

Local Newspaper Use in Hawaii Fosters Acculturation to Local Culture, Community Ties and Involvement

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A long tradition of research suggests that local newspapers serve as a key vehicle facilitating individuals' community ties and participation in community processes (Janowitz, 1952; Jeffres, Lee, Neuendorf, & Atkin, 2007; Stamm, 1985; Viswanath, Finnegan, Rooney, & Potter, 1990). These studies have found that local newspapers promote a sense of social cohesion (Yamamoto, 2011), trust of community members (Beudoin & Thorson, 2004), and involvement in local community and civic activities (Jeffres et al., 2007). Local newspapers foster the acquisition and reinforcement of local culture through the sharing of symbols that promote local interests, values, and traditions (Janowitz, 1952; Merton, 1960; Stamm, 1985).

Yet this line of research is limited in two important ways. First, the aforementioned studies of local newspapers have been primarily conducted in the continental U.S. A question is begged as to whether their findings can be extended to other local contexts, such as local communities in the Pacific Islands.

Second, few studies have specifically examined the role of the acquisition of local culture—or acculturation to local culture—as an explanation for the positive link between reading local newspapers and the development of community ties and involvement in community processes. Although a line of scholarship influenced by the work of Merton (1960) has delineated the link between interest in local newspaper content and local orientations, that line of scholarship primarily conceptualizes local orientations as membership in local community organizations (e.g., Viswanath et al., 1990). Moving beyond membership in organizations, acculturation refers to an internalized process of learning how to adapt to a cultural environment (Berry & Kim, 1997; Stephenson, 2000). Yet limited research has analyzed whether local newspaper use helps in the fostering of community ties and community involvement by first facilitating one's acculturation to the community's local culture.

In an attempt to fill the above noted voids in research, the present study analyzes data from a survey conducted in Hawaii, and examines the links between local newspaper use, local acculturation, community ties, and community involvement.

The purpose of the present study is three-fold. First, it examines whether local newspaper use is positively linked with acculturation to local culture on the one hand, and community ties and community involvement, on the other hand. Second, this study examines whether acculturation to local culture is linked positively with community ties and community involvement. Third, this study tests the indirect link of local newspaper use on the three previously mentioned variables via acculturation to local culture.

The present study uses the specific case of Hawaii because “localism” is a salient aspect of the cultural identity of the state's local residents (e.g., Wooden, 1995; Yamamoto, 1979). Given this unique aspect of local community in Hawaii, research is warranted to examine how the state's newspapers serve to form and reinforce local culture and foster a civically vibrant local community.

The present study is important from a practical standpoint because in spite of the known decline of the newspaper industry, recent research implies that newspapers still play vital role as a

social institution that builds and sustains local communities (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2015). The overarching goal of the present study is to examine the extent to which local newspapers serve to foster and sustain “community” in Hawaii by way of reinforcing local culture.

Community Ties and Involvement

As stated earlier, the present study investigates how local newspaper use in Hawaii is linked with community ties and community involvement.

In general terms, *community ties* refer to “bonds between the individual and community...[such as] their identification with their community and the patterns of behavior that keep people in the locality” (Rothenbuhler, 2001, p. 163). A resident’s ties with his or her community can take various forms, including affective, attitudinal, cognitive, and behavioral. This definition points to the multi-dimensional nature of community ties. It is in this vein that the present study examines three dimensions of community ties: sense of belonging, feelings of morale, and social trust.

Sense of belonging refers to the extent to which individuals feel they belong to a social group (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). This concept concerns cognitive and affective elements and includes information about group experiences and feelings related to those experiences, as information gleaned from paying attention to, and learning about the group often results in an affective response (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990).

Feelings of morale refer to the emotional response, whether positive or negative, of belonging to a social group (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). Individuals vary in their emotional investment in their community. Some residents feel strongly toward their community, while others do not. Such variations collectively present different opportunities for community building and are tied to citizens’ levels of willingness to participate in local institutions.

Both sense of belonging and feelings of morale are dimensions of social cohesion (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), which is known to be positively impacted by local newspaper use (Yamamoto, 2011).

Social trust, or the belief that others behave in ways that are consistent with normative expectations (Putnam, 2000), is a foundation of social life. Individuals are able to perform various forms of social action every day because they believe others share and follow the same rules and behavioral standards. The value of social trust is manifested in a wide range of activities such as sharing one’s information with neighbors, purchasing groceries at a farmer’s market, and inviting neighbors to one’s house, among others. Social trust is identified as a factor affected by media use.

Community involvement concerns a linkage of cognitive and behavioral dimensions of community ties (e.g., Boulianne & Brailey, 2014; Stamm, 1985). Involvement can take a wide range of cognitive and behavioral activities such as the local community as part of one’s personal identity, orientation to the local community, interacting with community members, participating in local events and activities, and joining or volunteering for a local club, church, or organization (Demers, 1996; Finnegan & Viswanath, 1988; Jeffres, Dobos, & Sweeney, 1987; Stamm, 1985; Stamm, Emig, & Hesse, 1997; Stamm & Guest, 1991; Viswanath et al., 1990).

Local newspapers help readers become integrated into community life. They tend to highlight community activities, social ties, and culture. Events covered in news stories are local in nature, such as cultural festivals, achievements, weddings, and births (Janowitz, 1952; Lauterer, 2006). National and international events tend to be presented through the lens of a local community, such as soldiers reuniting with their family after military service in a foreign country.

Overall, local newspapers spotlight community actors, be they residents, clubs, organizations, businesses, and institutions, with intimate and personal tones (Edelstein & Larsen, 1960; Janowitz, 1952; Lauterer, 2006). Reading news stories of this nature allows to residents and newcomers alike to vicariously interact with local actors, learn common values and norms, and develop positive feelings toward other residents and their community. Indeed, prior research has shown that reading a local newspaper is associated with various aspects of community life including psychological attachment to the community, social trust, community involvement (Jeffres, Lee, Neuendorf, & Atkin, 2007; McLeod et al., 1996), and a sense of cohesion (Yamamoto, 2011).

Local newspapers in Hawaii tend to present a common pattern of messages that reinforce local identity and local culture (e.g., Auman, 2007; Chapin, 1996). Based on the discussion above, the present study tests the following hypothesis in Hawaii:

H1: Local newspaper use will be positively associated with (a) sense of belonging, (b) feelings of morale, (c) social trust, and (d) community involvement.

Acculturation to Local Culture

Acculturation can be defined as an internalized learning process that occurs among individuals when they interact with the cultural environment of a new or host society (Berry & Kim, 1997; Stephenson, 2000). Acculturation research has typically analyzed the process in which newcomers such as immigrants or sojourners acquire their host society's culture through adopting its values, norms, and behaviors (e.g., Stephenson, 2000). These notions can be extended to the process of adapting to the local culture of a community.

In the context of Hawaii, Bautista (2003) developed a Hawaii Local Acculturation Scale, which was designed to measure several dimensions of adapting to Hawaii's local culture. These dimensions included feeling attached to Hawaii's local culture (e.g., considering one's self and one's family as local), preferring things that are local (e.g., hanging out with local people), and being knowledgeable of, and practicing local customs (e.g., being knowledgeable of local Hawaii Pidgin English).

Park (1922) provided one of the first comprehensive scholarly commentaries in the U.S. explaining the role of the newspaper in integrating immigrants to America. Kim (1977, 1988) later proposed and tested a comprehensive theoretical model explaining how U.S. immigrants' exposure to American media fosters their acculturation to American society. Subsequent studies supported the assumptions of Kim's model (Dalisay, 2012; Dalisay & Liu, 2015; Author, 2015; Choi & Tamborini, 1988; Moon & Park, 2007). For instance, research conducted with immigrants shows a positive relationship between media use and knowledge of American politics, an indicator of acculturation to American culture (e.g., Chaffee et al., 1991).

However, the extant research in the role of media in the acculturation process has primarily focused on the link between use of a host country's media (e.g., use of American media) in the acquisition of a host society's national culture (e.g., American values, knowledge, etc.). Few studies of this kind have examined the role of local media in acculturating individuals to the cultures of their local communities.

Yet there is reason to expect that the use of local newspapers could facilitate the acquisition

of local culture. In his classic study of local newspapers serving communities in Chicago, Janowitz (1952) posited that local papers contain contents that provide “a flow of specific news to assist adjustment to the institutions and facilities” of life within the community (p. 61), and help community residents orient themselves into the local community through “building and maintaining local traditions and local identifications” (p. 61). Similarly, Merton (1960) proposed that local orientations are linked with an interest in local newspaper content. However, and as noted above, it is important to note that Merton conceptualized local orientation to refer to membership in local community organizations (Viswanath et al., 1990), and he did not explicitly conceptualize this variable as local culture. Subsequent research has similarly treated local orientations in the same way as Merton (e.g., Stamm, 1985).

Based on the assumptions that communication is the primary socialization agent through which individuals become acculturated to their social environment (Kim, 1978), and that local newspapers foster and reinforce the acquisition of local culture by disseminating and reinforcing symbols that promote community interests, values, traditions, and images (Janowitz, 1952; Stamm, 1985), the present study proposes the following hypothesis and tests it in Hawaii:

H2: Local newspaper use will be positively associated with acculturation to local culture.

Acculturation to Local Culture and Community Ties

Research suggests a positive link between acculturation and indicators of community ties and involvement (e.g., Kenyon & Carter, 2011; Tucker & Santiago, 2013). In a study of Latinos in the U.S., Tucker and Santiago (2013) suggested that several indicators of acculturation to U.S. culture positively predict levels of civic engagement. Yet studies also indicate that acculturation to one’s ethnic group is positively linked with indicators of ethnic community ties (e.g., Kenyon & Carter, 2011). Scholars have suggested a link between culture and levels of community involvement among the state’s local residents (e.g., Boylan, 1992). For instance, there is evidence suggesting that the state’s local residents are among the least civically active states in the country (Pratt & Smith, 2000; Smith & Pratt, 1992; U.S. Elections Project, 2014; Wong, 2012), and some have argued that culture could be playing a role in explaining why some Hawaii residents are less civically active than others (e.g., Boylan, 1992). Yet given the research indicating a link between acculturation to local culture and community ties and involvement, it is justified to test the following hypothesis in Hawaii:

H3: Acculturation to local culture will be positively associated with (a) sense of belonging, (b) feelings of morale, (c) social trust, and (d) community involvement.

The Mediating Role of Acculturation to Local Culture

A mediation model proposes the process through which an independent variable is related with a dependent variable through a third explanatory variable, or mediator. The hypotheses above provide the basis for a mediation model, as it was predicted that local newspaper use will be

positively associated with both acculturation to local culture (H1) and community ties (i.e., sense of belonging, feelings of morale, social trust, and community involvement) (H2), and acculturation to local culture will be associated with community ties (H3). It is plausible that acculturation to local culture will serve as a mediator between use of local media and community ties.

The Pew Research Center (2015) suggested that the local newspaper is the most important source of local news for residents who have stronger ties to the community, as indicated by their level of local involvement in and satisfaction with the community. These same types of residents also tend to follow news on local arts and culture and local civics more closely.

Stamm and Guest (1991) noted that some papers do attempt to help newcomers through providing “special editions or supplements,” however, “the ‘information’ these publications contain is usually geared primarily to the needs of local government and merchants to disseminate certain kinds of information” (p. 645). In Hawaii, local newspapers may disseminate content reinforcing a “local-style” identity among local residents (e.g., Auman, 2007). As such, the following hypothesis is tested in Hawaii:

H4: Local newspaper use will have an indirect positive association with (a) sense of belonging, (b) feelings of morale, (c) social trust, and (d) community involvement through its positive association with acculturation to local culture.

Method

Procedure and sample

Since the present study sought to test propositions regarding local acculturation, it was necessary to select a sample with varying levels of acculturation to Hawaii’s local culture. Presumably, college students in Hawaii fit this aforementioned criterion as they represent individuals who have lived in the state for a long period of time and those who have recently arrived to the state from other places in the U.S. and the world. While not representative of the population of Hawaii, we expected that a college student sample would yield a wider variation in acculturation. Therefore, we surveyed a purposive sample of undergraduate college students in Hawaii ($N = 290$). We conducted our survey during the Fall 2013 semester. The students were recruited from communication courses at a large public university in Honolulu, Hawaii and offered course credit for their participation. At the time of data collection, around 30% of students identified themselves as non-residents, and 70% identified themselves as residents.

Measures

Independent variable.

Local newspaper use was measured by asking respondents about the extent to which they paid attention “local newspapers such as the Honolulu Star-Advertiser.” Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *no attention*, 5 = *lots of attention*, $M = 3.43$, $SD = .88$).

Mediator.

11 items adapted from Bautista’s (2003) Hawaii Local Acculturation Scale (HLAS) measured acculturation to local culture. The items used in this study are listed in Table 1. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents’ level of agreement with the items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). A principle component analysis using varimax rotation was employed on the 11 HLAS items to examine whether they represented separate index.

Table 1. Results of a principle components analysis for items measuring acculturation to local culture.

	Acculturation to local culture factor 1: Preference for things local	Acculturation to local culture factor 2: Identifying as local/knowledge of Hawaii Pidgin English
I prefer to eat local food.	.74	.22
I prefer to listen to local music.	.71	.02
I enjoy going to “local parties” held by local people.	.70	.31
A good party has lots of local foods.	.65	.26
I like following local customs.	.63	.39
Hawaii should be run mostly by locals than non-locals.	.55	.07
I consider myself local.	-.02	.81
I consider my family local.	.11	.81
I have “local pride.”	.37	.70
Most people I “hang out” with are locals.	.38	.60
If someone speaks [local Hawaii] Pidgin English to me, I will have an easy time understanding.	.30	.57
Eigenvalue	4.60	1.44
% of Variance	41.77%	13.12%

As Table 1 above shows¹, the first factor comprised of items that were interpreted as measuring “preference for things local.” These items were summed and averaged to form a single index ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .71$, $\alpha = .79$). The second factor comprised of items that were interpreted as

¹ The principle component analysis revealed two factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1, and explained more than 50% of the variance.

measuring “identifying as local/knowledge of Hawaii pidgin English.” These items were also summed and averaged to form a single index ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .90$, $\alpha = .81$).

Dependent variables.

Items from Bollen and Hoyle (1990) were adapted to measure sense of belonging and feelings of morale. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Sense of belonging was measured with three items, which were summed and averaged to form a single index ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .85$, $\alpha = .91$): I feel a sense of belonging to Hawaii; I feel that I am a member of Hawaii’s community; I see myself as part of Hawaii’s community. Three items, which were summed and average to form a single index ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .80$, $\alpha = .81$), were used to measure *feelings of morale*: I am enthusiastic about Hawaii; I am happy to live in Hawaii; Hawaii is one of the best states in the nation.

Social trust was measured with three items, which were summed and averaged to form a single index ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .68$, $\alpha = .79$): generally speaking, people in Hawaii can be trusted; in general, people in Hawaii try to be fair; in general, people in Hawaii try to be helpful.

Community involvement was measured with the following items adapted from Doolittle and Faul (2013): I am involved in volunteer position(s) in Hawaii; I help members in my community in Hawaii; I stay informed of events in my community in Hawaii; I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility in Hawaii; I contribute to charitable organizations within Hawaii (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The items were summed and averaged to form a single index ($M = 3.27$, $SD = .82$, $\alpha = .81$).

Controls.

Several variables were measured and included as statistical controls in order to counteract potential misspecification errors in the regression models. With non-resident coded as the higher number. Age was measured in an open-ended format ($M = 22.61$, $SD = 5.51$). Sex was measured with females as the high value (females = 2) and males as the low value (males = 1) ($M = 1.58$, $SD = .50$). Race was measured with Caucasians as the high value and all other groups as the low value ($M = .35$, $SD = .48$). Residency was measured by asking respondents whether their university considered them as a resident “for tuition purposes;” non-residents were coded as the high value ($M = 1.24$, $SD = .43$). Income was measured on an 11-point scale (1 = \$19,999 or less; 6 = \$100,000-\$119,999; 11 = \$190,000 and above) ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 2.73$). Political interest was measured by asking respondents about the extent to which they were interested in politics along a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not interested at all*, 5 = *very interested*; $M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.20$).

Analysis.

To test the hypotheses, several sets of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were estimated. As shown on Table 2, H1 was tested by regressing the two factors of acculturation to local culture on the control variables and local newspaper use. The models shown on Table 3 were used to test H2 and H3. H2 and H3 were tested by regressing each of the respective indicators of community ties (sense of belonging, feelings of morale, social trust, and community involvement)

on the control variables (model 1), local newspaper use (model 2), and the two acculturation factors (model 3).

In addition, to test for mediation, the present study used Hayes' SPSS PROCESS macro (2013), which estimated the indirect effects of local newspaper use on sense of belonging, feelings of morale, social trust, and community involvement through the two factors of acculturation to local culture. The present study employed bootstrap methods with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals to infer indirect effects.

Results

H1 proposed that local newspaper use will be positively associated with (a) sense of belonging, (b) feelings of morale, (c) social trust, and (d) community involvement. As shown in Model 2 of Table 3, local newspaper use was positively associated with sense of belonging ($\beta = .16, p < .01$), feelings of morale ($\beta = .23, p < .001$), social trust ($\beta = .13, p < .05$), and community involvement ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), with all other variables simultaneously taken into account. It is important to note, however, that when the two acculturation variables were added to each model (see Model 3), the relationships between local newspaper use and sense of belonging and social trust, respectively, were reduced to non-significance. In contrast, local newspaper use remained a positive predictor of feelings of morale ($\beta = .25, p < .001$) and community involvement ($\beta = .26, p < .001$). The results collectively provide partial support for H1.

H2 proposed that local newspaper use will be positively associated with acculturation to local culture. As shown in Table 2, after all other variables were simultaneously taken into account, local newspaper use positively predicted acculturation to local culture factor 1 (Preference for things local) ($\beta = .23, p < .001$) and acculturation to local culture factor 2 (Identifying as local/knowledge of Hawaii Pidgin English) ($\beta = .15, p < .01$). These results support H2.

H3 proposed that acculturation to local culture will be positively associated with (a) sense of belonging, (b) social trust, and (c) community involvement. As shown in Table 3 (see results for Model 3), after accounting for the control variables and local newspaper use, acculturation to local culture factor 1 positively predicted sense of belonging ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), feelings of morale ($\beta = .30, p < .001$), social trust ($\beta = .20, p < .01$). However, the relationship between acculturation to local culture factor 1 and community involvement was not statistically significant. Additionally, acculturation to local culture factor 2 positively predicted sense of belonging ($\beta = .53, p < .001$), feelings of morale ($\beta = .26, p < .001$), social trust ($\beta = .25, p < .01$), and community involvement ($\beta = .17, p < .05$). H2 was partially supported.

Table 2. Local newspaper use as a predictor of acculturation to local culture.

	Acculturation to local culture factor 1: Preference for things local		Acculturation to local culture factor 2: Identifying as local/ knowledge of Hawaii Pidgin English	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Age	-.19**	-.18**	-.04	-.04
Sex	.02	.01	-.03	-.04
Race (White)	.08	.07	-.08	-.08
Non-resident	-.01	.01	-.44***	-.42***
Income	-.03	-.04	.10+	.10+
Political interest	.10+	.06	.05	-.02
<i>Total R² (%)</i>	4.9%	--	22.4%	--
Local newspaper use	--	.23***	--	.15**
<i>Total R² (%)</i>	--	10.1%	--	24.5%

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $< .10$.

Local Newspaper Use in Hawaii Fosters Acculturation

	Sense of Belonging			Feelings of Morale			Social Trust			Community Involvement		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	-.14*	-.13*	-.08+	-.15*	-.13*	-.07	-.10	-.10	-.05	.03	.05	.06
Sex (Female)	.08	.07	.09+	.08	.07	.07	-.01	-.01	.01	.17**	.15**	.16**
Race (White)	-.05	-.05	-.02	.07	.07	.06	.08	.08	.08	-.04	-.05	-.04
Non-resident	-.29***	-.28***	-.05	.07	-.10+	.00	-.10+	-.10+	.00	-.14*	-.11*	-.04
Income	.03	.02	-.02	-.12*	-.07	-.09	.03	.04	.01	.01	-.00	-.02
Political interest	.03	-.01	-.03	.06	.01	.01	-.08	-.05	-.10+	.32***	.26***	.26***
Total R ² (%)	11.6%	--	--	4.8%	--	--	--	3.0%	--	13.1%	--	--
Local newspaper use	--	.16**	.04	--	.23***	.12*	.13*	--	.04	--	.28***	.24***
Total R ² (%)	--	14.0%	--	--	10.0%	--	4.5%	--	--	--	20.4%	--
Acculturation to local culture factor 1: Preference for things local	--	--	.19**	--	--	.30***	--	--	.20**	--	--	.04
Acculturation to local culture factor 2: Identifying as local/ knowledge of Hawaii Pidgin English	--	--	.53***	--	--	.26***	--	--	.25**	--	--	.17*
Total R ² (%)	--	--	47.7%	--	--	31.0%	--	--	17.8%	--	--	23.4%

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

Table 3. Local newspaper use and acculturation to local culture as predictors of community ties and involvement

H4 proposed that acculturation to local culture will serve as a mediator of the association between local newspaper use and community ties (sense of belonging, feelings of belongingness, social trust, community involvement), with local newspaper use leading to higher acculturation to local culture and higher levels in community ties. As shown on Table 3 above, local newspaper use had a small but statistically significant and positive indirect relationship with sense of belonging through acculturation factor 1 (point estimate = .093, 95% CI [.043 to .158]) and acculturation factor 2 (point estimate = .083, 95% CI [.015 to .153]). In addition, local newspaper use had a small but significant and positive indirect relationship with feelings of morale through acculturation factor 1 (point estimate = .084, 95% CI [.035 to .149]) and acculturation factor 2 (point estimate = .055, 95% CI [.008 to .114]). Local newspaper use also had a small but significant and positive indirect relationship with social trust through acculturation factor 1 (point estimate = .054, 95% CI [.023 to .096]) and acculturation factor 2 (point estimate = .039, 95% CI [.008 to .081]). Finally, local newspaper use had a small but significant and positive indirect relationship with community involvement through acculturation factor 1 (point estimate = .023, 95% CI [.002 to .060]) and acculturation factor 2 (point estimate = .022, 95% CI [.002 to .064]).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to use the case of Hawaii to investigate the linkages between local newspaper use, acculturation to local culture, community ties, and community involvement. The findings contribute to the current literature in a number of ways and imply a vital role of local newspapers in sustaining local communities.

First, local newspaper use was found to be related to increased acculturation to local culture. This finding supports previous research that has shown a positive link between use of a host society's media and the acquisition of the host society's culture (e.g., Dalisay, 2012; Kim, 1978). Prior research influenced by the work of Merton (1960) shows that local media use fosters orientation to the local community (e.g., Stamm, 1985; Viswanath et al., 1990). Such research typically conceptualized local orientation as membership in local community organizations. The present study extends Merton's (1960) notion by revealing that the internalized process of learning how to adjust to a local cultural environment—as conceptualized by acculturation to local culture—can also be explained by local newspaper use.

Second, consistent with prior studies (e.g., Janowitz, 1952; Jeffres et al., 2007; Park, 1922; Stamm, 1985; Viswanath et. al, 1990), local newspaper use was found to be a vehicle for community integration. Specifically, local newspaper use was related to increases in a sense of belonging, feelings of morale, trust of others in the local community, and community involvement. The literature on community journalism indicates that community newspaper content is characterized by a system of messages endorsing and reinforcing the social and cultural organization of the local community. The present study suggests the same pattern can be extended to an isolated island such as Oahu in Hawaii.

Third, the present study found that being acculturated to local culture was positively associated with sense of belonging, and social trust. However, community involvement was positively predicted by one of the two factors of acculturation to local culture— identifying as local/knowledge of Pidgin, but not the other factor, preference for things local. This implies that local community involvement is tied more closely to perceiving one's self as local, or part of the local community, as opposed to preferring local things or ideas. Nevertheless, taken together, these results extend previous research suggesting that has shown a positive link between acculturation

and indicators of community ties and involvement (e.g., Kenyon & Carter, 2011; Tucker & Santiago, 2013).

Fourth, consistent with our prediction, the results show that local newspaper use was related to increases in each criterion variable through its positive association with acculturation to local culture. Substantively speaking, some individuals feel attached to the community, trust other residents, and engage in local events and activities, because they become acculturated into local culture through reading of a local newspaper. This mediation effect is particularly notable for a sense of belonging and social trust, as their links with local newspaper use were completely mediated by acculturation to local culture. When this mediating variable was taken into account, the respective links between local newspaper use and a sense of belonging and social trust, were reduced to non-significance. The results suggest that local newspaper use may not directly affect a sense of belonging and social trust, but indirectly does so by orienting readers into the local community.

Conclusions

Despite the known decline of the newspaper industry, recent research implies that newspapers still play a vital role as a social institution in building and sustaining local communities (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2015). The present study found evidence supporting the idea that local newspapers serve an important role in fostering and sustaining “community” in Hawaii—local newspaper use fosters acculturation to Hawaii’s local culture and promotes community ties and involvement. From a more practical standpoint, these findings can be used to help rally public support for local newspapers in Hawaii. More broadly, these findings imply to the newspaper industry that its coverage of local news is vital to sustaining its local readership. More than anything else, local newspapers should continue to provide quality local content to its readers. They should also encourage local readers to keep reading local news.

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