

Peer Influence on Obesity-Related Behaviors

Design and Rationale of the Waipahu HART Project

Camonia R. Long, PhD, CHES, Heather Glow, MPH, CHES,
and Claudio Nigg, PhD

In the State of Hawaii in the first decade of the twenty-first century, 25.5% of Filipino students in grades 9–12 were ranked as obese.¹ The Waipahu Health Action Research Training (HART) project addresses the issue of adolescent obesity among high school students in the community of Waipahu, Hawaii, a predominantly Filipino population.*

Waipahu is a former sugar plantation town where various cultures and races have taken root in the course of history. It is a semi-urban low-income community located on the leeward side of O'ahu and has an estimated population of 38,216, predominantly Asian nationals, who make up 66% of the population.² U.S. Census results show that the Waipahu population is primarily composed of young people aged 18 and under and adults aged 25–44 years. Females make up about 50% of the population, with a female-to-male ratio of 100:97.6.² The community of Waipahu was chosen for this program due to an already established working relationship and the community's need and support. The Waipahu Community Coalition and Waipahu High School have played large roles in supporting the HART project and in supporting community health. Focusing on this community for obesity prevention for Pacific Islanders, as well as for similar communities in the mainland United States, highlights the idea that culturally sensitive and sustainable programs are needed to promote positive behavioral change among often-forgotten communities.

This project uses existing classroom activities and assignments to address the feasibility of delivering a curriculum on obesity prevention behaviors (namely, physical

Camonia R. Long is a postdoctoral fellow with the University of Hawaii Cancer Center and principal investigator of the Waipahu HART project. Heather Glow is the program manager of the Waipahu HART project at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center. Claudio Nigg is an associate professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Hawaii Manoa.

* This report is a companion to chapter 24, which also concerns Native Hawaiians / Pacific Islanders, and to other chapters that focus, as a whole or in part, on adolescents: chapters 2, 3, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 26, 27, and 29.

activity and nutrition) to high school students. The obesity curriculum was specifically designed to address community need and based on previous data collected by the students. The intervention is tailored to the individual suggestions, needs, and culture of the students in this community.

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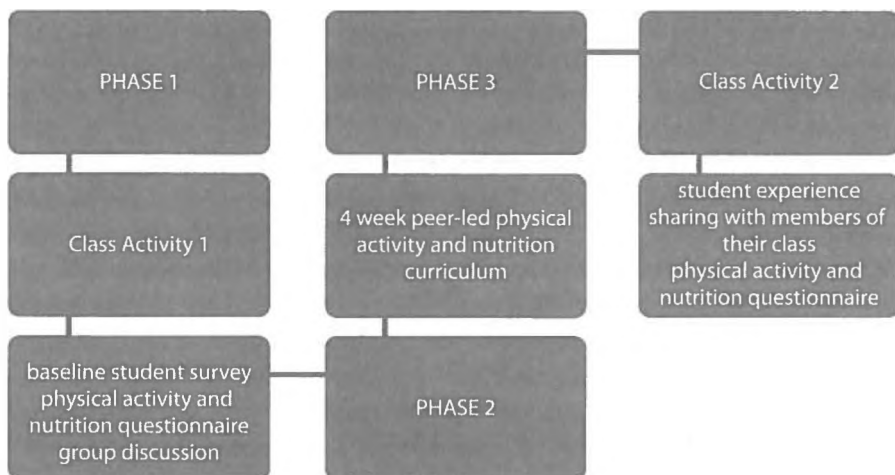
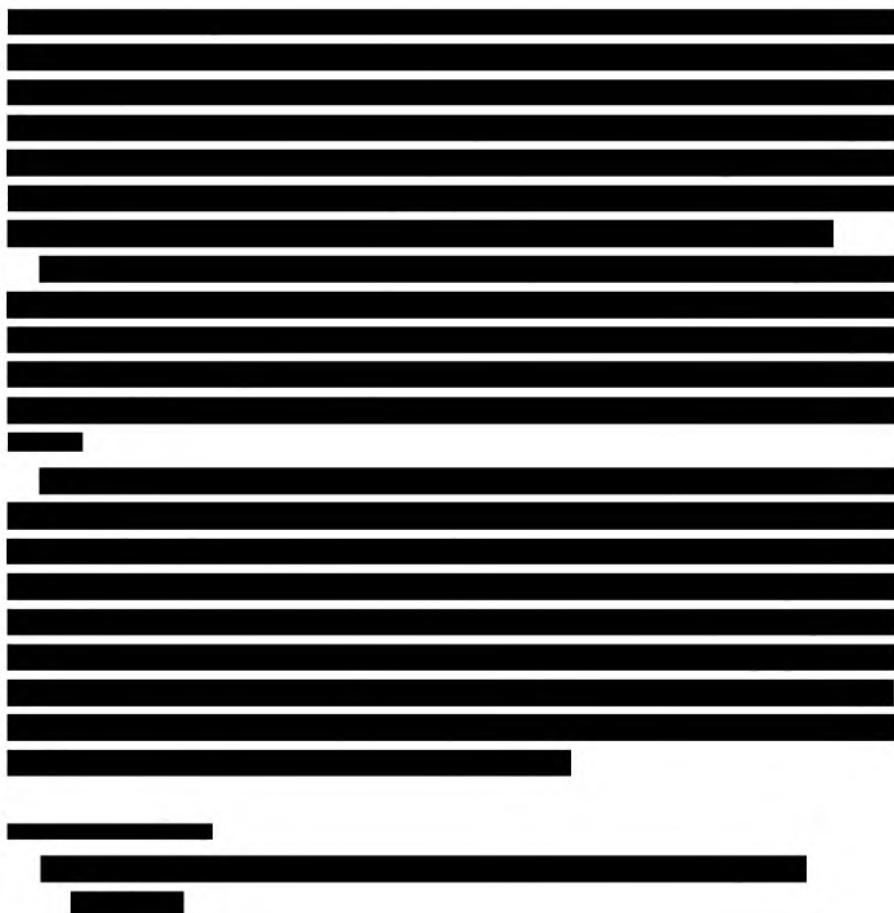


FIGURE 30.1. Waipahu Health Action Research Training (HART) project design.



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