

[共同研究：ハワイ社会の Multiethnicity]

## Social Psychology in Hawaii: Leon James Psychology in the Evolution of a Multicultural Intentional Community

Raoul CERVANTES\*

This study examines the work of Leon James, a social psychologist and professor at the University of Hawaii, and his attempt in building an intentional community that both absorbs and accommodates the culture of the surrounding local community of Honolulu. In this paper I will discuss theory, methodology, and works developed over the past twenty five years by Dr. James and his colleagues at the University of Hawaii.

### Setting and Problem

In describing Hawaii, or more specifically Honolulu, as a multicultural community, it is first necessary to discuss the definition of culture and ethnicity. We can define culture as the commonly held beliefs, practices, values, rituals, and meanings by an identifiable group of people. For example, in Hawaii, ghost stories could be considered evidence of Hawaiian culture. Descendants of Native Hawaiians believe that ghosts exist, avoid going to certain places for fear of disturbing ghosts, share stories about ghosts, and possess in their memories a collection of stories, themes and characters from ghost stories.

The notion of multiculturalism is more problematic. The folk theory of multiculturalism would define the concept in terms of ethnic groups, groups of people, either geographically or socially isolated from other peoples, interacting in such frequency as to develop its own identifiable culture. For example, in Hawaii, we could speak of Native Hawaiians, Haoles (technically any outsider but in practice white people from the mainland United States), local Japanese, local Chinese, or local Portuguese cultures.

There is some justification for these cultural divisions. Native Hawaiians were the first inhabitants on the islands, followed by successive waves of immigration by the identifiable cultural groups mentioned above. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that groups who immigrated from Japan will be culturally unique from other immigrant groups residing in Hawaii. However, when considering Hawaii in 1999, the issue is more complex. Although there is evidence that ethnic groups remain culturally, distinct there is also evidence that the cultural boundaries between different groups have merged and new cultural groupings are emerging. For example, cultural stereotypes and labels remain very much intact; descendants of white United States immigrants are still referred to as Haoles, and are considered arrogant

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and selfish. However, many white descendants in Hawaii share beliefs in local ghost legends, marry non-whites, participate in local sports and festivals, and respect Native Hawaiian taboos. Over the past 100 years, cultural practices themselves have immigrated among the various ethnic groups.

Another, more dynamic, problem is that because of the organization of American post-modern capitalist society, ethnic groups have lost spaces for remaining culturally intact. From infancy through adulthood, Hawaiian residents participate in institutions which are ethnically (but not socio-economically) integrated. Within the institutions of daycare, school, and the workplace, people interact across ethnic boundaries. Within these institutions intact groups form, and reform, establishing dynamic cultural codes and norms. In short, it is easy to identify descendants of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii, but more problematic to identify unique cultural practices, either within individuals or across groups.

### Research Methodology

This qualitative study gathered data from several sources including interviews with Dr. James, observations of his psychology classes, student reports, published documents, and web sites. In addition, I have drawn from my own personal experiences as a former student of Dr. James and a resident of Hawaii.

### Researching Dynamic Multiculturalism

The problem of researching multiculturalism, or dynamic multiculturalism as discussed above, has been addressed by Leon James and his colleague at the University of Hawaii. Rather than examining ethnic groups and their perceived differences, Dr. James targeted his research towards cultural practices within the setting of Honolulu. Using this approach, cultural differences, if identifiable, will emerge through the study of daily community life.

### The Research Community

Dr. James had organized his research program around the practice of the community classroom. Dr. James teaches social psychology and statistics courses at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. The community classroom includes the students enrolled in one of his courses, graduate assistants, former students, and interested visiting participants and Dr. James himself. An important component of the community classroom is its generation aspect, that the community extends beyond the boundaries of a given group of students who meet for four months then disperse. Student work is preserved as natural history for succeeding generations of students.

Within the community classroom, students individually and in groups participate in research projects directed by Dr. James and his colleagues. Within this research context, Dr. James has compiled a list of community classroom practices:

1. term paper topics are chosen by the students from a cumulative generational list to which they also contribute suggestions for future students.
2. all assigned reports are written for future students as the target audience, not the

instructor.

3. all reports are voluntarily donated to the generational curriculum archives which are kept in a designated area by the instructor.
4. each succeeding generation of students reads, uses, and maintains the archives through assigned and supervised activities.
5. all student reports are shared in the classroom with exercises specifically designed to elicit peer comment and evaluation.
6. student reports are never defined as complete and can be improved or added to at any time throughout the semester (and even beyond, when they are no longer students).
7. students are coached to write only what they understand and believe in, so they can take full responsibility for intellectual content any sentence they write that does not conform to this rule is labeled "plagiarism" unless placed in quotation marks with a citation).

### Traffic Psychology : An example project

An area of human behavior which increasingly has become a source of aggression, stress, hostility, and violence is driving. Violent driving behavior or "road rage" has become a serious problem in urban areas where drivers crowd the roads, impatiently, venting their frustrations on other drivers. Honolulu over the past several years has become a ripe context for road rage. Drivers and cars have increased, driving spaces and parking on limited island territory is limited, and anger inciting incidents can easily be attributed to racial or ethnic causes.

Over the past three years, Dr. James has directed his students in self-witnessing research reports observing and analyzing their driving behavior. Topics addressed in these students include :

- Allen on the accordion effect in traffic.
- Akagi on rushing in traffic.
- Balatico on rushing in traffic.
- Arashiro on driving stress and on his driving personality makeover attempt.
- Beauchemin on the reformed driver.
- Takitani on pedestrian traffic.
- Isa on bicycling.
- Ota's personality change from being a demon driver.
- Balatico's driving temper.
- Noguchi on overly cautious drivers.
- My initial self-assessment as a driver by Cynthia Yap.

### Applications

Dr. James approach to psychology holds promise for understanding daily life in this post-modern period, by gathering data and analysis from the subject-observer. By focusing on routine, daily involvement, by individuals who hold common identities, allegiances, and ex-

periences may lead to a deeper understanding of our evolving cultural practices and meanings.

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Dr. James had organized his research program around the practice of the community classroom. The community classroom includes the students enrolled in one of his courses, graduate assistants, former students, and interested visiting participants and Dr. James himself. Within this research model, Dr. James has applied ethnographic research self-report techniques, observer-subject analysis, and discourse analysis to examine issues in social psychology.

Dr. James approach to psychology holds promise for understanding daily life in this post-modern period, by gathering data and analysis from the subject-observer. By focusing on routine, daily involvement, by individuals who hold common identities, allegiances, and experiences may lead to a deeper understanding of our evolving cultural practices and meanings.