material interests of the tourist industry are expressed in this “Hawaiian” curriculum. With example after example, I found that these Western-authored Hawaiian studies textbooks subtly and not so subtly promote a distorted notion of the Hawaiian culture as an exotic commodity to be consumed by visiting foreigners, while simultaneously recruiting young Hawaiian students as its frontline peddlers.

CRITICAL THEORY AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

I began to feel at this point that my research was bordering on dangerous territory. As a native Hawaiian I understand the distrust in Hawaiian communities toward academic research on Hawaiian educational initiatives. While I believed that my particular study would ultimately serve positive ends, I knew full well that if I chose to continue with my critique of this Hawaiian-initiated program, there would likely be many Hawaiians who had been involved in the original design and implementation of the curriculum and numerous others who are strong supporters of the program whom I might unintentionally offend.

In her discussion of the special difficulties facing indigenous researchers conducting insider research, Smith (1999) suggests that one of the most difficult risks indigenous researchers can take is to pursue a critical study that challenges taken-for-granted views or practices of their native community. Such studies can unsettle beliefs, values, and relationships within the community with consequences that the researchers, their families, and the community will have to live with on a daily basis. At the same time, however, if these critical studies are conducted in a reflexive, ethical, and respectful manner, they have the potential for ultimately strengthening the community by giving voice to previously silenced perspectives and questioning the basis of taken-for-granted assumptions. A good example of this is the recent development of Maori women’s studies that critically question taken-for-granted patriarchal accounts of Maori society that have previously been provided by Westerners and Maori men (Te Awekotuku, 1992).

As I struggled with my own conflicted feelings about the relative costs and benefits of continuing with my own critical study, I turned to Hawaiian tradition and protocol for guidance on how I should proceed. In Hawaiian tradition, when one finds oneself in a position where one is about to commit a wrong that is unavoidable or somehow necessary for the larger good, one is expected to ask for forgiveness in advance. Before you picked a plant, you would pray and say, “Please forgive me for taking this plant. I need it to cure grandmother who is sick.” Or, if it was

necessary to walk on volcanic land, “Forgive me, *Pele* (Goddess of fire), for walking on your domain” (Pukui, Haertig, and Lee, 1972, p. 246).

At this point in my research I made my own apology or *mihī* and asked our larger Hawaiian community for *kala* (forgiveness) for the *hala* (wrong) I was about to commit. While I, from the vantage point of hindsight, critically questioned the current efficacy of the Hawaiian studies curriculum and pondered its suitability to the present Hawaiian state of affairs, in doing so I meant no disrespect to our wise elders or *kūpuna* who had the foresight to initiate this program or those who since have worked long and hard to contribute to its current success.

The process of decolonization requires our continual efforts toward questioning and revealing hidden colonial influences in past and current beliefs and practices, those of the *haole* (or foreigner) as well as those of our own *kānaka maoli* (indigenous people), including our *kūpuna* (elders), our ancestors, and ourselves. Through my *mihī* I asked for the Hawaiian community’s understanding that my humble critique, however irreverent, was my small attempt to help our Hawaiian people move one step further along the path toward decolonization. Our *kūpuna* have taken us this far—now we must do the rest.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND REPORTING BACK

With this apology, I humbly continued. When I concluded my study of the Hawaiian studies textbooks, I immediately took my findings back to the Hawaiian community. Through a series of formal and informal presentations, I shared my newfound knowledge with a wide range of audiences, including native Hawaiian university students, Hawaiian immersion classroom teachers, native Hawaiian elders, and Hawaiian sovereignty activists. During this process of “sharing knowledge,” I learned to talk about my research in a culturally appropriate manner and in a language appropriate for each particular audience. In the conversations that ensued I learned that what I was reporting was consistent with the experiences of many others in the Hawaiian community and resonated with what they had known and felt intuitively.

Following Smith (1999), when I speak of “sharing knowledge” with the community, I use the term deliberately. For beyond just sharing the surface “information” or the “in a nutshell” findings of my research, I was diligent about sharing with the Hawaiian community the critical theories and analyses that informed my study. In doing so, I aimed to demystify the way in which academic knowledge is constructed and represented. Through this process, I was able to introduce members of the Hawaiian community who may have had little formal schooling to a wider world, a world that includes

other indigenous people who have experienced similar oppressions, share in similar struggles, and voice their concerns in similar ways.

COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND GIVING BACK

Whenever and wherever I shared my findings in the Hawaiian community, I was careful to make it explicitly clear that my concern was not with the Hawaiian studies curriculum per se, but with the overwhelming influence of western-authored textbooks that intentionally or unintentionally serve ends inimical to our own. I was very clear about my belief that this Hawaiian curriculum should be under Hawaiian control and offered several suggestions for ways to ensure this.

Although my presentations and suggestions were clearly appreciated by the Hawaiian community, it soon became apparent that, as far as the community was concerned, my work on this project had just begun. For along with the rights and privileges that I enjoyed as a member of this community came accompanying *kuleana* or community obligations and responsibilities. Unlike an outsider researcher who might conduct a study in an indigenous setting and then simply present his or her findings through a written report or academic presentation, with no further responsibility to the community, indigenous academics who live and work in their home communities are inevitably implicated in a set of insider dynamics that make it impossible to simply present one's findings and walk away.

When I presented my critique of the elementary Hawaiian studies curriculum to my fellow Hawaiians in various community settings, the questions that followed weren't abstract, academic questions concerning sample size or methodology. They were pressing, action-oriented questions of "What are we going to do to remedy this?" or "What should we do next?" (It is interesting to note that the Hawaiian language has two different forms of the word "we"—*mākou*, or we exclusive of the listener, and *kākou*, or we, all of us, the listener included. The latter, inclusive, form of the word was the form used here.)

As a contributing member of the Hawaiian community, it was my *kuleana* to follow my research with action by assuming an active role in community efforts toward remedying the problems I uncovered. So when my informal presentations and conversations inspired a group of Hawaiian language immersion teachers to band together to write a new Hawaiian studies textbook from the long silent Native Hawaiian perspective, I gladly offered my assistance. The teachers and I wrote the text collaboratively and gave formal and informal presentations about our textbook and its unique approach at local education workshops for Hawaiian studies teachers and Native Hawaiian classroom elders. We also traveled together

to the American Southwest where we shared our Native curriculum project with other indigenous educators at the international Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Conference and the Pueblo of Zuni, New Mexico.

Similarly, when another group asked if I might also take a look at the Hawaiian elder component of the Hawaiian studies curriculum, I once again obliged. The proponents of the Hawaiian elder program assured me that while the Hawaiian studies textbooks may leave much to be desired, it needn't be such a major concern. They explained that the "real" instruction in elementary Hawaiian studies comes from weekly classroom visits from Native Hawaiian *kūpuna* or elders who are hired as part-time teachers to assist the (typically non-Hawaiian) classroom teachers with the implementation of the curriculum.

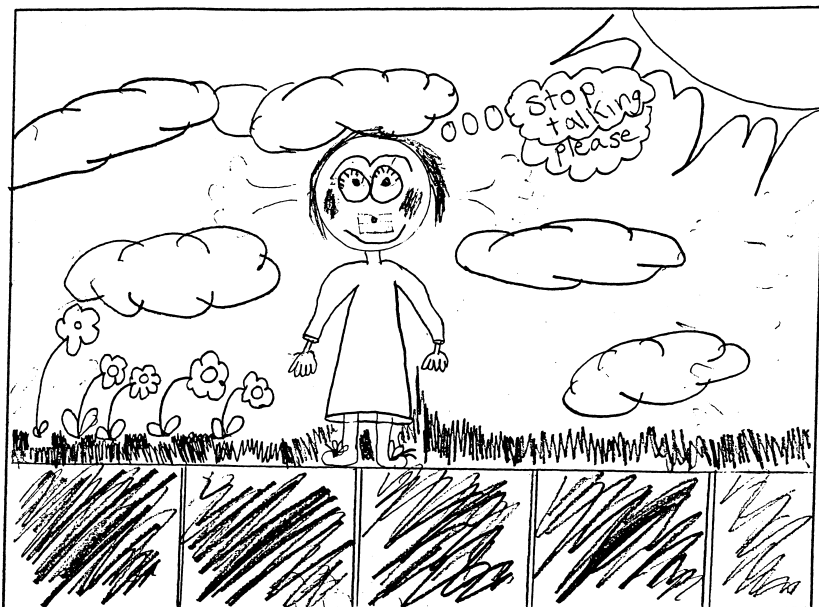
According to teachers and principals who speak highly of the program, the *kūpuna* are "invaluable resources" in the teaching of the Hawaiian culture and language, and they also bring a special feeling of "warmth and aloha" to the elementary school classrooms. The *kūpuna* epitomize Hawaiian cultural values and the aloha spirit and provide positive intergenerational exchanges for those children who do not have grandparents of their own (Afaga and Lai, 1994). The *kūpuna*, everyone seemed to agree, are the backbone of the Hawaiian studies program, the keepers of the Hawaiian traditions. So I optimistically set out to pay these classroom elders a visit.

DECONSTRUCTING THE HAWAIIAN ELDER PROGRAM

On my first few visits, just to see the stir that these *kūpuna* create when they arrive on campus—the warm greeting they receive from youngsters who run clear across the playground to shower them with hugs, and the way the older students rise from their seats when the *kūpuna* arrive at their classroom door—seeing all of this for the first time was heartwarming. However, as I stayed on and talked with the *kūpuna* and followed them through their days, I began to realize that there was once again more and less going on with the *kūpuna* program than initially meets the eye.

To delve below the surface appearance, I observed and interviewed *kūpuna*, students, and teachers in eight elementary schools across the state. I also studied students' drawings and end-of-the-year written reflections on what they remembered about their *kūpuna*'s visits. I then employed various deconstructive techniques, including Derrida's (1976) concept of *sous rature*,³ to look beyond the manifest text, and instead examine the subtext, or that which was put under erasure.

For instance, take a look at the student drawing featured in Figure 1.1. If we strictly read the surface of this image, we see a cheerful drawing of a



I remember that when we needed to get ready for our May day and we went to the field and we needed to walk across the field more than once.

Figure 1.1. A surface look at the *kūpuna* program.

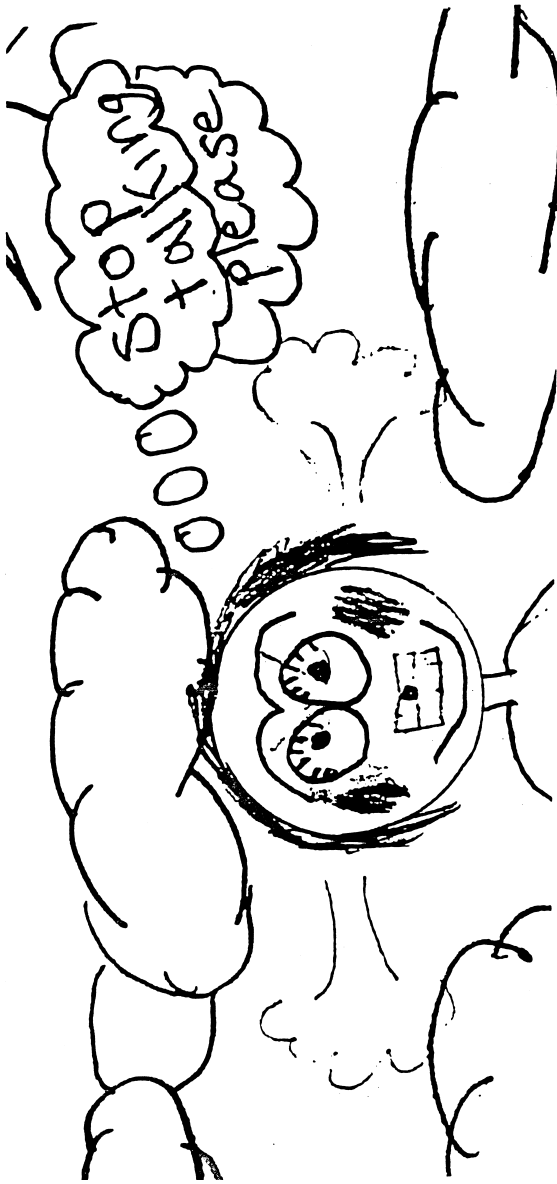


Figure 1.2. The *kūpuna* program up close.

smiling *kūpuna* teaching outdoors on a sunny day surrounded by thick grass, fluffy white clouds, and beautiful flowers. On the surface, the image seems to epitomize what the *kūpuna* program purportedly is all about: Hawaiian elders from the community coming to our Western-dominated schools to instruct Hawaii's youngsters in native Hawaiian ways of life—an indigenous form of education that may best be taught outside the four walls of the institutionalized classroom. But let's now take a second look at this picture. (See Figure 1.2.) This time instead of focusing on the surface picture, let's pay closer attention to what was rubbed out from the picture, literally put under erasure. If we study the child's illustration with the same care that an art historian would give an artistic palimpsest,⁴ we discover that beneath the image of the smiling *kūpuna* lies another hidden picture, a first text that has been rubbed out and covered by the second.

Like a psychoanalyst interpreting a verbal slip, we find that a former, repressed text can be glimpsed through the gaps in the latter. Beneath the *kūpuna*'s bright, round eyes, cheerful smile, and rosy cheeks, we find a face flushed with anger, with gritting teeth, cutting eyes, and pent-up steam bursting from both ears. When we inspect the *kūpuna*'s accompanying dialogue we see that it too readily comes undone. The two-tiered configuration of the dialogue bubble suggests that our *kūpuna*'s calm request that her students "Stop talking please," originally stood as the abrupt command of a *kūpuna* short on patience ("Stop talking!"), and was later softened with the subsequent addition of the word "please." Try as they might, however, these and other subsequent smoothing modifications, such as the fluffy white clouds and cheerful flowers that have been superimposed over the earlier scene, can never fully disguise the underlying angry picture.

After months of visitations and candid conversations it became clear to me that beneath the surface of this heartwarming *kūpuna* program, many of these gracious Hawaiian elders were justifiably angry and impatient. They had little authority in the classroom, little control over their curriculum, and they were invariably overwhelmed and overextended.

HUMILITY AND KNOWING ONE'S PLACE

At this point, I once again found myself, a native Hawaiian academic, in an awkward situation. Like many native Hawaiians, I have been taught since birth to honor our Hawaiian *kūpuna*, the wise ones who have paved the way before us, the keepers of our ancient traditions. Knowing that the *kūpuna* may not come across entirely favorably in my study, I seriously considered stopping my research short rather than exposing the *kūpuna* program's many weaknesses.

When outlining the particular difficulties of indigenous insider research, Smith (1999) suggests that insider research needs to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research, but it also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because as an active member of the indigenous community, the insider researcher is entwined in a complex set of roles and relationships that often serve to negate the “expert” status typically enjoyed by academics in other communities. Indeed, regardless of my academic degrees, within the Native Hawaiian community that privileges elders and the holders of traditional Hawaiian knowledge, I am merely a young, thirty-three-year-old woman with little life experience to draw from. It is therefore essential that I remember my place in the Hawaiian community and always act with humility.

I had already earned myself a reputation in the Hawaiian community as an incorrigible academic. While most tolerated my critique of the western-authored textbooks, they surely would not be as forgiving if it seemed that I was now turning my sights on the respected and defenseless *kūpuna*. Many of these *kūpuna* are retired tour guides and Waikīkī musicians who rely on these part-time positions for much-needed income. Perhaps, I thought, my critique of this *kūpuna* program, which already struggles for funding from year to year, may be one study best left unfinished.

However, after much soul searching and introspection, I decided that this seeming irreverence was once again necessary to achieve a larger good. After all, my intent was never to lay blame on the *kūpuna*, but instead to use the interpretive methods at my disposal to uncover the structural problems that are contributing to their difficult position. I never intended to fault them for their underlying angry dispositions, but instead aimed to find and remedy the source of their anger. I never meant to be disrespectful, but instead aimed to restore to these *kūpuna* the dignity and respect that they deserve.

With this understanding in mind, I once again made my *mibi* (apology) and humbly continued on, this time attending to the deep structures that lay below the surface. As I continued my studies I found that beneath the veneer of a respectful Hawaiian studies program based on the Hawaiian value of reverence for elders, our expert *kūpuna* are poorly treated, alienated from their work, and, as the erasures in the following student drawings suggest, they are virtually disembodied.

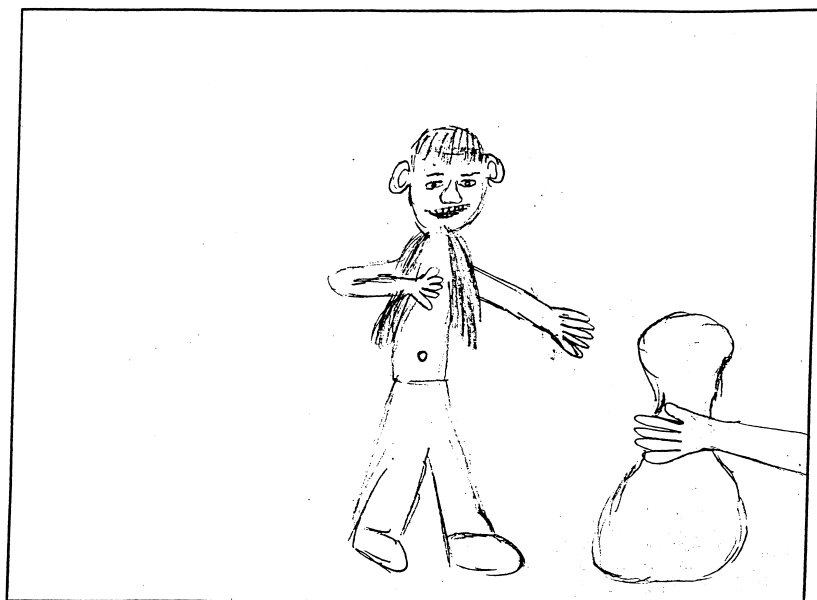
THE DISEMBODIED KŪPUNA

In Figure 1.3 we see a drawing of students rehearsing a song-and-dance performance for their school’s annual May Day celebration. The boys in the picture are making a parody of their featured song “Pearly Shells” by



I remember from last year
 when [Kūpuna] told us a song
 called perly shells and me Larry
 and Dave all ways make fun of
 it like curly fries from McDonalds
 something like that then we all
 got busted.

Figure 1.3. The kūpuna erased.



I remember when we made the Hea
leaf lei and we did the may
day dance (e-pele e-pele) out on the
courtfield without our shirts and it
was real fun dancing our may
day dance in front of everyone.

Figure 1.4. The disembodied kupa.

changing the words. That's interesting in itself. But what I find most interesting is what has been rubbed out or erased from the picture—that is, the *kūpuna* who was directing the rehearsal. The *kūpuna* was initially drawn in from a back view, with legs astride and arms crossed. But then she was curiously erased, with only her *ipu* or gourd instrument remaining to mark her place.

Similarly, in Figure 1.4, a drawing depicting an actual May Day performance, all we see of the *kūpuna* is her hand grasping the neck of a large *ipu*. The rest of her body is cropped or cut off from the picture, leaving us to imagine it outside the frame. In these and several other student reflections on the *kūpuna*'s visits, the *kūpuna* are literally disembodied—cropped, left out altogether, or erased.

KŪPUNA AS HIRED HANDS

In his discussion of the disfiguring, dehumanizing effects of capitalism and the division of labor, Karl Marx (1867/1977) describes how the capitalist laborer is severed from his productive knowledge, judgment, and will, and becomes “a mere fragment of his own body” (p. 482)—a hand, watched, corrected, and controlled by a distant brain. Under capitalism, the labor process is dissociated from the skill and knowledge of the worker, and there is a sharp division between those who conceptualize and plan for others (the “head labor”), and those who execute the work (the “hand labor”). As management controls and dictates each step of the labor process, people are dehumanized and alienated from the right to that which is essential to their nature—the right to be in control of their own activities.

Such is the fate of these *kūpuna* who are hired under the guise of Hawaiian studies experts but on entering our schools are treated as little more than hired hands. Virtually homeless in our schools, with no classroom or even office space to speak of, these itinerant seniors scurry back and forth through the halls on an efficiency-maximizing teaching schedule that has them running from room to room at a hectic and even dizzying pace.

Once in the classroom these expert *kūpuna* are expected to execute a song-and-dance curriculum or a series of prescribed “*kūpuna*-proof” lessons, all under the watchful supervision of the ever-present classroom teacher. Subject to an oppressive program with rigid work schedules, uncompromising curricular demands, and closely regulated teaching situations, our expert *kūpuna* is dehumanized and disembodied—a hand controlled by a distant brain.

Within the factory system of our schools, these *kūpuna* are low-paid laborers whose ultimate function is to reproduce the existing capitalist

relations of exploitation. Limited to a restrictive performance-based curriculum and substandard, alienating working conditions, these retired Hawaiian tour guides, musicians, and Waikīkī performers unwittingly ensure the survival of Hawai‘i’s visitor industry as they participate in their own reproduction through the interpellation of a new generation of compliant Hawaiian tourist industry workers.

EMBODYING OUR KŪPUNA

While this is where my story ends, my work continues. Since completing this study I have once again shared my findings with various groups in the Hawaiian community. Together we are working to embody our *kūpuna* through larger, structural changes in school policies. By lobbying for classroom and office space for our *kūpuna*, full-time hiring, reasonable teaching schedules, and a greater degree of curricular independence, we aim to emancipate our *kūpuna* from the alienating conditions of our schools. In the process we hope to enable our Hawaiian youngsters to learn from these experts in a dignified setting that gives both our Hawaiian elders and our Hawaiian culture the respect they truly deserve.

PANI (CONCLUSION)

This is the story of my personal journey, a chronicle of my attempts to come to terms with my “unhomely” position as a Native Hawaiian academic working and researching in a Hawaiian educational community. It is a tale full of twists and turns, with many crises of confidence, and a good deal of introspection and soul searching. Its one recurring theme is the progressive development of a hybrid Hawaiian/Western research methodology that attempts to bridge the knowledge of the western world with the traditional wisdom of my native community in an effort to reconcile these disconnected aspects of my being.

In offering this *mo‘olelo* to you, I ask that you think on the *kaona* (underlying messages and meanings) of the story—the questions raised, the protocol followed, the responsibilities expected and fulfilled. Although mine is just one small story, it is my hope that in the oral tradition of *ha‘i mo‘olelo* (Hawaiian storytelling) this story will inspire others to tell stories of their own. As others begin to relate the tales of their efforts and dilemmas in indigenous research, and more voices and perspectives are added to the mix, we can begin to build a knowledge base of ideas for reconnecting indigenous researchers with our home communities through the development of indigenous research protocols and methodologies that are ethical,

respectful, and empowering. For above all else, indigenous research should be about healing and empowerment. It should involve the return of dignity and the restoration of sovereignty, and it should ultimately bring formerly colonized communities one step further along the path to self-determination. We should think on these factors as they apply to our own research, and if and when we decide to proceed, we should do so humbly, in an effort to serve.

NOTES

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1. For a discussion of the “unhomeliness” engendered by the colonial encounter and its disruption of familiar meanings and identities, see Homi Bhaba (1994).

2. While I am aware of the controversy surrounding the postcolonial concept of “hybridity” and the term’s racist, imperial roots, following Homi Bhaba (1994) and Robert Young (1995) I use the term deliberately in an effort to reclaim the concept for liberatory ends.

3. *Sous rature*, a term usually translated as “under erasure,” is one of the central concepts in the work of deconstructionist Jacques Derrida (1976). To put a term *sous rature* is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. Because the word is inaccurate, or rather inadequate, it is crossed out; because the word is necessary, it remains legible.

4. The term palimpsest, from the Greek *palimpsestos* “rubbed again,” refers to writing material, such as a parchment or tablet, that has been written on or inscribed several times after the earlier writing has been rubbed or papered over, but never completely erased.

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