RE-CONCEPTUALIZING RISK:
ADOLESCENTS IN HAWAI'I TALK ABOUT REBELLION AND RESPECT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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AMERICAN STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Youth advocates have long lamented Hawaiians', Samoans', and Filipinos' over-representation in Hawai‘i's juvenile justice system. Most research exploring adolescent issues nationally and in Hawai‘i has been quantitative. In this study, I utilized a community-based participatory research approach, working with two cohorts of Hawai‘i high school students ($N = 14$) predominantly of Hawaiian, Samoan, and/or Filipino ancestry during three school semesters. Student participants identified the teen issues they viewed as most important for them personally and in their communities, while also scrutinizing the etiology of those issues qualitatively.

Participants identified interpersonal violence and illicit substance use as the two most critical issues impacting adolescents in Hawai‘i. However, further discussion of these issues found that racial stereotyping, rigid constructs of masculinity, homophobia, sexism, and family breakdown all contributed to youths' tendency to engage in fighting and/or illicit substance use. Moreover, participants' contributions to this study illustrate how quantitative data oftentimes fail to properly contextualize adolescent attitudes and behaviors.

The current academic literature on youth issues is dominated by the quantitative exploration of "risk and protective factors" that rigidly categorize certain attitudes and behaviors as harmful or protective. Yet participants in this study demonstrated how attitudes and behaviors traditionally defined as risk can serve as forms of protection when accounting for additional life circumstances. Most apparent in this study were the ways that adolescent participants described their participation in so-called risk factors as pursuits for respect and acts of rebellion. Therefore, this study argues that in order to
fully understand and effectively address adolescent violence and substance use, practitioners, educators, community advocates, and policy makers must be more flexible in conceptualizing “risk” and “protection.”

Finally, this study contends that in expanding theorization of risk and protection, academicians and policy makers must include larger structural influences. In Hawai‘i, this means addressing how western colonialism has fractured families, reconfigured gender roles, perpetuated racial disparity, and capitalized cultural norms. Recommendations include providing increased state and federal funding for the development of large-scale, community-based prevention initiatives, directed independently by ethnic communities, which hold heterosexual males heavily responsible for redefining healthy gender roles within their respective ethnic communities.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the past two years, I have been extremely fortunate to work with literally dozens of people who have assisted me in carrying out this study. Unfortunately, in order to preserve the anonymity of the adolescents involved in this study, I cannot mention most of those people here. However, I would still like to extend my deepest thanks to the administrators, social workers, and faculty members at the two high schools and the YMCA where I conducted this study, who worked with me in conceiving this research project, recruited student participants, assisted me in working with students, and patiently answered my numerous questions on logistical matters. These schools also showed that they have the courage to work collaboratively with researchers in examining adolescent and community issues, rather than hiding from inquiries into adolescent concerns and publicly denying any potential problems.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee members. First and foremost, I must thank Meda Chesney-Lind, who gave me the opportunity to work on her Youth Gang Project research team at the end of 1996, and then to serve as the team’s Project Coordinator between 1997 and 2000. Had I not been given this opportunity, it is likely I never would have moved into this line of research in the first place. David Stannard, my Committee Chair, has served as a supportive mentor, not only in terms of this dissertation and for my Masters thesis, but also in my desires to teach community-based classes on adolescent issues in Hawai‘i. Karen Kosasa and Katherine Irwin helped me to come to terms with and confront some of the larger theoretical issues that needed to be bolstered for this project, and Theo Gonzalves has helped me to see how my undergraduate roots in Asian American Studies are intertwined in this scholarly effort.
Earl Hishinuma and Gregory Mark, in recent years, have also given me the opportunity to continue my scholarly and community-based efforts with regard to youth violence prevention in Hawai‘i, bringing me on as part of the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center (APIYVPC) team. In addition, Pavel Fiaui and Ami Scronce (also APIYVPC staff) have assisted me in technical support for this project. It is also critical that I thank the APIYVPC Advisory Board, who agreed to provide funding for this project, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from where this project’s funding originated.

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Finally, I would like to thank the fourteen adolescents who participated in this project. Some contributed more than others, and some are profiled in this work more than others. However, all fourteen students helped me to grow personally and professionally, and hopefully, their viewpoints offered in this project will have a positive and significant impact on the ways our society treats adolescents in Hawai‘i and across the United States. Despite the extreme adversity these students have encountered throughout their lives,
they continuously show an amazing resilience – an ability to bounce back from misfortune that would impress any athletic coach.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In August of 2003, the American Civil Liberties Union released a report accusing staff at the Hawai‘i Youth Correctional Facility (HYCF) of egregious crimes committed against juvenile incarcerates. According to Brent White, author of the report and then ACLU legal director, the alleged crimes ranged from “...brutality and use of excessive force; sexual assault and harassment; lack of privacy at the girl’s facility; grossly inadequate programming; lack of exercise and recreation; inadequate schooling and lack of access to education...” (White, 2003, p. 3). A specific example from the report focusing on excessive punishment states that male wards were subjected to the following:

...humiliating and inappropriate forms of punishment include making male wards take off their pants and boxers and squat on the floor naked, leaving wards naked in the holding cell for hours and making fun of them, denying wards food, taking away sheets and pillows, forcing wards to sleep on concrete by taking away mattresses, and physical violence. (p. 7).

As might be expected with regard to female wards, the alleged crimes committed by HYCF staff were equally extreme, while also including forms of sexual assault.

There are only three female guards at the girls’ facility. Overnight, and at other times, there are no female guards on duty. This situation has resulted in several sexual assaults against girls by male staff over the past few years and at least one recent rape. There were also reports of guards raping wards by trading cigarettes for sex. In 2001, two guards who allegedly sexually assaulted wards were transferred to the boys’ facility.... Wards reported that since the recent rape, there has been less talk of sex and less
flirting between the guards and the wards. Wards expressed concern that
the night shift is comprised entirely of male guards and that they feel
vulnerable after the rape because male guards could enter their cells at any
time. (p. 13).

Naturally, the report made headway in Hawai‘i’s local print media; in the Honolulu Star-
Bulletin, White was quoted as saying “The guards terrorize the wards, they beat them and
when management goes home at 4:30 p.m., the guards run the place” (Borreca, 2003, p.
A1). Since release of the ACLU report, waves of local media coverage have documented
quibbles between ACLU and state of Hawai‘i representatives, with state representatives
claiming reform was occurring at a realistic, if not adequate, rate (e.g., Boylan, 2004a;
Reyes, 2004a). Of general consensus, however, was the admission that Hawai‘i lacked
adequate alternative intervention programs for teens who ended up being incarcerated for
relatively minor acts of delinquency (Boylan, 2004b).

Whether all the allegations of abuse cited by the ACLU are completely accurate
or not remains unknown at present time. However, investigations into the alleged abuse
have uncovered and confirmed crimes, which suggest that at least some of these horrific
allegations are true. On April 30, 2004, the Honolulu Star-Bulletin reported: “A former
prison guard pleaded guilty yesterday to three counts of sexual assault and one count of
terroristic threatening for assaulting a teenage girl at the Hawaii Youth Correctional
Facility” (Apgar, 2004, p. A1). In this same article, ACLU Legal Director Lois Perrin
states, “…this case is only one of a number of alleged assaults that took place.... this
guilty plea only confirms that the environment did not adequately protect youth...” (p.
A1).
Then in September 2004, in an attempt to reduce overcrowding and offer some form of effective programming for incarcerated girls, the six remaining female wards were shipped to a juvenile detention center in Salt Lake City, Utah. The girls’ transfer was predicated upon a number of circumstances. State officials pointed out that a number of the girls had run away from alternative programs located on neighbor islands, further indicating Hawai‘i’s need for effective and attractive intervention programs, especially for girls. With a majority of Hawai‘i’s incarcerated girls being Polynesian, the facility in Utah was also chosen as an alternative site because it offered culturally-specific programming for Pacific Islanders (Lum, 2004). Still, quarrels over the appropriateness of the girls’ transfer continued to transpire between various community advocates and the state (Reyes, 2004b; Viotti, 2004a) until the girls’ return home, at which time parties agreed that the girls had received improved programming in the Utah facility (Reyes, 2004c).

Unfortunately, as disheartening and chaotic as this whole scenario sounds, these proven and alleged crimes against Hawai‘i’s incarcerated juveniles are hardly unique. In juvenile detention centers across the United States, incarcerated teenagers are abused by adult staff (Barnes, 2003; Hargrove, 1998). In addition, it is not uncommon for juvenile detention centers to become over-crowded, and in turn problematic, due to a lack of alternative intervention options in other, more appropriate settings that would normally provide services for non-violent offenders (Kaufman, 2004).

Lost in the public discourse, however, is a racialized dimension to this already dismal problem. At virtually any given time, well over half of all incarcerated juveniles in HYCF are of Hawaiian ancestry, with Samoan adolescents also showing
disproportionately high incarceration rates (Kassebaum et al., 1995; Office of Youth Services, 2002). One only needs to walk through Hawai‘i’s only juvenile detention center to see firsthand the disproportionate amount of Polynesian adolescents who fill up the facility’s cells. As Stannard (2000) writes in reference to Hawaiian youth, “During the middle years of the 1990s well over half of all minors incarcerated in state correctional facilities were Hawaiian - a figure more than 50 percent higher than the Hawaiian juvenile arrest rate for all offenses” (p. 18). Noting that this trend is equally as pronounced with the Hawaiian adult population, Stannard follows, “…the justice system in Hawai‘i is embarked on a patently transparent campaign to incarcerate and thus create a multi-generational class of Hawaiian criminals” (p. 19). In 1995, Kassebaum and colleagues suggested disproportionate minority confinement rates in Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system could best be attributed to seriousness of offense. Presumably, over-represented ethnic groups’ propensity to commit more serious forms of delinquency led to their increased juvenile incarceration rates. MacDonald (2003), on the other hand, examined 3000 randomly selected juvenile delinquency cases from family court, covering the years 1980-1986. In this study, MacDonald determined that “…after controlling extralegal and legal factors, Hawaiian and Samoan youth are significantly more likely than White youth to receive more severe juvenile court outcomes” (p. 257). Ultimately, MacDonald’s analysis concludes that “what one finds in Hawaii’s juvenile justice system is punitiveness for Hawaiians and Samoans and leniency for Whites” (p. 258).

Returning to the gendered situation of incarcerated girls, based on the public media covering the HYCF’s problems, one can clearly see some of the sexist realities that
too often accompany juvenile detention centers. Yet when one also takes into account the fact that Hawaiian girls are systematically discriminated against as they funnel through the juvenile justice system, this reality becomes even more difficult to digest. Examining family court data from 1980-1991, MacDonald and Chesney-Lind (2001), found that East Asian (e.g., Japanese, Chinese, Korean) boys and White girls were the least likely ethnic/gender groups to receive probation or confinement following an arrest. Upon further examination of the data, this study also found that offense severity was most significant in terms of gender inequality:

The offense seriousness had a stronger predictive influence on the decision to formally dispose (probation/confinement) boys compared with girls. In other words, once girls were found delinquent, they were more likely than boys to be given a restrictive sanction for less serious offenses. (p. 187).

And again, MacDonald and Chesney-Lind’s study finds that Hawaiian youth are significantly more likely than White youth to be dealt formal dispositions upon adjudication. In short, if a Hawaiian girl in adolescence is engaging in major or minor forms of delinquency and gets arrested, she is significantly more likely to end up in the state’s only juvenile correctional institution, where sexual assault and other forms of gender discrimination clearly pervade. Likewise, for Hawaiian and Samoan youth, irrespective of gender, arrests for delinquent acts are more likely to result in incarceration, when compared with White and East Asian youth. Unfortunately, research on numerous facets of Hawai’i’s juvenile justice system point to the over-representation of youth from specific racial groups.
Adolescent Prevalence Studies in Hawai‘i: Gangs, Arrests, and Self-Report Data

Though never found to be over-represented in Hawai‘i’s juvenile incarceration studies, Filipino youth have also received their fair share of attention in the local Hawai‘i discourse on adolescent risk. Filipinos and Samoans in Hawai‘i (adolescents and young adults) have been tagged with the distinction of being over-represented in gangs as documented in the Honolulu Police Department’s (HPD) gang database. According to Cheseny-Lind and associates (1994), HPD had documented 22 gangs and 450 identified gang members in Honolulu County in 1991. Of these 450 identified gang members, 47.4% were reportedly Filipino and 18.0% Samoan (p. 206, 208) – percentages that grossly exceed their proportion in Hawai‘i’s general population. Notably, however, this study concludes that “juveniles identified by police as gang members...are most frequently arrested for non-criminal status offenses and property offenses” (p. 221), as opposed to offenses involving violence, drugs, or weapons. Further research on youth gangs in Hawai‘i shows that Filipino and Samoan youth who join gangs frequently do so in an attempt to access cultural spaces of power and security more commonly denied to boys and girls from these racial groups (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995).

With regard to juvenile arrests, the State of Hawai‘i’s Attorney General’s Office provides data sorted by race. Between 1996 and 2003, records show that youth identified as Hawaiian and Samoan consistently show arrest rates that severely exceed their juvenile proportion in Hawai‘i; on average, Filipino youths’ arrest rates are slightly higher than their proportion in the juvenile population (see Table 1, following page).
<table>
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<th>Table 1: Juvenile Arrest Numbers and Rates by Race, 1996-2003 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of Hawai‘i Population (10-17 year olds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996 Arrests/Total Arrests; % of all Arrests</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998 Arrests/Total Arrests; % of all Arrests</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999 Arrests/Total Arrests; % of all Arrests</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000 Arrests/Total Arrests; % of all Arrests</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001 Arrests/Total Arrests; % of all Arrests</td>
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Again, in comparing Hawaiians’ and Samoans’ proportion of all juvenile arrests from year-to-year with their overall proportion in Hawai‘i (for 10-17 year olds), one can see that their arrest rates clearly exceed what one would normally expect based purely on their overall population. It should be noted that the absolute number of all juvenile arrests, as well as the number of arrests for youth from each of the three race

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1 Data utilized here to infer juveniles’ racial proportion in Hawai‘i were drawn from 2000 Census records. “Hawaiians” are defined as all 10-17 year olds with any Hawaiian ancestry (thereby including all youth who claimed full or part-Hawaiian ancestry). Including “full” and “part” Hawaiians in this inclusive “Hawaiian” category is the most commonly used method of determining the Hawaiian population due to the extremely high rates of Hawaiians who have multiple ethnic backgrounds (Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, State of Hawai‘i, 1995). Conversely, Samoan and Filipino youth are defined here as all 10-17 year olds who claimed only Samoan or only Filipino ancestry. Race in juvenile arrests are determined somewhat haphazardly, sometimes provided by the arrested youths themselves, and sometimes determined by the arresting officer. Admittedly, making comparisons between census records and arrest rates is highly problematic due to “official” agencies’ varied methods of capturing the race variable. However, these data do provide the most (if not only) method by which to make these comparisons on disproportionality in current arrests records. For a more detailed discussion on “race” and “ethnicity” in Hawai‘i and the difficulties in understanding these constructs, please see Chapter Two.
groups profiled above, generally decreased each year, especially after 1997. However, the ongoing disproportionality in arrest rates shows a problem worthy of additional investigation.

Still, examining overall arrest rates without taking note of specific arrest offenses does little in helping scholars and practitioners to identify what types of delinquency youth from these race groups are engaging in and being arrested for. A cursory look at specific arrest offense rates shows important arrest patterns. For example, Tables 2-4 show some of the offenses that drive racial disproportionality in arrests for Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan youth.

Table 2: Disproportionate Hawai‘i Arrest Numbers and Rates for Specific Offenses, Hawaiian Juveniles, 1996-2003

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>112/299</td>
<td>127/398</td>
<td>76/162</td>
<td>54/111</td>
<td>65/154</td>
<td>60/129</td>
<td>75/180</td>
<td>59/135</td>
<td>628/1458</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated</td>
<td>47/136</td>
<td>48/130</td>
<td>48/130</td>
<td>58/126</td>
<td>45/134</td>
<td>45/104</td>
<td>53/147</td>
<td>44/110</td>
<td>388/1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
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<td>54/157</td>
<td>33/105</td>
<td>29/72</td>
<td>21/58</td>
<td>17/53</td>
<td>26/69</td>
<td>37/85</td>
<td>264/689</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possession</td>
<td>240/649</td>
<td>246/616</td>
<td>252/636</td>
<td>263/606</td>
<td>225/555</td>
<td>250/630</td>
<td>218/519</td>
<td>172/463</td>
<td>1866/4674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
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<td>1775/4740</td>
<td>1604/4316</td>
<td>1690/4160</td>
<td>1686/4467</td>
<td>1719/4210</td>
<td>1875/4437</td>
<td>1577/4293</td>
<td>13864/35876</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
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<td>40.8%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
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Table 3: Disproportionate Hawai’i Arrest Numbers and Rates for Specific Offenses, Filipino Juveniles, 1996-2003

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<td>16/120</td>
<td>21/130</td>
<td>14/126</td>
<td>30/134</td>
<td>20/104</td>
<td>22/147</td>
<td>10/110</td>
<td>166/1007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curfew</td>
<td>172/734</td>
<td>134/533</td>
<td>129/650</td>
<td>117/499</td>
<td>97/465</td>
<td>80/373</td>
<td>112/420</td>
<td>143/613</td>
<td>984/4287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runaway</td>
<td>845/5253</td>
<td>902/4740</td>
<td>751/4316</td>
<td>701/4160</td>
<td>741/4467</td>
<td>690/4210</td>
<td>759/4437</td>
<td>653/4293</td>
<td>6042/35876</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Disproportionate Hawai’i Arrest Numbers and Rates for Specific Offenses, Samoan Juveniles, 1996-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>65/299</td>
<td>69/288</td>
<td>29/162</td>
<td>11/111</td>
<td>45/154</td>
<td>33/129</td>
<td>51/180</td>
<td>24/135</td>
<td>327/1458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated Assault</td>
<td>12/136</td>
<td>11/120</td>
<td>5/130</td>
<td>16/126</td>
<td>8/134</td>
<td>13/104</td>
<td>7/147</td>
<td>15/110</td>
<td>87/1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Assault</td>
<td>105/136</td>
<td>119/1159</td>
<td>90/1039</td>
<td>89/1004</td>
<td>100/1112</td>
<td>128/1011</td>
<td>99/1066</td>
<td>85/1086</td>
<td>815/8838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data maintained by the Attorney General’s office show that between 1996 and 2003, youth of Hawaiian ancestry are highly over-represented in arrests for robbery and motor vehicle theft, while also showing significant over-representation in arrests for aggravated assault, disorderly conduct (alcohol related), possession marijuana, and runaway. Filipino youth’s greatest over-representation is shown in arrests for weapons offenses and curfew violations. However, like Hawaiian youth, Filipinos are also over-represented in arrests for aggravated assault and running away from home. Finally, Samoan youth show extremely high arrest rates, especially for robbery violations. Recall that Samoan youth only represent 2.1% of Hawai’i’s juvenile population (ages 10-17), yet Samoans represented 22.4% of all juvenile robbery arrests between 1996 and 2003.
As early as 1979, Samoans were heavily over-represented in Hawai‘i arrests for violent crimes; according to Blanchard & Blanchard (1983) Samoans only represented 0.9% of Hawai‘i’s total population in 1979, but they made up 4.58% of all nonviolent criminal arrests, 17.76% of all arrests for robbery, and 7.97% of all other violent crime arrests (p. 167). If nothing else, these data demonstrate that youth from the afore mentioned race groups encounter Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system far more frequently than they should, and do so fairly consistently for particular offenses. And at least for Samoans, disproportionately high arrest rates have kept up over time.

Academicians have also identified social disparities among Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan youth in Hawai‘i, predominantly in large-scale self-report survey studies with high school students. Pearson and Oliveira (2003a; 2003b; 2003c; 2003d), for example, offer self-report data gathered from both private and public Hawai‘i high schools in 2002 that allow for race comparisons. Table 5, following page, displays self-reported prevalence rates on lifetime alcohol and substance use and other behaviors, comparing Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino students, and youth from the entire study (which includes Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino student respondents).
Table 5: Self-Reported Prevalence by Race, Hawai‘i High School 10th and 12th Graders, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10th Graders</th>
<th>Entire Sample (N = 5971)</th>
<th>Hawaiian Sample (N = 784)</th>
<th>Samoan Sample (N = 138)</th>
<th>Filipino Sample (N = 1321)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever drank alcohol</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been drunk in lifetime</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever used marijuana</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been drunk or high at school</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been suspended from school</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked someone with intention to harm</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been arrested</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12th Graders</th>
<th>Entire Sample (N = 4948)</th>
<th>Hawaiian Sample (N = 734)</th>
<th>Samoan Sample (N = 115)</th>
<th>Filipino Sample (N = 1022)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever drank alcohol</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been drunk in lifetime</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever used marijuana</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been drunk or high at school</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been suspended from school</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacked someone with intention to harm</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been arrested</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented above suggest that Hawaiian students report greater rates of drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana, as has been shown in other studies utilizing the same data set (Wong, Klingle, & Price, 2004). Samoan students, though showing lower alcohol and marijuana rates, report substantially higher rates on having been arrested and attacking others, especially for 12th graders. And despite being documented heavily as

2 The “Entire Sample” of 10th grade student respondents includes students from all race backgrounds, including Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino students. Unfortunately, the available data disseminated to the public do not allow the “Entire Sample” to exclude students of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino ancestry, which would have provided for a better comparison group.

3 See above, as it applies for 12th grade students.
gang members in police records, Filipino students in the above study tend to show prevalence rates commensurate with the entire sample’s average.

In addition to juvenile delinquency data made available for comparison by way of race, a number of scholarly studies have examined race as a focal point when examining problem behaviors. Self-report studies with Hawai’i high school students postulate that Hawaiian youth show higher prevalence rates on behaviors traditionally considered risky by practitioners and scholars. Linking alcohol consumption with risky sexual behavior, Ramisetty-Mikler and colleagues (2004) state:

In general, [Native Hawaiians] were more sexually active and more likely to initiate sex earlier than their counterparts. Significant ethnic differences also emerged in the number of sexual partners (lifetime) for both males and females, with higher proportions of [Native Hawaiians] having two or more sexual partners in their lifetime.... Both male and female [Native Hawaiians] were more likely to use alcohol, initiate drinking at younger ages, drink on school property, and engage in episodic drinking. (p. 19, 20).

In this study, however, only three race groups were constructed – Native Hawaiians, Caucasians (who also showed high risk rates), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (a homogenized group of Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian students).

Likewise, Goebert et al. (2004a) compare Hawaiian, Caucasian, and “Asian American and Pacific Islander” high school students on reported levels of alcohol consumption and interpersonal violence. This study surmises that “Overall, Native
Hawaiians were more likely to engage in health risk behaviors than their non-Hawaiian counterparts, particularly other Asian American and Pacific Islander youth" (p. 83, 85). These studies do provide useful information for readers. For example, Goebert and associates’ (2004a) study also confirms that binge drinking tends to escalate violent behavior for youth from these race groups, who are grossly understudied. Still, this type of research fails to place these reported risky behaviors within a broader social context and do not uncover why youth from particular ethnic groups – in this case Hawaiians – seem to be more apt to engage in these behaviors.

Limitations of Adolescent Risk and Protective Factor Research, Nationally and in Hawai‘i

In a report by the Hawai‘i Office of Youth Services submitted to the 1991 Legislature, Matsuo (1991) states,

The cultural and ethnic backgrounds of those in need of, for example, literacy education, financial assistance or parole supervision, routinely are identified as the following vulnerable groups: Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan. These same cultures and ethnicities also are reflected in the populations of Hawaii’s at-risk youth. (p. 11).

Whether or not the above referenced race groups should be considered “vulnerable” or not remains arguable. However, as described previously in this chapter, most data collected by state agencies and researchers in Hawai‘i indicate that Filipino and Samoan youth are more involved with gangs, that Hawaiian youth more commonly use illegal substances, and that Hawaiian and Samoan youth more frequently engage in violent
behaviors, are arrested, and incarcerated, at least when compared with youth from other race backgrounds. If in fact these data are even partially accurate, it would seem natural for scholars to subsequently dig deep in seeking to investigate why higher percentages of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth engage in these behaviors that often times lead to other forms of risk, delinquency, arrest, and even incarceration.

Unfortunately, most of the studies that point out these social disparities do not capture (or at least do not report) adequate background information, which could then be used to better understand what motivates or manipulates some youth from these race backgrounds into delinquency. Moreover, because the studies do not offer a wider historical or contemporary context to the findings, consumers of the data are led to interpret all the findings in a negative light. Drinking alcohol, using marijuana, joining a gang, getting into fights, and being arrested – without knowing what life circumstances ensconce youths’ lives, these behaviors appear purely as harmful actions that damage society, unmitigated by any sensible justification or planning.

In recent years, the scientific literature on adolescent delinquency has shifted to include a heavy focus, utilizing the terms “risk and protective factors.” According to national juvenile delinquency specialists, “risk factors” are those social circumstances that put youth at greater likelihood to acquire mental health problems, participate in delinquent activities and/or be victims of violence. As defined by Rae-Grant et al. (1989), risk factors are “...those factors that, if present, increase the likelihood of a child developing an emotional or behavioral disorder in comparison with a randomly selected child from the general population” (p. 262). Some risk factors commonly cited in the field include early onset of substance use (Brook & Balka, 1999; Huizinga, Loeber, &
Thornberry, 1993), high exposure to community violence (Cooley-Quille et al., 2001; Myers & Thompson, 2000), personal victimization (Ireland, Smith, & Thornberry, 2002; Feigelman et al., 2000; Nadon, Koverola, & Schludermann, 1998), school problems/alienation (Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996), and susceptibility to peer pressure (Flannery et al., 1994). Notably, some of these behaviors were noted earlier as they related to youth in Hawai‘i.

With much of the juvenile delinquency research also being quantitative, various risk factors are frequently analyzed using survey data gathered in major research projects, which then present statistical analyses and seek to identify the risk factor, or combinations of risk factors, that place youth at greatest propensity to acquire mental health problems, be victimized, and/or engage in harmful activities. For example, identifying risk factors that purportedly influence alcohol use among “Hispanic” adolescents, Alva (1995) states, “Alcohol use was found to be most frequent among adolescents experiencing high levels of psychosocial stress and depression” (p. 494). Presumably then, a relationship between alcohol use and psychological stress/depression exists for “Hispanic” (i.e., Latino) adolescents. Such a finding makes sense, and would likely hold true for adolescents from most race groups.

Perhaps not surprisingly, scholars commonly note that certain risk factors are significantly more prevalent with adolescents from various demographics. In fact, this procedure is quite common when comparing risk factor prevalence rates between teens from different race groups. Unfortunately, these risk factor comparisons made between youth from different race categories rarely uncover the underlying contextual factors that cause these varying trends. Take, for example, Swahn & Donovan’s (2004) study, titled
“Correlates and Predictors of Violent Behavior Among Adolescent Drinkers.” In discussing their research findings and model, the authors write:

The final model also included one significant interaction, indicating that high-volume drinking was a particularly strong predictor of violent behavior among African-American adolescent drinkers. This finding is consistent with previous prospective research on young adult males that found that the relationship between alcohol consumption and violent behavior was stronger among African-Americans than among Whites. (p. 489).

From there, discussion on comparative race tendencies fizzles out. Readers are left wondering why these trends exist, which essentially “prove” that more young African American males consume heavy amounts of alcohol, and are in turn, more commonly violent, at least in comparison to White adolescents.

While this type of risk factor research may or may not hold validity, it surely lacks satisfactory background information, which would provide readers with explanations as to why these behavioral variations foment in society. For instance, if significantly more African American adolescent males drank large amounts of alcohol and engaged in violent behavior within Swahn and Donovan’s sample, we do not learn how prior life experiences within this adolescent African American population may have influenced this trend. Worse yet, these types of findings can easily reproduce and fortify harmful racial stereotypes.

Miller and White (2003) provide a particularly useful discussion on the limitations in dating violence research that also characterize much of the quantitative risk...
factor research. Noting that a good portion of studies on adolescent dating violence suggest that boys and girls are equally as likely to be perpetrators of dating violence (e.g., hitting a dating partner), readers are not always made privy to the fact that girls often times perpetrate dating violence acts in retaliation to or in defense of their male partner’s prior abusive behaviors. Fontes (2004) adds:

...in the early studies using the Conflicts Tactics Scales, men and women appeared to be equally violent with each other in intimate relationships. The studies essentially asked about the incidence of violent acts (slaps, pushes) without inquiring into their motives and consequences (e.g., a blow struck in self-defense versus an aggressive attack or a blow that is easily deflected versus one that lands its target in the hospital). These studies appeared to uncover large populations of battered husbands and couples engaged in mutual combat, when in fact the husbands often laughed off their wives’ blows, the wives usually struck blows in self-defense, and the husbands’ blows were more likely to cause physical damage. (p. 161).

Thus, the dating violence body of literature fails to account for feminist perspectives that would normally incorporate broader dimensions of gender discrimination and inequality. In short, much quantitative research on adolescent dating violence does “not address the root social causes of relationship conflict and violence, as these are deeply grounded in gender inequalities rather than just individual pre-dispositions to violence” (Miller & White, 2003, p. 1242). Likewise, it is critical that the broader risk and protective factor
body of literature properly contextualize its findings in other areas of adolescent behavior.

So not to only examine the negative aspects of adolescent behavior, a good portion of risk and protective factor research also addresses “protective factors.” Protective (also termed “resilience”) factors purportedly help to shield youth from risk factors they are likely to encounter, while also propelling youth toward successful futures. As stated by Rutter (1985), protective factors help to modify and improve how one responds to different types of environmental risk, which would otherwise contribute to some type of destructive outcome. Some examples of frequently cited protective factors are greater family cohesion (Hahm, Lahiff, & Guterman, 2003; Kim, Zane, & Hong, 2002; Grossman et al., 1992), holding a positive ethnic identity (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999; Brook et al, 1998; Goodstein & Ponterotto, 1997), and satisfaction in school (Reyes & Jason, 1993). In risk and protective factor studies, scholars sometimes highlight demographic variables as critical influences on adolescent health.

In their quantitative study on adolescent substance use, Trudeau et al. (2003) explore gender differences, and find significant differences between boys’ and girls’ responses on their propensity to refuse using drugs. According to the study, girls report a greater likelihood of refusing peer proposals to use illegal substances. However, because their research fails to determine what might cause gender inconsistencies in refuting offers for drugs, the authors are essentially left making new hypotheses for these gender variances:

As they progress through the middle school years, boys may be influenced more strongly than girls by peer substance offers in risk-conducive social
situations. Peer pressure to use substances is more intense for boys because substance use is often perceived as "macho" behavior. (p. 322; emphasis added).

Although the above explanation is plausible, readers are unable to determine exactly how "macho" attitudes develop over boys' life pathways that might contribute to increased substance use. Thus, as scholars continue to identify various risk and protective factors for adolescents, consumers of this knowledge are left wondering how to deal with the demographic discrepancies in the findings in a practical, "hands-on" manner.

Returning to a Hawai'i study on race, Goebert et al. (2004b) provide a useful example with a focus on Hawaiian youth. Using a surveyed sample of 4,164 Hawai'i high school students (64.1% of whom were Hawaiian), this study makes the following assertions on family adversity as it relates to school-based problem behavior:

...the vast majority of the Hawaiian adolescents experience family adversity. There may also be an expectation for, or undetected aspects of, family adversity among those few adolescents without adversity.

Hawaiian adolescents were also more likely to exhibit school-related behavioural problems and receive family support. These findings suggest that any family adversity can seriously impact behaviour in schools among Hawaiian adolescents. (p. 8).

In this case, family adversity stands as the risk factor presumably increasing the chances of students (in particular Hawaiian students) having school-related behavioral problems. While the methodology for the study is sound and therefore, the findings are likely accurate, readers still cannot ascertain what specific family problems influence school
behavior problems, how these family problems impact school behavior, and how those family problems materialized in the first place. In short, studies like these that lack context do not offer much in the form of practical assistance for teachers, social workers, and policy makers who work with Hawaiian students, families, and communities. All readers can confirm is that family problems contribute to school problems, more so for youth from some race groups than for others.

Though not always immediately obvious, risk and protective factors are balanced off in an opposing binary. A neutral variable such as “self-esteem” may be explored, with “low self-esteem” being the hypothesized risk factor, and “high self-esteem” the hypothesized protective factor (e.g., Miyamoto et al., 2000; Martinez & Dukes, 1991). Or as in the study discussed above, “family adversity” would be a risk factor, with “no family adversity” standing as a protective factor. Again, even demographic variables have been categorized as risk and protective factors, as in studies on the demographic construct of acculturation. Among Asian American and Pacific Islander youth, acculturation studies generally find that increased acculturation rates correlate with elevated risk for substance use and delinquency, while lower acculturation levels correlate with decreased risk (Nagasawa, Qian, & Wong, 2001; Chen et al., 1999).

While not the norm, it is not terribly uncommon for scholars to denote the demographic characteristics of sex and/or race as risk factors. For example, in summarizing identified risk factors associated with drinking alcohol, Feldman et al. (1999) state, “The following variables were associated with heavy drinking: being male and Canadian-born, stated ethnicity as Canadian, having parents who drank alcohol, and stating that half or more of friends drank” (p. 55). Similarly, in their discussion section on
risk and protective factors related to disordered eating, Croll et al. (2002) propose that “Males and females shared common risk factors: being of Hispanic and Asian ethnicity, having appearance concerns, smoking more cigarettes, and drinking alcohol more frequently. Risk factors unique to males were being of American Indian ethnicity and binge-drinking…” (p. 173).

In these adolescent studies, being male and Canadian, “Hispanic,” Asian, or “American Indian” is deemed a social risk, and in effect, these sex and race (or stated “ethnic”) groups are simply relegated to the list of deleterious risk factors that reportedly plague adolescents’ life chances. These studies may (or may not) also present additional risk or protective factors specific to a race and sex group. As one example, Croll et al. (2002) determine that increased self-esteem helped to protect “Hispanic” and Asian adolescent girls from engaging in disordered eating behaviors. Nonetheless, these types of studies still fail to contextualize the life-long experiences that may promote some youth from these demographic groups to build self-esteem or other forms of resiliency. In addition, the language and terminology used to describe social risks further stigmatize sex and race groups as risk factors in and of themselves.

At face value, the premise behind such risk and protective factor research is commendable. The research assumes that if scholars can identify the most salient risk and protective factors in a given youth population, youth practitioners will then be able to advocate for and implement more effective prevention and intervention efforts based on the research findings. However, effective implementation would also require a stronger understanding of the contextual situations that precede youths’ actions and shape youths’
rationale. Moreover, a more conscious research literature would not label entire race and sex groups as risks themselves.

Still, conducting quantitative risk and protective factor research with adolescents is not pointless. The data presented earlier in this chapter on Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth in Hawai‘i does offer useful information for practitioners who must present need when attempting to secure funding for youth programs and initiatives. However, as Waller and colleagues (2003) note with regard to indigenous peoples, “Analyses that present quantitative data independent of context may identify problems, but present an incomplete picture of these problems and how Indigenous people experience and respond to them” (p. 80).

In effect, the ways that many scholars have come to investigate and discuss adolescent risk and protective factors in the research literature lack depth and can even perpetuate social stereotypes. As Blum and colleagues (2000) argue, by drawing attention to race differences in adolescent health risk behaviors, many public health reports “tend to negatively portray minorities...while only marginally advancing our understanding of the factors that contribute to the behaviors under study” (p. 1883). In fact, innovative scholarship on adolescent health theorizes that “risk” must be interpreted from multiple viewpoints if we are to truly comprehend adolescent behavior.

Re-Conceptualizing Risk

Ungar (2004) defines resilience as “…successful negotiation by individuals for health resources, with success depending for its definition on the reciprocity individuals experience between themselves and the social constructions of well-being that shape their interpretations of their health status” (p. 352). By this definition, behaviors that would
normally fit in the “risk” box (e.g., fighting, drinking alcohol, using illegal substances, running away from home) could also be conceptualized as protective factors in the case that these behaviors fulfill an aspect(s) of someone’s life positively. However, to date, the adolescent risk and protective factor body of literature has rigidly defined these types of acts only as examples of risk.

In all likelihood, these and other behaviors commonly referred to as risk factors do contribute more negatively to adolescents’ lives than they do positively. However, unless scholars and adolescent practitioners actually hear the ways that adolescents account for their prior life experiences and how adolescents describe the specific social contexts in which “risky” behaviors are carried out, we cannot ascertain whether or not these behaviors may actually promote some healthy life outcomes. For adolescents who live in violent, chaotic circumstances, it is hardly unreasonable to consider that delving into some aspects of “risk” may be a sign of temporary or long-term improvement.

In her study on racial disparity in the juvenile justice system, Conely (1994) states, “The hegemony of quantitative methodologies in disproportionality research has limited attention to the stages of the juvenile justice system that can be measured empirically. As a result, what occurs before and at the level of arrest is ignored” (p. 136). Likewise, when research on women’s victimization became more common after the 1970s, feminist scholars argued that quantitative studies on family violence were so rigid that they did not allow victims to provide their own definitions and perspectives on relationship dynamics (Kelly, 1987) and did not always categorize violence in ways that yielded reliable results (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). Instead, feminist scholars have suggested that when investigating family violence, researchers allow participants to
define their own experiences (Kelly, 1987). In following this line of thought and Ungar’s (2004) viewpoint, I am suggesting that the quantitative risk and protective factor research on adolescent issues too often boxes youthful attitudes and behaviors into rigid categories and glosses over the multiple ways adolescents perceive and experience “risk” and “protection.”

As overviewed previously in this chapter, three major race groups in Hawai‘i consistently show disproportionate contact with the juvenile justice system – Hawaiians, Samoans, and Filipinos. This does not imply that Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth are more prone to engage in risky behaviors, which then leads to their greater arrest and/or incarceration rates. In fact, it must be emphasized that a majority of youth from these race groups do not report engaging in delinquent acts, are not arrested, and are not incarcerated. But as Conely suggests, it is critical that scholars begin to explore what social factors are occurring within and around youth from these racialized communities that lead to their increased rates of reported risk, arrests, and incarceration.

Numerous plausible explanations exist. For example, the relatively recent implementation of federally funded “Weed & Seed” initiatives in Hawai‘i communities – which not surprisingly have high populations of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino residents – means that increased police enforcement could very well be a major contributor to these adolescent groups’ escalated arrest rates. However, the present study is not about identifying possible explanations for juvenile delinquency beforehand and

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Federally funded “Weed & Seed” initiatives identify communities with high rates of crime and increase punitive measures for those who commit crimes within those communities. In addition, within “Weed & Seed communities,” police presence and enforcement is intensified in order to “weed out” crime before the community is “seeded” with greater crime prevention and intervention efforts. In Honolulu County, the communities of Kalihi and Waipahu have been designated “Weed & Seed communities” in recent years (Fong, 2003; Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 2000; Fujimori, 2000) – communities with very high populations of Filipino, Samoan, and Hawaiian residents.
then trying to test for their validity. Rather, this study is about learning from adolescents themselves. In this study, youth from predominantly Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino ancestry will be given the opportunity to talk candidly about the issues in their lives, the experiences that shape their personalities and behaviors, and explain how those behaviors function for them in both positive and negative ways. By hearing the detailed processes that influence adolescents’ decisions to engage in certain behaviors, practitioners and policy makers will have added information that can augment the numerous quantitative risk and protective factor studies both in Hawai‘i and across the United States.

Moreover, despite the data overviewed previously in this chapter, this study is not necessarily about juvenile incarceration, arrests, gangs, drugs and so forth, although some of these issues will be thoroughly discussed and dissected. This study is about the issues that adolescent participants identify themselves, and subsequently, how those issues interface with other facets of their lives (e.g., peers, family, school). In describing the value that qualitative methods provide, Ungar (2004) states:

> Qualitative methods have the potential to provide a more comprehensive picture of lives lived under adversity, but to date, their use has been limited and their integration with more mainstream programs of research less than adequate. The result is that children’s own perspective on their culturally embedded pathways to resilience have remained largely silenced. (p. 358).

Consequently, this study will detail the experiences that predominantly Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth encounter, evade, and cope with as they navigate their lives toward adulthood. Knowing the appalling types of “reform” that are inflicted upon
minors in youth correctional facilities, it is critical that we better understand adolescents’ perceptions of the environments they inhabit, while also contextualizing their thoughts and behaviors through rich dialogue, as provided by youth themselves. Hopefully by gathering and utilizing this information, program and policy reforms can be made that lessen future arrests and incarceration of minority youth in Hawai‘i and ultimately improve their lives.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Asian American activism developed as an offshoot of and in support of the African American Civil Rights Movement. During this time, Asian American activists recognized stark racial disparities and responded by critiquing the larger global power structures that perpetuated Asian Americans’ oppression, while also working actively to empower and give voice to “the most disenfrancished of the community, such as low-income workers, youth, former prisoners and addicts, senior citizens, tenants, and small-business people” (Omatsu, 1994, p. 41). Likewise, in the 1970s, Hawaiian sovereignty activists began re-forging a pride in their indigenous Hawaiian identity and reclaimed an indigenous right to Hawai‘i’s land and ocean base, stolen and corrupted by western military and capitalist institutions (Trask, 1999).

Today’s scholarship on racial disparity in Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system fails to connect ongoing racial disproportionality with historical and contemporary forms of colonialism. Instead, western criminology and public health scholars have become preoccupied with risk and protective factors, which confine themselves to present-day individual, peer and family, and community strengths and weaknesses (defined rigidly by western standards). Thus, in this discourse, international imperialist and colonial crimes
are completely forgotten and relegated disconnected to juvenile disproportionate minority confinement. As Chapter Two will illustrate, Hawai‘i's racialized history is not a history that can be forgotten.
CHAPTER TWO: RACE AND ETHNICITY IN HAWAI‘I

Conceptualizing Race and Ethnicity

In Chapter One when discussing varying rates of juvenile incarceration, arrests, and delinquency, I deliberately used the term “race.” Ethnicity is another term commonly used when discussing issues of social disparity. However, while noting that race and ethnicity are related concepts, academicians typically make a sharp distinction between the two. Lee (1999) describes “race” in the following manner:

…it is an ideology through which unequal distributions of wealth and power are naturalized – justified in the language of biology and genealogy. Physiognomy is relevant to race only insofar as certain physical characteristics, such as skin color or hue, eye color or shape, shape of the nose, color or texture of the hair, over- or underbite, etc., are socially defined as markers of racial difference. (p. 2).

In other words, concepts of race are not simply rooted in biological qualities that denote physical difference. Instead, concepts of race emerge when society defines certain physical traits as socially important. Moreover, as Lee points out, those assumed physical differences are then utilized by society to allocate resources and power unevenly across racialized groups.

Omi and Winant (1994) argue that this process of utilizing race to organize society along unequal lines is carried out in “racial projects,” which “connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning” (p. 56). For example, historically in athletics, African Americans have been characterized in some
sports as physically superior when compared with athletes from other racial groups (namely Caucasians). However, that racial characterization has come along with the portrayal of African Americans as being mentally inferior (Wiggins, 1997). Thus, in this example, sport serves as a racial project that perpetuates a societal misperception typifying African Americans as physically gifted, but intellectually deficient as they compare to Caucasians. As will be illustrated later in this study, Samoans in Hawai‘i are racially stereotyped much like African Americans in the United States.

Presentations of culture can also be used in racial projects to promote or demote different groups in society. African Americans, Native Americans/First Nation Peoples, and Chicanos have frequently been portrayed as having a “culture of poverty” suggesting that members from these groups have cultural values, fostering low educational and occupational motivation and dependence (Harrison, 1999). Takagi (1992) found that media and educational institutions often times perpetuated the culture of poverty image thrust upon African American students by comparing them to some Asian American students, who conversely were cast as “model minorities” with supposed cultural values that cultivated educational and occupational success. Plainly, the formation of race is comparative, relying on how one racial construct balances off in contrast to another, or any number of contrasted racial groups.

Racial projects can also materialize from perceptions of cultural experience. Hamamoto (1994) suggests that media and police structures in Southern California collaborate to criminalize young Vietnamese residents. In this racial project, news reporters interview police detectives who state that Vietnamese gang members are especially dangerous and do not hesitate in breaking American conventions or laws.
Allegedly, Vietnamese gang members do not fear American forms of punishment due to their prior violent experiences in Vietnamese refugee camps. In effect, the media and police are able to create a racialized perception of young Vietnamese to the greater public that incites fear, distrust, and the overall marginalizing of young Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans in Southern California.

In short, understandings of race are wide-spread artificial concepts, produced by institutions, such as those presented in Chapter 1 that are produced largely by the State of Hawai‘i. More importantly, racial concepts are then exploited by social structures in order to generate and perpetuate social inequality. For instance, Merry (2002) illustrates how crime data in Hawai‘i furthers the criminogenic gaze already thrown unfairly upon Hawaiians. Like some constructs of race, ethnicity is a social concept tied heavily to culture. However, unlike race, cultural understandings of ethnicity are formed from within groups in order to develop and maintain a sense of group identity. As overviewed previously, racial concepts are tagged upon groups from outsiders in order to build disparity. Conversely, Spickard (1996) contends that ethnic groups’ bonds weigh heavily on their degrees of shared ancestry, shared interests, shared institutions, and shared culture. While these different features of ethnicity may emerge in response to external racial markings, they are constructed internally as a way to sustain group cohesion and existence, rather than to exploit power difference.

Cornell and Hartmann (1998) point out that race and ethnic groups often times overlap.

Ethnicity refers to perceived common ancestry, the perception of a shared history of some sort, and shared symbols of peoplehood. Race refers to a
group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical
c Characteristics. A human group might well meet both sets of criteria at
once. (p. 32).

Drawing from a previous example, young Vietnamese immigrants and Vietnamese
Americans in Southern California may be racially marked as particularly dangerous gang
members, and at the same time, these same young Vietnamese immigrants and
Vietnamese Americans may (or may not) share common ancestral roots, interests,
institutions, and culture.

Ethnicity has stood as an important feature in shaping young people's cultures and
is frequently established in response to racial disparities. Vigil (2002) points out that
alienation and subsequent failure in school are some of the common racist factors that
influence young males to join gangs that are ethically-based, finding a sense of group
solidarity and inclusion previously denied in academic institutions. Lee's (1996) study of
Asian American youth found that resistant teenagers from certain Asian and Southeast
Asian backgrounds (Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian) bonded in defiance of non-
Asian and other Asian students who stereotyped them racially as failing Americans. And
Pinderhughes' (1997) ethnographic study of youth in New York City shows that ethnic
bonds were solidified among adolescents who felt estranged from occupational potential
due to race-based stereotypes. Pinderhughes' research also found that youths’ ethnic
identities frequently contributed to inter-ethnic conflict, revolving around competition
over turf and resources.

Thus, although race and ethnicity are two distinctive concepts, they are hardly
dissimilar, and they are commonly inter-related. As just illustrated, social opinions on
race can interplay with adolescents’ ethnic identities and the formation of ethnic bonds in ways that affect gang membership, resistance to stereotyping, and interpersonal violence. As Nagel (1994) theorizes, ethnic identity is established when individuals (or groups of individuals) negotiate what others think their ethnicity (or race) means versus what they think their ethnicity means internally. In Hawai‘i, the ways that race and ethnicity have fomented over time, and the ways that people form ethnic identities in response to and in opposition of race-based projects have played a central role in shaping the society’s ongoing development.

Hawai‘i as a Racial Project

Western Colonization and the Indigenous Population

Prior to Captain James Cook’s arrival upon the Hawaiian archipelago in 1778, the indigenous peoples of the Hawaiian islands, whose majority of the population was self-described as the maka‘āinana, lived an isolated life in the Pacific, free from the western influences of mass materialism and global expansion. At the time of Cook’s arrival, the Hawaiian Kingdom was comprised of eight populated islands and several chiefdoms. Cook, an English explorer, began a series of three voyages into the Pacific in 1769, where he and his crew sailed into the Pacific territories of Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga, the Easter Islands, the Marquesas, and eventually Hawai‘i. Along the way, Cook and his crews landed upon these various regions of the Pacific on their own terms, at times killing small groups of Pacific Islanders when not met peacefully by the indigenous inhabitants (Dougherty, 1992).
On his third and final voyage into the Pacific, Cook eventually sailed upon the Hawaiian archipelago; he and his crew were generally welcomed by the indigenous population. In fact, the first time Cook went to shore himself, Hawaiian chiefs treated him with divine honors. As Cook and his crew sailed from island to island in the Hawaiian chain, his crew members initiated that which would be the greatest downfall of the Hawaiian people – the mass spreading of infectious disease. Engaging in sexual intercourse with Hawaiian women, Cook’s crew infected the indigenous population with diseases such as gonorrhea and syphilis, diseases for which the indigenous population had not developed any resistance.

Cook was a temperamental individual, and although he was by and large treated honorably as he traversed across the Hawaiian island chain, he did engage in conflicts with the indigenous population. In February of 1779, Cook enraged a group of Hawaiians to the extent that they killed him, thereby ending the English explorer’s immediate influence. At the time of Cook’s arrival, the size of indigenous population in Hawai‘i remains debated. Stannard (1989) asserts that between 800,000 and one million Hawaiians lived across the eight inhabited Hawaiian islands, whereas Dougherty (1992) claims the population to be between only 200,000 and 300,000. What stands without debate is the rapid decrease of the indigenous population due to mass disease shortly after Cook’s arrival and for many years to come. For example, in 1853, small pox was considered an epidemic health concern for Hawaiians (McDermott, Tseng, & Maretzki, 1980), and by 1930, “The number of Hawaiians was reduced to sixty thousand” (Young, 1980). By 1976, less than 8,000 full-blooded Hawaiians remained (Kanahele, 1996).
Still, mass death and disease was not the only destructive element forced upon the Hawaiians. Hawai‘i, the racial project, was only beginning. Following Cook’s death, Hawai‘i was quickly transformed into a site where European traders could utilize Hawai‘i’s geographic location and natural resources for the global economy’s ever changing desires. European whalers invaded Hawai‘i’s waters, traders stripped Hawai‘i’s land of sandalwood, capitalists manipulated the Hawaiian monarchy into debt, and Hawai‘i itself was transformed into a capitalist port where European whalers, traders, and merchants could replenish (Merry, 2000; Kent, 1993). Still, as Merry (2000) points out, the Hawaiian monarchy did not sit idly by as Hawai‘i underwent this radical conversion; rather, Hawaiian chiefs were weaving their way through a complex and aggressive international capitalistic barrage while attempting to maintain the Hawaiians’ way of life and survival, all in the face of continued of the Hawaiian population death from disease.

As the Hawaiian population continued to decline, Christian missionaries introduced what seemed an attractive concept of eternal salvation and the additional values endorsed by Christianity. In 1820, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions began laying the foundation for the mass dispersion of Christianity in Hawai‘i. Missionaries did not approve of the growing capitalist onslaught on Hawai‘i’s terrain, proclaiming that the development of capitalist enterprises exploited the general populace. Nevertheless, the spreading of Christian ideology still ended up supporting capitalist ideals, as missionaries advocated that Hawaiians relinquish communal values for those that center on the nuclear family and private land ownership. Missionaries believed such values would increase work productivity and decrease the Hawaiians’ supposed indolence and lasciviousness. In effect, however, Christian missionaries only
perpetuated highly deleterious racial stereotypes of Hawaiians as over-sexed and occupationally lazy and assisted American capitalistic endeavors in Hawai‘i.

Most notably, the immediate descendants of early Christian missionaries became some of Hawai‘i’s most powerful capitalist enterprisers (Kent, 1993). In 1848, Hawai‘i itself was redefined as a land space to be segmented off into divisions for private ownership in what is known as the Great Māhele, thereby supporting capitalists’ desires to exploit the land for sugar production and supporting Christian missionaries’ desires to make the Hawaiians more industrious. As stated by Kame‘eleihiwa (1992), missionaries felt that once Hawaiians

held their taro patches and house lots in fee, the theory ran, the
maka‘āina would have the incentive to become industrious, hard
working, and Christian, because they alone would receive the benefit of
their labor. Once the maka‘āina became industrious, they would give up
their bad habits, save money, and become wealthy – and the alarming
decline in Hawaiian population would be halted. (p. 202).

However, as Kame‘eleihiwa (1992) also states, missionaries conveniently failed to notice that prior to western influence, the Hawaiians were hard working and healthy. It was only after contact with Westerners that Hawaiians’ poor health emerged as a major issue due to widespread infectious disease.

Moreover, exploitation of the land became an area of conflict for capitalists and the Hawaiians. The maka‘āina always viewed land (āina) as sacred and not to be exploited for material gain. With the advent of the Great Māhele, the āina was vulnerable to those who could afford ownership. Not surprisingly, Kent (1993) notes that less than
one percent of all land ownership went to the maka‘āinana, and goes on to state, “the Hawaiians were severed from the land that had been the basis of their subsistence economy” (p. 31). In essence, the Great Māhele legally converted Hawai‘i into a geographic locale that would provide American capitalists with the land base to take advantage of the global demand for sugar.

Although Hawai‘i was transformed into a space utilized heavily for sugar production, generally speaking, the Hawaiian population did not work in sugar plantations. Hawaiians’ collective resistance to be subjugated as contract laborers and exploiters of the āina provided them with some refuge from capitalist objectives, but also further marginalized them from the growing Western ideology that would come to dominate Hawai‘i’s socio-political arena. In 1893, just forty-five years after the Great Māhele, the independent Hawaiian monarchy was overthrown by the United States military, and five years later in 1898, Hawai‘i and its two million acres of native land were illegally annexed by the United States without treaty or the assent of the indigenous population (Blaisdell & Mokuau, 1991).

By the turn of the twentieth century, American capitalistic, political, military, and educational forces continued to join forces in restructuring Hawai‘i’s socio-political topography. Kent (1993) states that by 1910, an elite group of foreigners (haoles) had an unyielding grip on Hawai‘i’s economy:

The elite controlled a diverse empire consisting of plantations, banks, insurance companies, shipping lines, trust companies, railroads, and retail and wholesale outlets. They used a host of methods to ensure its continuance – interlocking directorates, direct stock ownership, holding
companies, transportation agreements, family intermarriage, and joint financing. (p. 70).

In addition to economic changes, the process by which Hawaiian children were educated changed drastically, as dictated by missionary and capitalist desires. Christian missionaries forced Hawaiian children to stop speaking the Hawaiian language in schools. Missionary schools also forced Hawaiian students to work as individuals and to stop working collaboratively in lesson plans, thereby negating communal efforts, a long-held strength in Hawaiian culture (Benham and Heck, 1998).

Finally, American capitalists radically altered Hawai‘i’s legal structure, making all of the previously stated international crimes completely legal. In fact, according to Merry (2000), the over-representation of penalized Hawaiians began when the United States forcibly implanted its criminal justice system, which was originally developed in Massachusetts. For example, newly implemented American laws made it virtually impossible for women (namely Hawaiian women) to exit marriages in which they were being abused. Rather, women who left abusive marriages were arrested under western law, whereas prior to western influence, the Hawaiian culture had protocols established that facilitated women’s exiting from abusive relationships.

As Hawai‘i was pulled further into the American landscape throughout the twentieth century, the sugar industry became less dominant. Nevertheless, foreign industry did not yield its control over Hawai‘i and its indigenous populace. Particularly prior to World War II, the American military targeted Hawai‘i as an important geographic locale in their battle with Japan for control of the Pacific. This is most evident in the construction of Pearl Harbor as an American naval base, and according to Ferguson
and Turnbull (1999), almost twenty percent of Hawai‘i’s total land mass is now occupied by the United States military, by far the highest for any state in the union. To this day, Hawaiian sovereignty activists are regularly in conflict with American military activities that destroy sacred Hawaiian land areas, misuse Hawai‘i’s natural resources, and displace the indigenous population (Ferguson & Turnbull, 1999). Following World War II in 1959, Hawai‘i was made America’s 50th state. However, the process of determining statehood systematically excluded Hawaiian residents in Hawai‘i who opposed American dominance (McGregor, 2002).

During the latter half of the twentieth century, a new industry surpassed the sugar plantations that would further displace Hawaiians in their own homeland – tourism. Kent (1993) argues that the tourist industry has perpetuated Hawaiians’ (and other ethnic minorities’) economic dependence on an oppressive system that benefits foreign capital.

From airline counter to hotel to rent-a-car, the tourism monopolies are in control. They package the tours and furnish the airplanes, accommodations, and ground transportation. The food the guests eat, the beds they sleep in, and the sports equipment they use do not originate in Hawaii, but are imported from the metropole – as are those who manage the hotels and restaurants. Hawaii provides only cheap labor to clean the rooms, kitchens, and gardens, to carry the bags, and to drive the tour buses; and the sea and sky and sun and land….What choice do the local residents have but to become a service class at the beck and call of far more affluent outsiders with a different lifestyle? (p. 169).
Kent goes on to state that the tourist industry is akin to a “new plantation” system, in which predominantly foreign Caucasian and Asian professionals profit, while the “blue-collar working class is largely Hawaiian, Filipino, Samoan, immigrant Asian, and Pacific Islander” (p. 180). Disproportionately represented in dead-end, low-paying service oriented jobs, the afore mentioned ethnic populations are less apt to acquire economic benefits provided by tourist companies. To make matters worse, the tourist industry has appropriated the Hawaiian culture, embellishing cultural images of physically threatening Polynesian men and sexualized Polynesian women to entice foreign tourists (Green, 2002; Trask, 1999).

Despite all this, the Hawaiian people have not passively accepted western intrusion, neither in the past nor in the present. A renewed surge in Hawaiian pride and a push for Hawaiian sovereignty surfaced in the 1970s. Presently, the University of Hawaiʻi system offers Hawaiian Studies programs, and Hawaiian immersion schools across Hawaiʻi advance the Hawaiian language and culture (Benham and Heck, 1998). Sovereignty activists also assert their rights when confronting military and tourist interests that destruct the ʻāina (Trask, 1999). And in regard to population statistics, the re-emergent pride in being Hawaiian has increased the number of Hawaiians who come from multiple ethnic ancestries to claim Hawaiian as their primary (if not only) ethnicity. Nevertheless, western (in particular American) forces have undoubtedly driven Hawaiʻi’s indigenous population to the border, and the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty is an arduous one. As evidenced in the 2000 U.S. Supreme Court Rice Decision that forces Hawaiians to accept status as part of the United States in order to protect Hawaiian-specific programs, the quest for independent nationhood and its attendant social benefits
are not on the United States’ political agenda (Blaisdell, 2002). As such, the racial project that is Hawai’i does not provide for the indigenous population, and it does not appear that changes are planned for the foreseeable future.

Hawai’i and Filipino Importation

Discussed only peripherally in the prior section is Hawai’i’s forced transformation into a plantation economy. In fact, as Hawai’i’s economy shifted to one rooted in a plantation system, Hawai’i the racial project, evolved to include racialized groups from many other regions of Asia and the Pacific. Due to the Hawaiians’ reluctance to work in plantations and their ongoing population decrease, plantation owners turned to sectors of Asia as a source for contract laborers. However, before any foreign laborers were brought into Hawai’i, the Masters and Servants Act of 1850 was authored in order to standardize owner and laborer relationships. Also modeled after Massachusetts state law, the Masters and Servants Act was presumably designed to protect both plantation owners and contracted laborers from abuses. In actual practice, however, the 1850 Act was manipulated to benefit plantation owners and minimize plantation workers’ rights. In fact, as plantation laborers resisted their exploitation over the years, the Masters and Servants Act was used as an enforcement instrument to criminalize defiant laborers (Merry, 2000). As stated by Beechert (1985), western courts in Hawai’i “consistently interpreted the law in a manner calculated to increase the authority of the contract holder” (p. 56). Thus, the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who were maneuvered into Hawai’i’s plantations always faced an uphill battle in standing up for their rights.
Between 1852 and about 1946, approximately 400,000 workers were brought to work in Hawai‘i’s agricultural, capitalist economy, radically changing the region’s ethnic demographics. The first foreign contract laborers brought to Hawai‘i in 1852 were Chinese, who made up the greatest number of contract laborers between 1852 and 1870. Varied groups of South Pacific Islanders were brought in 1859. Japanese were first recruited in 1868 and comprised the greatest number of immigrant workers between 1880 and 1920. Norwegians, Germans, Galicians, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Koreans, Russians, and Spanish comprised many of the other ethnic and racial groups brought over to work in Hawai‘i’s plantations (Lind, 1996). Filipinos made up the largest number of foreign immigrants contracted to work in Hawai‘i in the early to mid-1900s. “Between 1909 and 1931, 113,000 Filipinos migrated to Hawai‘i, 55,000 stayed in Hawai‘i, 39,000 returned to the Philippines, and 18,000 moved onward to the Pacific Coast of America” (Agbayani, 1991, p. 77).

As Takaki (1983) points out, immigrant workers were defined as material objects that could be ordered, purchased, and sold, and the ethnic diversity that characterized these immigrant workers reflected plantation owners’ strategic efforts to break any homogenous efforts of resistance. Also noteworthy, was that this labor class was heavily male, and entirely male for many of the ethnic groups noted above. Being a world power at the time, Japan was able leverage some benefits for their contract labor emigrants; a fraction of Japanese immigrants to Hawai‘i (and the continental United States) were women, thereby allowing Japanese immigrants to begin building families and healthier communities.
Filipino contract laborers were first brought to Hawai‘i in 1906. Between 1906 and 1946, about 126,000 Filipinos were recruited to work by the Hawai‘i Sugar Plantation Association (Junasa, 1996). An important and often times overlooked aspect of Filipinos’ historical migration to Hawai‘i is the fact that the vast majority of Filipinos originally came from northern Luzon, in the Ilocos region of the Philippines. Conversely, most Filipinos who migrated to the continental United States originally came from Southwestern Luzon where the country’s capital, Manila, is located, and where a significantly greater percentage of Filipinos have higher economic and educational backgrounds. Though frequently stereotyped as especially hard working and self-sacrificing, Ilokano Filipinos were singled out as exploitable workers more because of Spain’s and the United States’ prior colonial trade policies in the Philippines. Sharma (1984) asserts that in the Philippines, Spain and later the United States dictated sugar, copra, hemp, and abaca to be the country’s primary exports, none of which could be grown in the Ilocos region. Consequently, the Ilocos region no longer had any exportable products that could yield adequate income, though they were increasingly reliant on national and international trading relationships. In short, as a result of imposed Spanish and American trading policies, Ilokano Filipinos were more desperate for work, and in turn, targeted heavily as exploitable labor.

Like laborers from most other ethnic backgrounds, Filipino laborers were almost exclusively male, and again like other contract laborers, Filipinos were segregated by plantation owners into their own ethnic-specific camps. As sojourners, these Filipino laborers had hoped to save money, send money home to their families, and eventually return home themselves. However, as might be expected, the exploitive plantation labor
system generally impeded such efforts (although Alegado, 1991, notes that Filipinos were able to pool money together and send remittances back to their families in turns and in times of family need). Alegado (1991) suggests that by World War II, the first wave of Filipino migration to Hawai‘i had ceased. During this initial wave (1906-1946), only a few hundred Filipino women and children migrated to Hawai‘i in the 1920s and 1930s, and consequently, Filipino communities were largely absent of nuclear families. For example, by 1930 for every 100 Filipino women in Hawaii, there were about 975 Filipino men (Junasa, 1996, p. 81).

Following World War II, Filipino workers were entrenched heavily in the struggle for labor rights. Most notably, Filipinos and contract laborers from other ethnic groups had begun cooperating with one another in order to collectively resist abusive labor policies and unfair wages. In 1946, the Hawai‘i Sugar Plantation Association imported 6,000 Filipinos from the Philippines as strike breakers. However, showing class solidarity, these Filipino laborers sided with Japanese laborers, and in doing so initiated a wave of class-based advocacy in opposition to plantation holders. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Filipinos and laborers from other ethnic groups continued to join forces in building a strong union that could advocate effectively for decent working and living conditions.

Alegado (1991) states the third wave of Filipino migration to Hawai‘i coincides with the passing of the 1965 Immigration Act, which facilitated immigration to the United States by way of family reunification and occupational preference (Ong, Bonacich, & Cheng, 1994). In Hawai‘i specifically, the decline in sugar production and the ascent of tourism as the primary industry also impacted Filipinos’ way of life. Says
Alegado (1991), Filipinos were the most affected ethnic group by the closing of plantations, with large numbers of Filipino workers having to seek employment in the tourist industry’s many service-oriented jobs. Due to the passing of the 1965 Immigration Act, roughly 4,000 Filipinos move to Hawai‘i each year, maintaining the community’s immigrant (or settler) identity. As such, Filipinos (both born locally and in the Philippines) still experience employment discrimination. Describing Filipinos’ struggles in Hawai‘i’s employment sector, Alegado (1991) states:

Continued concentration in jobs associated with Hawai‘i’s “new plantations” – as housekeepers in the hotels, as busboys and kitchen help in food/restaurant services, and as janitors in airports, banks and other business establishments – sets the basis for the subjective reproduction of national culture and social relations among Filipinos. This stratification in the work place is reinforced by the re-emergence of ethnic enclaves – identifiable Filipino neighborhoods and districts in the new and old urban areas of Hawaii. (p. 23).

Over-represented in low-paying service-oriented jobs, newly arrived Filipino migrants to Hawai‘i, even if they hold higher levels of education attained in the Philippines, are often times resigned to working in the service industry since adequate social networks have not been established that would otherwise funnel educated Filipinos from the Philippines into higher paying occupations (Okamura, 1991).

In the post-1965 era of Filipino migration to Hawai‘i, Filipino families have generally sought three goals: (1) family reunification (bringing over family members who had been left in the Philippines) and family establishment (since the Filipino population
was heavily male, male Filipinos sought Filipino wives from the Philippines; (2) improved education for Filipino children; and (3) improved socio-economic status through employment (Ponce & Forman, 1980). However, as delineated above, attaining improved socio-economic status is complicated by the tourist industry’s stronghold over Hawai‘i.

Likewise, Hawai‘i’s educational system, which follows a completely American model, has been insufficient in providing for Filipino students originally from the Philippines. Educational system differences (e.g., school calendar, school schedule, and registration requirements) make integration into Hawai‘i’s public school system difficult for newly arrived Filipino children and adults (Chattergy & Ongteco, 1991). In addition, Agbayani (1996) reveals that Hawai‘i’s Department of Education requires Filipino students to adjust to the American standard, rather than having schools adjust their policies and procedures in ways that could benefit foreign-born students. As an example, the Hawai‘i Department of Education stated that Filipino students from the Philippines lack “relevant schooling in their native country”; Agbayani (1996) counters that Hawai‘i schools lack a “relevant curriculum appropriate to the school attended by the immigrant student” (p. 151).

Though certainly not indigenous to Hawai‘i, like Hawaiians, Filipino struggles have come about as a result of Western pursuits for power on an international level. Turned into exploitable labor from Spanish and American colonialism and subsequently targeted by capitalist plantation owners, Filipino laborers were thrust into Hawai‘i on unequal terms. Trask (2000) points out that Filipinos and other “immigrant” groups to Hawai‘i can play the settler role, impinging on indigenous Hawaiians’ land and rights,
while proclaiming an entitlement to such rights having labored through the oppressive plantation experience. Considering Hawaiians' current struggles in their own homeland, Trask's claims are certainly warranted. Still, as the last major racial group recruited to work on Hawai'i's plantations that was overwhelmingly male, Filipinos did get a later start than all other ethnic groups in Hawai'i in building families and stable communities. Census 2000 data show that presently, about 170,000 Filipinos reside in Hawai'i. Filipino communities are a mix of locally born and settler residents, densely clustered in neighborhoods with many other marginalized minority groups, who also struggle and persevere when sifting through the racial project of Hawai'i.

*America's Militaristic Presence in American Samoa and Samoan Migration*

On average, an even more recent group to Hawai'i than Filipinos are Samoans. Samoans did not begin migrating to Hawai'i and the American west coast in significant numbers until after World War II. Consequently, Samoans were never forced to work in Hawai'i's oppressive plantation system. However, like Filipinos, Samoans' relocation to Hawai'i can be traced to America's pursuits for international power.

As mentioned previously, prior to the United States' involvement in World War II, the United States began asserting its militaristic prowess across the Pacific, primarily posturing in opposition to Japan. While the Japanese had established military bases in Micronesia (Poyer, Falgout, & Carucci, 2001), the United States countered by setting up naval bases in Hawai'i, Guam, and American Samoa. In American Samoa, the United States set up its naval base in Pago Pago, a natural harbor whose topography makes it impossible for passing ships to view any military headquarters.
Janes (2002) explains that when the United States navy set up its base in Pago Pago, the surrounding Samoan community was completely transformed. Before this, American Samoa was still predominantly an agrarian country. With the influx of the American military, American Samoans were introduced to industry, capital, and material/luxury items. However, an ensuing problem with the naval base at Pago Pago materialized after World War II ended when the United States saw no need for a military presence in American Samoa, and consequently, closed down and pulled out. The Samoan community had been introduced to an American capitalist lifestyle and was reliant upon the naval base’s employment opportunities (e.g., as stevedores and construction workers). Nearly 1000 Samoan men had even joined an American marine unit called the Samoan Marines (Janes, 2002, p. 119).

However, with the closure of the naval base in 1951, Samoans not only needed jobs; many also longed for material items introduced by the United States. Samoans had also acquired a taste for material assets far beyond their ability to pay. Young people crowded into the rapidly growing Pago Pago area looking for wage-paying jobs to satisfy their appetite for American clothes, caned foods, beer, and motion pictures. But falling exports and rising import prices seriously affected the local economy, and the number of wage-earning jobs available to Samoans was sharply reduced.... It became apparent to many future-oriented Samoans that migration to Hawaii or California was the alternative of choice for anyone seeking a job, education, or escape from what some perceived as the chafing confines of village life. (Janes, 2002, p. 120).
The most appalling aspect of this scenario is that the United States military never intended on assisting the Samoan people. Instead, the United States’ only interest was securing an additional military presence in the Pacific. Once that presence was deemed unnecessary, the United States quickly left, showing that they always defined American Samoa and its people as expendable. In the process, however, they transformed the country’s economy so that it was dependent on industry and influenced young Samoans to leave their country of origin. Since the departure of the U.S. Navy, tuna canneries have sprung up in American Samoa, providing a new form of industrial employment for American Samoans (Hecht, Orans, & Janes, 1986), while also showcasing American Samoa’s ongoing economic dependence on industry and capitalism.

Following the United States’ militaristic presence in American Samoa, the country’s population changed in other ways as well. Due to health improvements, life expectancy rates increased substantially while infant mortality rates decreased. So not only were Samoans living longer, they were also giving birth to healthier children. In addition, changes in American Samoa’s economy and health practices influenced many Samoans from Independent (previously “Western”) Samoa to move to American Samoa. Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, American Samoa had a major population increase (Harbison, 1986). This population explosion combined with greater need for employment and a pursuit for American education all contributed to Samoans’ migration for Hawai‘i and California.

Like Filipinos in Hawai‘i, Samoans have had a difficult time securing well-paid employment opportunities in the United States. According to Greksa, Pelletier, and Gage (1986), in 1980, Samoan women had lower labor participation rates in the United States
than women who were Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, or Guamanian. For Samoan males, only Vietnamese males had lower labor participation rates in 1980 (p. 307, 309). Howard (1986) writes, “In Hawaii the percentage of unemployed Samoans in the civilian labor force is by far the highest of any ethnic group” (p. 406). Howard goes on to explain that (like Filipinos) Samoans’ cultural value of relying on family networks to attain employment compound with language barriers and Hawai’i’s predominance of low-paying, high turnover service jobs has contributed to Samoans’ higher levels of unemployment and poverty.

Also like Filipinos in Hawai‘i, a very high proportion of Samoans live in low-income urban neighborhoods with many other settler ethnic groups, though a substantial number of Samoans also live on O‘ahu’s north shore in a heavily populated Mormon community (Markoff & Bond, 1980). Still, Samoans differ from Filipinos in that they represent less than two percent of Hawai‘i’s total residential population. According the 2000 U.S. Census, 16,166 Samoans reside in Hawai‘i. Despite comprising such a small proportion of the total population, Samoans are grossly over-represented (even sometimes comprising a majority of the total population) in over-crowded low-income public housing tracts (Baker, 1986; Hecht, Orans, & Janes, 1986).

Samoans’ high unemployment rates and general financial difficulties are further complicated by Samoans’ attempts to maintain traditional cultural values within a new American culture that is dominated by capitalism – or money. Historically, Samoan families (aiga) pooled resources together during major life-cycle events (e.g., weddings, birth of a new child, funerals) in ceremonies called fa‘alavelave; shared resources in the past included items such as bread fruit and hand made mats. Today, contributions to
faʻalavelave are frequently monetary, or may include the purchasing of expensive mats. As noted by Mokuau and Chang (1991), “The greater the contribution, the higher the esteem accorded to the family. The desire to maintain a financial commitment to the extended family may partially explain the extremely high poverty levels of Samoan families in the United States” (p. 163). In addition to this, Samoans in Hawai‘i and on the American west coast, send a considerable amount of money back home in the form of remittances – over $1 million annually to American Samoa (Alailima, 1996, p. 89).

Samoan parents who have moved to Hawai‘i have also felt constricted, having to cope with Western laws that are incongruent with Samoan cultural norms. In traditional Samoan culture, the use of corporal punishment is completely acceptable when disciplining children. However, after punishing a child physically, it is customary for parents to show affection towards their children and explain why the punishment was necessary. Still, corporal punishment can be interpreted as physical abuse in the United States, and thus, it is not surprising that in Hawai‘i, child abuse is reported “at a much higher rate per capita among Samoans than among other major ethnic groups.... Almost 5 percent of the confirmed reports of child abuse” (Mokuau & Chang, 1991, p. 162). With this in mind, Samoan parents may feel powerless when trying to discipline their children, who know the American child abuse laws.

Turning to prior research with adolescents, Samoan adolescents in Hawai‘i (and likely on the American west coast) consistently receive praise for their success in one activity – football (notably an almost exclusively male sport). Alailima (1996) writes of Samoans in Hawai‘i: “Sports is another area in which Samoans excel. Nearly every high school football team has Samoans playing on the first string, and a number of players
have continued their careers on Mainland university and professional teams” (p. 93).

However, this stereotype of Samoans as successful football players comes along with the long-standing assumption that good football players are dumb jocks. A 17-year-old Samoan male noted how this stereotype is commonly cast upon Samoan teens, saying, “People think if you’re Samoan, you’re stupid and you steal…. Sometimes football is the only time they say you’re good” (Kreifels, 1999, p. A8). Samoan girls have also expressed success in athletics, but remark that they are not afforded the same social rewards or encouragement by schools as their male counterparts (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind, & Koo, 2001).

In fact, though Samoans frequently emigrate in hopes of providing their children with improved education, in Hawai‘i and California, Samoan youth have encountered significant obstacles in school (Harbison, 1986, p. 89). Samoan adolescents in Hawai‘i have mentioned that antagonistic relationships with teachers contribute heavily to their lower success rates in school. In particular, Samoan teenagers state that teachers show preference towards students from other ethnic groups and effectively neglect Samoan students. Finally, Samoan adolescents have stated that because others value them for their physical (and not their intellectual) prowess, some Samoan teens fulfill this stereotype and behave violently in order to attain a sense of power that is denied them in more socially acceptable circles (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind, & Koo, 2001). In short, “Samoans are distinctly and negatively stereotyped as big, aggressive, and violent” (Hecht, Orans, & Janes, 1986, p. 57).

Although Samoans in Hawai‘i have demonstrated success (Honolulu’s current mayor, Mufu‘uli Hannemann, is of Samoan and German ancestry), Samoans have
experienced and continue to experience extreme hardships. Their tremendous over-representation in Hawai‘i’s low-income public housing tracts, high rates of unemployment, and struggles in school all exemplify that the Samoan experience in Hawai‘i, the racial project, has not been entirely beneficial. That notwithstanding, it is important to recall that Samoans’ movement to Hawai‘i began with the United States’ utilization of American Samoa strictly for militaristic purposes.

In the aftermath of the United States’ conquests, Samoans were left dependent on capitalist industry that could most easily be found in Hawai‘i and California. Unfortunately, an urbanized Hawai‘i, dominated by the tourist industry, has not been an advantageous environment for Samoan families. In fact, due to prior American colonial enterprises and Hawai‘i’s current tourist-run economy, too many Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan families now struggle when attempting to provide for and nurture their children. In both urban and rural parts of Hawai‘i, families are forced to contend with a capitalized culture.

Sacrificing Cultural Norms and Family Development in Capitalized Hawai‘i

Hawai‘i’s forced transformation from an independent kingdom based on agriculture and subsistence living to one dependent on capitalism, and more recently on tourism, has severely impacted families’ ability to nurture their children. As discussed earlier, as a result of Western colonial practices inflicted across the Pacific, Hawai‘i’s current political economy contributes heavily to the inability to secure steady employment, putting families from particular ethnic and racial groups at a distinct disadvantage. Furthermore, in adjusting to living in a capitalized economy, Hawaiian,
Samoan, and Filipino families have had to alter, and even sacrifice, important cultural mores that were used historically to foster children’s successful upbringing.

Family (or ‘ohana) has always been a structural foundation for Hawaiian communities. And unlike American nuclear families, Hawaiian families have always been highly inclusive, making distinct efforts to include extended family members as part of a seamless family bloodline. Hawaiian culture also promotes the adoption of parentless children (or children whose parents cannot care for them for whatever reason) into families, commonly referred to as the hānai system. Thus, in the Hawaiian culture, understandings of illegitimacy are minimized. Says Young (1980), “...the ‘ohana was the extended family bonded by blood and from which any member could expect warmth and support. This support system was not expected or demanded, it was simply there” (p. 11).

Likewise, in Samoan culture, the concept of family (aiga) is virtually identical to Hawaiians' understanding of 'ohana. And as Ponce and Forman (1980) write,

The extended family is, in effect, the basic unit of Philippine society. Its concerns are largely turned inward and nonmembers are regarded as outsiders. The Filipino will readily share his labor and good fortune with his relatives but tends to a strong indifference toward those outside the family. (p.157, 158).

In short, for the three ethnic groups discussed in this chapter, family is central to the culture and highly inclusive of extended family members.

Unfortunately, the tourist industry (e.g., hotel resorts and golf courses) has exploited Hawai’i’s most valuable natural resources (Kim, 1994; Minerbi, 1994) and escalated housing costs (Aoude, 1994), driving many of those working in the lower-
paying service industry jobs to the outskirts of urban public housing or rural communities. Life in low-income public housing tracts and/or segmented private houses in low-income, congested communities plays a major role in negating the traditional processes by which Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino families monitor and discipline children. In the past, healthy communal methods were widely utilized to monitor children, especially in the Hawaiian and Samoan cultures. Families’ shelter across the Pacific was never densely packed in compact quarters or constructed in high- and low-rise lodgings that were distinctly segmented off from one another. Today’s low-income public housing establishments in Hawai‘i resemble those one might see in any low-income public housing community across the United States – they are over-crowded, have high levels of transience and extremely high poverty rates. In addition to being physically segregated from each other, apartments are visually separated, thereby impeding communal efforts of child and family monitoring that used to mitigate children’s and adolescent’s wrongdoings and child abuse.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) explain that Polynesian children (which include Hawaiians and Samoans) were once regularly monitored by multiple parents:

Polynesians in Honolulu, San Jose, Los Angeles, Auckland, or any other metropolitan city simply cannot live in their accustomed way; therefore they find that housing, working, and other conditions make multiple parenting unlikely, if not impossible…. While the Polynesian child-rearing system can well handle large numbers of children in the natural setting; nothing is more likely to disturb and disrupt the Polynesian child-rearing system than nucleated suburban living. (p. 196).
Ritchie and Ritchie go on to explain that housing in the past was open, not crowded, and allowed extended family members to view one another, except while sleeping. As such, there was a system of community responsibility widely understood and established, enabling multiple extended family members and adult neighbors to prevent children’s misbehavior before it became too serious. On top of that, if parents were punishing children, and the level of corporal punishment was too severe, family members and/or neighbors of higher status could view any forms of abuse that were transpiring and intervene. “In the village setting multiple parenting operated as a quality control on the parenting of all adults and, far from reducing the individual responsibility of any one adult, probably increased it, but in conjunction with collective responsibility” (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p. 196; see also Fitisemanu et al., 2002; Mokuau, 2002; Hartz, 1995).

In the private and dense living arrangements that characterize Hawai‘i’s contemporary urban public housing tracts and their surrounding neighborhoods, it is far more difficult to employ these communal systems of social control. Consequently, adolescents who already may be struggling with language barriers, who are stereotyped by peers and teachers in school, and who tend to live in high levels of poverty can more easily act out, free from any major community supervision. Likewise, if strained parents utilize methods of corporal punishment when disciplining their children, adult peers are not at hand to constructively intervene when necessary. Thus, in the walled off apartments and houses of present-day Hawai‘i, parents are not held accountable for their actions (or non-actions) by the wider community.

In Hawai‘i’s capitalized and service-oriented economy, occupational stress also inhibits parents from spending time with children. Robillard (1996) comments on Filipino
parents’ common anxiety having to work extremely long hours and not having the time or support system to teach their children the cultural value of respect. Not surprisingly, teaching the proper forms of status and respect are also critical elements of Polynesian cultures, which were learned as children and adolescents experienced “the consequences of early indulgence and its discontinuity. It is then that the child learns about the gap between the statuses of adult and child and about other statuses he or she will later adopt and respect” (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p. 193). Before western contact, adult family members had the time to teach the proper forms of cultural and community respect, and also stressed how proper behavior was necessary such that families were not shamed by an individual’s rebellious behavior (Pukui, Haertig, & Lee, 1979). However, with parents’ present excessive work schedules, fewer children interact with parents and the wider community to adequately learn how one earns and shows respect in their particular ethnic groups. Likewise, with America’s heavy cultural focus on individualism, acculturated teens may be less likely to view any personal negative behaviors as a reflection of their family, in effect canceling out the cultural value of shame that helped to keep individual family members from acting out in ways that would disgrace the larger family.

Hawai‘i’s urban, capitalist economy has also disrupted traditional gender roles in families, adding further to familial stress. In the traditional Filipino family, mothers and fathers generally have far more egalitarian roles. And while on average, Filipino women have relatively high occupational status in the United States, Okamura and Agbayani (1991) theorize that America’s emphasis on male dominance can contribute to family stress if Filipino men acquire a sense of insecurity, especially if they have experienced a
decline in occupational status after migrating from the Philippines and come to view themselves in the United States as inadequate family providers. Cote (1997) and Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) also suggest that Samoan girls and women have had their social status greatly reduced, being confined to cramped, urban apartment buildings that increase stress and do not provide for social interaction with other women from their ethnic group.

Lastly, even in rural parts of Hawai'i, families are strained by the service industry's centralized geographic locale. Hawaiian parents living in more isolated communities remark that it is physically and emotionally taxing, commuting long distances to downtown Honolulu and Waikiki where they must work long hours in low-paying service and construction jobs. In these cases, simply spending time with children is difficult. After long, laborious work shifts and extensive commutes during odd hours of the day or night, nurturing children can sometimes feel a virtual impossibility (Mayeda, Okamoto, & Mark, 2005).

Globally perceived as a multiethnic, melting pot paradise whose residency is characterized by extremely high degrees of interethnic marriages and offspring, and a vacation get away with a welcoming sprit of aloha, Hawai'i has actually been treated callously by Western colonial forces as a racial project to be used for American profit (Edles, 2004). Subsequently, Hawai'i's indigenous population and exploited immigrant groups have been manipulated into expendable servants and hosts. And in this process, these ethnic groups' core cultural component has been heavily compromised – the family. With a disproportionately higher number of families from these ethnic groups becoming fractured, seeing higher rates of youths from these ethnic groups funnel through Hawai'i's juvenile justice system is not especially surprising.
In 2003, Hawai‘i’s total population stood at 1,221,885, with “Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders” comprising 23.00% of the total population, when accounting for people of one or more races. In urban Honolulu, Samoan, Filipino, and to a lesser degree, Hawaiian families and adolescents occupy the same social spaces, working to attain their fair share of limited occupational and educational resources; a high proportion of Hawaiian families also live in rural areas of O‘ahu and on the Neighbor Islands. In this state of affairs, those ethnic groups with greater numbers and overall power continue to benefit at the expense of the indigenous population. Filipinos, for example, comprise a a fairly large proportion of Hawai‘i’s current residential population and are beginning to show significantly greater numbers in occupational and political positions that yield power. Samoans, on the other hand (a fellow Polynesian group to Hawaiians), comprise less than 2% of Hawai‘i’s total population and typically do not reap the benefits of tourist and capitalist enterprises. Still, Filipino residents hold nowhere near the power-base of Caucasians.

Whites make up 24.28% of Hawai‘i’s total population (or 39.48% of the population when accounting for Whites of multiple racial backgrounds). In other words, Hawai‘i residents who are only of Caucasian ancestry now outnumber the combined number of Hawaiians, Samoans, and other Pacific Islanders, even when accounting for those Pacific Islanders of multiple racial backgrounds (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). However, Caucasian residents in Hawai‘i generally do not live in the same neighborhoods as Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino residents, living instead in upper- and middle-class communities, along side many residents of Japanese and ancestry and a smaller population of Chinese residents. It is in these more privileged Hawai‘i
communities where the heaviest capitalist and western political power-base lies, and therefore where greater social responsibility lies in diminishing Hawai‘i’s wide-spread racial disparities.

In the chapters that follow, adolescent participants will express how struggling family situations, racism, rigid gender-role expectations and gender inequity, and other institutional biases complicate their lives and contribute to rebellious pursuits for respect. Before this, however, it is important to briefly explain this study’s research methods and processes since prior research conducted in the Pacific has done more to damage than help Pacific Islander communities.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Participatory Research

In the beginning of Chapter Two, I briefly noted how Merry (2002) argues that spotlighting crime data specific to Hawaiians (and likely other race groups overrepresented in Hawai‘i’s justice system) perpetuates existing racial stereotypes – that Hawaiians are occupationally lazy, physically violent, intellectually aloof, and so on. Presumably then, Chapter One of this study, which highlights a great deal of research on Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino juveniles’ delinquency and arrest rates, does little more than reinforce the prejudicial attitudes too frequently directed towards youth from these ethnic and race groups. Though I generally agree with Merry’s thesis, I also acknowledge that the delinquency, arrest, and incarceration data reviewed earlier in this study can help to justify further research conducted with youth from these ethnic groups and can be used collaboratively by researchers and adolescent participants to better understand untapped adolescent perspectives on these social concerns.

In attempting to identify and employ a more responsible research methodology that investigates racial disproportionality in Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system, I studied the research process termed broadly, participatory research. Essentially, participatory research projects involve a sample of those persons who are affected by the research issue under study in every step of the research process. Thus, community participants are provided with significantly more ownership of the research project and can more effectively use the research findings for their community’s benefit. But before describing the various components of participatory research in greater detail, it is important to overview how and why this research approach emerged historically.
Participatory Research – A Brief History

In an effort to establish sociology as an objective, rational, and respected science free from human biases, social scientists in the early 20th century began embracing positivism as a central scholarly approach used to understand societal patterns. Adopted largely from European scholars, positivist research rested, and still rests upon the theoretical foundation that "empirical research is conducted to establish facts or deterministic laws that govern relationships among events; that any, well-conducted study is likely to reflect such laws in its findings; and that such facts or laws are largely universal" (Biddle, 1987, p. 159). In short, social science was made to mimic the natural sciences, with people studied as objects and findings understood to be applicable universally. Therefore, under the positivist tradition, scholars studying human problems were discouraged from developing close, personal ties with communities under study. Instead, supposed legitimate scholarship only utilized research instruments and methodologies that had been scientifically validated within the exclusive academic circles of university institutions.

Although anti-positivist ideals were advanced as well (including Jane Addams’s Hull House that advocated for community service and social justice), this surge in the social sciences was promoted and substantiated heavily in the University of Chicago’s school of sociology. Highly influential University of Chicago sociologists, such as Robert E. Park and Ernest Burgess, “encouraged their students to consider the city of Chicago as some sort of ‘social laboratory’ within which they could actively pursue genuinely scientific research” (Burns, 1996, p. 476). And staying in line with the positivist tradition,
these social scientists and their colleagues quantified their communities under study while pumping out numerous scientific articles on the city’s various social issues.

By the 1950s, the positivist tradition, widely accepted and practiced in both Europe and North America, was viewed internationally as the supreme social science research model and had spread to developing countries across the globe (Hall, 1992). However, communities (minority communities in particular) under study quickly realized that the only people who truly benefited from positivist research were the scholars themselves. As Park (1992) writes:

...so-called scientific methods in fashion prescribed the treatment of the people being studied as objects, as in the physical sciences. Minorities and the poor bore the brunt of this treatment, since their relative lack of power exposed them disproportionately to being “studied to death” by social researchers. Not only were they subjected to the indignities of being probed as under a microscope, like carriers of social diseases, which they were presumed to be, but to make things worse, they received no tangible benefits from the social science research. (p. 31).

Consequently, during the 1970s in Latin America and other developing areas, social scientists began working with communities such that all parties would benefit from the research and a sustained researcher-community relationship. Engaging with communities in a more egalitarian relationship also emerged out of the numerous social movements that sought minority equality throughout the 1960s (Hall, 1981). In other words, minority communities frequently perceived positivist research as another process that alienated research subjects, cemented discriminatory stereotypes, and furthered the power gap
between academia and community. In many cases, these perceptions were accurate. Community-based scholars hoped that a more collaborative form of research would help to alleviate these important concerns.

Over time this more inclusive form of research has become known as “participatory research.” Within the participatory research school of thought, varying models exist with their own unique strengths, weaknesses, and nuanced approaches. Some approaches are more apt to focus on community education (Petras & Porpora, 1993); others are more geared toward identifying community strengths and creating political change (Laverack & Wallerstein, 2001), while others are more feminist-oriented (Small, 1995). And though the particulars differ, common to all participatory research approaches is the necessity to involve non-academic community members in every phase of the research project, from the initial stages of calling for research projects, to forging trusting relationships, to identifying research concerns, establishing methodologies, owning the research and disseminating findings for advocacy purposes. As mentioned in Chapter One (page 26), Asian American activism was first founded upon participatory research principles, working to give voice to disempowered Asian Americans, though Asian American activists did not term their approach “participatory research” at the time.

Though failing to note participatory research’s roots in Latin America, Whyte’s (1991) work is an important contribution to the push for participatory research in North America. Whyte’s edited volume offers examples of how communities have utilized different participatory research approaches in addressing problems, particularly within industrial and agricultural work settings. In recent years, participatory research has gained more credibility in the United States and is being promoted by major federal
agencies as an approach worthy of replication when addressing social concerns more relevant to public health (Metzler, et al., 2003; Higgins, Maciak, & Metzler, 2001; Riley, Nkinsi, & Buhi, 2001).

Today, the positivist tradition still runs strong, and there is certainly a place for \textit{responsible} positivist research within academia (though as this study will argue, responsible positivist research would benefit greatly by being coupled with action-based participatory research). Unfortunately, North American scholars have noted that participatory researchers still struggle to gain respect from their colleagues as top-tier scientists, since their research is driven so heavily by non-academic communities. As Lincoln (1998) laments with regard to participatory research, “Often, such work is, at best, poorly understood; at worst, it is considered a second-class activity for research university faculty” (p. 263). Consequently, many participatory researchers have found it difficult to negotiate their research philosophies with occupational sustainability and advancement (Cancian, 1993).

However, participatory research requires scholars to develop communication skills that allow for reflexivity, patience, community inclusion, and fluid process building. It asks that researchers listen to and work with communities, rather than enforcing a “top-down” research agenda that is more prone to silence research participants. Finally, participatory research better insures that scholars are responsible for partaking in long-term collaborative efforts that are relevant to and useful for non-academic communities (Weed & McKeown, 2003). In short, participatory research “brings opportunities to do nonalienating research that contributes to social justice and public welfare” (Cancian, 1993, p. 105). Like the positivist school, there is also a place
for participatory research in institutions of higher education that deserves full credibility and scholarly support.

Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) – Components and Limitations

Surprisingly, participatory research has generally not been understood as a methodology in and of itself. Rather, it has been conceived as a process by which research staff collaborate with community members to establish research projects in a more egalitarian manner. In the process, community members may opt to conduct varying qualitative or quantitative research methods, or both. Typically, the researcher’s role is to offer guidance and assistance in carrying out whatever methods the community wishes to employ. Therefore as Small (1995) points out, participatory researchers “...must be methodologically eclectic, usually much more so than traditional academic researchers” (p. 943). I argue that participatory research does constitute a distinct methodology since scholars must be more creative and flexible in employing distinct research protocols while also working with grass-roots community members to utilize accepted research methods.

For instance, the following research protocols have been cited as being essential to the community-based participatory research (heretofore referred to as CPBR) process:

- collaboration between researchers and program/community partners to develop the local research focus, questions, and design;
- community-focused recruitment of study participants under the leadership of community-based program staff;
• employment of community residents as research staff and use of a team approach in research decision making and practice;
• joint program-research oversight of the research process;
• sharing preliminary findings with program/community partners, and engaging them in interpretation of findings and implications for program practice;
• translating research theory and projects into "action," or a legitimate change in the political atmosphere that benefits participants;
• mutual education of community participants and research staff as equal partners; and
• taking a reflexive approach to the CBPR process, such that researchers and community members continuously look back on prior activities and adjust research activities as needed.

(Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2004; McAllister et al., 2003; Wallerstein and Duran, 2003; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Nurturing the abilities to talk with community participants, plan collaborative research projects, and complete the above steps in a truly egalitarian manner are skills too many researchers do not possess, or care to develop.

Nonetheless, as with any research methodology, in forging this collaborative process, there are key pitfalls that participatory researchers may encounter. For starters, participatory approaches are at risk of solidifying social inequality within communities. Mohan (1999) cautions that women (and girls) can be easily silenced in participatory research projects if the community and research environments have patriarchal tendencies. Ironically, participatory research heralds itself as an approach very much in
line with feminism (Small, 1995). However, one can easily see a researcher seeking out community input on a research project and receiving a disproportionate amount of assistance from the more public community leaders, who could very well be male. McIntyre (2000) suggests that in order to bypass this form of discrimination, researchers must be conscious to highlight the viewpoints of all participants and hold "a commitment to look for what has been left out of the traditional theorizing about gender, social class, age, and other social positions" (p. 21). Speaking more broadly, Macaulay et al. (1999) state that "Researchers may inadvertently collaborate with a minority section of the population that does not represent the collective interests of the entire community" (p. 777). These can be critical pitfalls in CBPR processes.

In addition, participatory research is unpredictable since community participants have power in dictating the research questions, methods, and dissemination efforts. Because of this unpredictable characteristic, most participatory projects are extremely time and effort heavy. Vakil (1994) discusses the difficulties she encountered when attempting to complete a CBPR project on housing cooperatives in Zimbabwe in seven months, which did not allow her adequate time to completely identify training needs and networks for all the communities with whom she worked.

Moreover, collaborating with community members in creating and carrying out a research project "...can place additional strain on already overtaxed community organizations" (Metzler et al., 2003, p. 803). For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1993) conducted research with immigrant women in northern California. In reflecting on the process, Hondagneu-Sotelo concluded that having Latina immigrant domestic workers fully engage in a research project from start to finish would be asking for too much time.
and effort. Instead, it was determined that research be carried out which was more advocacy-oriented so not to further encumber the research participants. Thus, researchers must be careful not to burden community members with added stress that does not yield them significant and tangible benefits in the future.

Finally, participatory researchers must be honest with themselves and collaborative community members. Berardi (2002) warns that to some degree, the notion of conducting participatory research might be trendy enough within the academic community such that the approach is merely used as a way to show a collaborative process without a truly sustained collaborative effort:

Another problem with participatory research is the concern with depolitization, as it becomes mainstreamed into large agency and state projects. Scholars need to be careful with terms so that “participatory” does not become a meaningless, catch-all term, with agencies using participatory methods in the data collection or analytical phase of research and then slipping back into a hierarchical or autocratic approach during implementation and management. (p. 849).

Additionally, scholars should be forthright with communities in stating that research projects, even participatory ones, tend to benefit the researchers more than the community research participants themselves (Mohan, 1999). In an effort to even out the benefits of participatory projects, scholars have suggested that community participants be included as authors in research reports and manuscripts (Riley, Nkinsi, & Buhi, 2001). In summary, it is critical that CBPR scholars continually reflect on their research projects,
allowing for constructive criticism and change, in order to insure and maximize participant benefits.

**CBPR with Adolescents**

Unfortunately, very little scholarship has been carried out which involves youth in CBPR projects. This lack of youthful participation in participatory research projects is regrettable. As McDonald (1999) writes,

> Stereotypes suggest that...young people would not have much to say. But once they realise that we are there to listen to them, and that they can use the research process to get others to listen to them as well, they have a great deal to say. (p. 23).

A few participatory research projects have been conducted that include adolescent participants. McIntyre’s (2000) book, *Inner-City Kids*, provides an excellent example, offering some of the potential challenges that emerge when working with youth. McIntyre worked effectively with middle school students predominantly of African American and Puerto Rican heritage, though she identified personally as a “white female university professor-researcher” (p. 17).

An important contribution from McIntyre’s work is how she balanced the power relationships between herself and a group of participants with diverse personalities between the ages of eleven and thirteen. With adolescence being a period in life where exploring and forging one’s personal identity(ies) is of utmost importance, it is hardly surprising that the participants in McIntyre’s study responded with different levels of confidence and enthusiasm: “Some participants contributed silently. Others loudly. Some

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engaged the project passively. Others did so aggressively” (p. 19). Working with participants to come up with creative research approaches that engaged all participants in a comfortable manner (e.g., McIntyre’s use of community photography) proved to be a valuable contribution from McIntyre’s work.

Kelly (1993) also notes on the relative absence of young people engaged in participatory research, noting that “they are thought to lack full capacities for consent and speech” (p. 10) by most researchers. In contrast, Kelly’s work shows that high school students can conceptualize meaningful research proposals and articulate important thoughts with the researcher’s guidance. Kelly does, however, caution researchers to be wary of a few significant impediments. To begin with, when outnumbered numerically, students of color may be silenced when attempting to explore issues covering racial discrimination. Reflecting on her project, Kelly writes, “the story of this project is as interesting for what did not get asked, researched, and proposed for action as for what did” (p. 16; see also Chavez et al., 2003). Kelly also cautions that the researcher’s ethnic/gender background can influence the dynamics with high school students. According to Kelly, because she is Caucasian, it was even more difficult for ethnic minority students to voice their concerns, while being female, “emboldened the girls to contribute more aggressively to the research agenda” (p. 16).

Hones (2002) worked with bilingual high school students, utilizing journaling as a way to interest participants in the research process. According to Hones, using journals and allowing participants to clarify and edit their own words “helps to foster authentic dialogue between myself [the researcher] and research participants and to develop their potential leadership in further research and action efforts” (p. 1168). Hones suggests that
future participatory projects with high school students employ electronic journaling since
e-mail dialogue can occur instantaneously, whereas hardcopy journaling between
participants occurs too infrequently (p. 1181). Using electronic communication tools in
CBPR has been suggested by other scholars as well (Fawcett et al., 2003).

Although barriers are clearly present, CBPR with adolescents is clearly a
plausible endeavor and one that merits future academic work. To begin with, although
extensive research has been carried out overviewing youth populations via quantitative
survey research, considerably less scholarly work has captured the qualitative opinions of
young people in understanding teen issues. Even less scholarly work has employed young
people in framing research questions and research agendas. Perhaps the most critical skill
for researchers to learn in carrying out successful CBPR projects with young people is the
ability to interact in ways that are non-threatening, fun, educational, and genuinely
interesting, while drawing out participation from all participants, despite their individual
and demographic diversity. When the process is carried out in a flexible and inclusive
manner, adolescents’ involvement in CBPR projects can yield notable outcomes,
including policy changes at the local level (Cheatham & Shen, 2003).

CBPR in the Pacific

Just as very little literature exists with regard to CBPR and youth, a dearth of
literature is available describing participatory research approaches in the Pacific. Western
academia has certainly done its part to create and solidify false images of Pacific
Islanders in American popular culture. One only needs to examine the multiple editions
of Margaret Mead’s Coming of Age in Samoa to see how influential scholarly work can
be in misrepresenting Pacific Island adolescents and their supposed behavioral tendencies (Tiffany, 2001).

However, misleading research can do much more than just produce and reify erroneous stereotypes. Smith (1999) argues that western research on indigenous peoples stands as a key component of imperialism.

The development of scientific thought, the exploration and ‘discovery’ by Europeans of other worlds, the expansion of trade, the establishment of colonies, and the systematic colonization of indigenous peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are all facets of the modernist project. (p. 59).

Thus, one must begin with an understanding that western scholarship has its place alongside additional imperialist objectives. As noted further by Smith, western research was used to revamp Pacific concepts of space, time, epistemology, and cultural status that benefited western imperialists and their push to subjugate Pacific peoples. Such arguments are very much in line with those proposed by Said (1978), who illustrates how western academia created knowledge (i.e., myths) of Egypt and other sectors of the Middle East that greatly facilitated broader imperialist efforts.

Returning to Hawai‘i, Trask (1999) argues that the University of Hawai‘i continues to play an important role in subjugating Pacific peoples by strengthening a tourist industry (e.g., the university has its own School of Travel Industry Management) that relegates Pacific Islanders to low-end service jobs and occupies stolen land and other natural resources. Additionally, Trask argues that the University of Hawai‘i administration and faculty are generally unwilling to incorporate substantial programs
and viewpoints that would support Native efforts and pay homage to indigenous social movements. Not surprisingly, Stannard (2000) notes that with each incremental rise in higher education (from junior college, to bachelors, to graduate/professional school), the proportion of Hawaiian students decreases substantially.

In fact, educational research on additional ethnic minorities in Hawai‘i substantiates Trask’s claims. Filipino students are under-represented at the University of Hawai‘i relative to their youthful population in Hawai‘i and have received an education at the K-12 levels that discourages cultural preservation and a sensitivity toward immigrant concerns (Agbayani, 1996). And though well represented on the University of Hawai‘i football team (i.e., males), Samoan students are also under-represented in the university’s student body (Franco, 1987). Thus, the University of Hawai‘i institution in many ways still represents a legacy of racial discrimination and colonialism.

In light of these realities, I have chosen to apply a CBPR approach for this project, which aims to identify and better understand adolescent perspectives on teen issues in Hawai‘i. Of course, concentrating on problem behaviors has its own potential hazards. Once again, Merry (2002; 2000) accurately maintains that by zoning in on disproportionately high arrest rates of Hawaiians, racist stereotypes of criminogenic Hawaiians are extended without taking into account the broader historical and contemporary forms of colonialism that very much cause disproportionate minority confinement. My intentions, therefore, are to work with youth to reach an understanding of these constructed realities, while accounting for the multiple forms of institutional and interpersonal barriers that impact young people’s lives. Moreover, it is likely that in the
process, signs of resilience will emerge that are equally important to highlight in studies with adolescents and other minority groups.

And while it can be difficult to balance equal emphases on resilience, victimization, and deviance, finding this balance is critical for scholars working in the Pacific, as well as for those who hope to better understand adolescent concerns. Simply tagging Pacific peoples as distraught victims in the face of colonialism does little to advance ongoing decolonization movements and fails to acknowledge the savvy ways that Pacific Islanders resisted and still resist colonial efforts. On the other hand, only citing empowerment movements while ignoring victimization allows readers to forget the horror that has been thrust upon indigenous peoples (Stannard, 1989). As contended by Chappell (1995), the academic community has a responsibility to communicate both sides of these extremes and the subtleties that lie in between.

Finally, Chappell (1995) also states that “A truly ‘island-centered’ historiography requires more than talking about past islanders. It also demands hearing native voices in the present and future...” (p. 318). While the current project is not intended to be an historical work, it is my hope that the voices presented here will offer contemporary perspectives from the Pacific, provided by teenagers who stand to become Hawai‘i’s future adults. More importantly, it is my intention that the voices profiled in this text will offer a realistic glance into the processes by which adolescents in some Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino communities perceive various social concerns on an individual and structural level.
Personal Background and Research Ethics

Although this project is not a self-reflexive study of myself, it is appropriate and necessary to briefly discuss my position as an outsider conducting research in Hawai‘i. Now in my early 30s, I was born in Massachusetts, but raised and lived in Southern California between the ages of about three and twenty-three. After graduating from the University of California at Irvine, I moved to Hawai‘i to attend graduate school at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. My father’s side of the family has a fairly rich history in Hawai‘i, as my great-great grandparents came to the island of Kaua‘i in the mid-nineteenth century to work as plantation contract laborers. Thus, most of my extended family on my father’s side is local Japanese, though some family members, like myself, are of mixed ancestry.

My mother’s side of the family is Caucasian (English and German). My grandfather’s family on my mother’s side immigrated to the United States in 1680, arriving in Massachusetts and eventually settling in Iowa, though my mother grew up in Burbank, California. My grandmother’s family immigrated to the United States in the mid-eighteenth century and first settled in Illinois before re-settling in Kansas. Prior to the Civil War, my great-great grandmother and her family assisted African slaves in escaping to the North by hiding slaves beneath hay in wagons as they traversed north through the underground railroad.

Although my father’s side of the family has lived in Hawai‘i now for five generations, we are by no means indigenous. Thus, although I tend to blend in visually amongst the local population as a hapa-haole (half Japanese, half Caucasian), I am clearly an outsider in Hawai‘i, conducting research with Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino
adolescents. It is largely due to my multiple outsider statuses (in addition, my age, educational level, socio-economic status, and in some cases gender, make me a demographic outsider) that I sought out a research methodology, which would help insure the development of a trusting relationship between myself and participants, maximizing participant empowerment and perspective.

Unlike the Christian missionaries of yester-year, I do not intend to impose western viewpoints and ideologies as a means to “enlighten” the minority population. As outlined above, it is my hope that by holding a greater consciousness to the negative consequences of western influence in the Pacific, spending an extensive amount of time with study participants to develop trust (Holkup et al., 2004), and drawing on the CBPR process, any unintended negative consequences of my research will be mitigated. Whether or not this is possible remains to be seen and is certainly open to interpretation and debate.

Research Process and Setting

This research project took place with small groups of students from two Hawai‘i high schools on the island of O‘ahu. In the first phase of this project, I conducted research with students attending a high school from Honolulu’s Leeward district (on the West side of O‘ahu; at the request of the school, the school’s name will remain anonymous). More specifically, I collaborated with the community’s local YMCA and the high school’s athletic department to create an after-school, for credit health class, which I taught with assistance from two YMCA teen counselors, geared for student-athletes who (at the school athletic department’s request) were academically at-risk. School counselors
defined academically at-risk student-athletes as those students who were failing at least two current classes, though other students were allowed to participate if they were doing well academically. In this phase, student-athlete participants, the two YMCA counselors, and myself met twice per week for approximately two hours after school. In order to develop a trusting rapport with the student-athlete participants in this phase, I also taught participants a type of athletic drills called plyometrics each day we met for roughly the first hour of class. During the second hour of each class, we met either at the YMCA or on the school’s campus to map out the CBPR project and discuss teen issues. This project lasted the entire 2004 Spring semester. In addition, in this phase of the research project, the YMCA and I were able to hire a part-time high school student assistant who had taken two of the YMCA’s previous teen classes to help design class lesson plans and analyze emerging data.

In the second phase of the this research project, I was able to collaborate with an alternative high school that served students who were having more serious problems with truancy, substance use, and/or violent behavior. This alternative school (which will also remain anonymous) only enrolls fifteen students each semester and caters to students from five public high schools on O'ahu. In order to enroll in this high school, students must formally apply with a legal parent or guardian and demonstrate that they are serious about improving their educational efforts. Recruitment for this phase of the research project was carried out with help from the school’s administration at the school’s introductory meeting for students and parents. In this phase, I met with student participants once per week for roughly two hours during the entire Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 school semesters. This phase also differed from the first phase in that I met with
student participants during school hours; participating students received elective credit for their participation.

During class sessions in both phases, study participants and I identified teen issues, discussed daily occurrences at school, joked around, worked through silence, planned research projects, practiced community presentations, and learned from each other. Various tools were designed by myself, teen counselors, and the participants themselves in order to engage participants through the research project. In most sessions, we had very free-flowing class discussions that essentially resembled focus groups. In other classes, students filled out worksheets on teen issues. Student participants also examined pre-existing information on juvenile delinquency in Hawai‘i and discussed the data, offering their own interpretations to various adolescent trends. As might be surmised, virtually all the data collected for this project was qualitative. All participants agreed to audio recording class discussions knowing that their identities would be kept confidential; I then transcribed class discussions in their entirety, verbatim (in Phase One of this study, the student assistant also transcribed one class session). A more detailed description of the research project’s recruitment methods, classroom dynamics (including a description of the athletic rapport building component used in Phase One), and methods used to analyze the qualitative data gathered for this project is provided in Appendix One. The University of Hawai‘i, Committee on Human Studies approved all research procedures for this project (CHS # 12609).
Research Participants

Table 6, below, lists the fourteen high school students who participated in this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honolulu High School</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity(ies)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1 (Spring 2004)</td>
<td>Dianna</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Filipino, Japanese, African American, Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tavita</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Samoan, Hawaiian</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jay</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tulipa</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Samoan</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shauna*</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Samoan, German</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative High School</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity(ies)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 (Fall 2004/ Spring 2005)</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hawaiian, Filipino, and additional ethnicities</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joelle</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hawaiian, Filipino, and additional ethnicities</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Korean, and additional ethnicities*</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Filipino, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Japanese</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lani</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hawaiian, Tongan, Japanese, Portuguese</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hawaiian, Chinese, Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brooke</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Filipino, Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*High school student assistant.

As can be seen in Table 6, not all of the students who partook in this study were of Hawaiian, Samoan, and/or Filipino ancestry. For instance, Lani and Karen were of Caucasian and Korean/ Caucasian and other ancestries, respectively. Additionally, ten out of the study’s fourteen participants reported being from multiple ethnic backgrounds.

What follows, is a brief introduction to each of the participants.

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5 I have not provided all of Julie’s, Joelle’s, or Karen’s ethnic backgrounds in order to help protect their identities. Joelle and Karen provided a substantial amount of important but also very detailed information on how their boyfriends (or ex-boyfriends) controlled them and influenced them to fight with other girls, and Julie is Joelle’s older sister. Some of the stories provided by Joelle and Karen are unique enough that their (ex-)boyfriends may be able to trace the information provided back to them. As Fontes (2004) writes with regard to research concerning violence against women, “Disguising revealing details is of particular concern in studies with small samples or in which participants could have a high profile in a particular community” (p. 155). Thus, here and throughout this work (and especially when discussing issues related to romantic partners), I will deliberately leave out some details to help protect the girls’ anonymity. I will also not list their (ex-)boyfriends’ exact ages or ethnicities in order to maintain the girls’ anonymity.
Honolulu High School Participants (Phase One)

Dianna (Filipino, Japanese, African American, Caucasian): At the time of study, Dianna was a 16-year-old girl, who was recruited as a potential participant. Diana was born and raised in Hawai‘i, and had no lack of confidence in breaking traditional gender roles through sport. A multi-sport athlete, Dianna ran track, played football, and assisted as student-help on the school’s wrestling team. Although Dianna was in her second year of high school, she struggled somewhat in her classes, and was still a freshman academically. Dianna had also received a number of school suspensions in the past for fighting. Very outgoing, extremely articulate, and holding a very positive attitude, Dianna quickly emerged as a natural leader in the class. Dianna missed a large portion of class sessions since this class was offered immediately after school during the Spring semester, right in the midst of track season. Still, Dianna was one of the most responsible and polite students in either of the classes, always informing me ahead of time if she had to miss class in order to compete in a track meet or attend a particularly important practice. In terms of her own ethnic identity, Dianna expressed that she identified equally with all her backgrounds. Dianna lived with her mother in a small house close to her school.

Tavita (Samoan, Hawaiian): Tavita was another natural leader in the class. A very proud and intelligent individual, Tavita commanded respect on numerous levels. He was also a physically gifted individual. Although he was relatively big (about 5’9” and 240 pounds), Tavita also had impressive quickness and explosive physical power. Football was a very important part of his life. Tavita had transferred to this high school after having been expelled from another high school for assaulting a fellow student, who
was also a teammate. Tavita was chosen as a potential participant for this project because he was failing two of his classes. His struggles in school were not a reflection of his intelligence. Tavita was quite articulate, had strong writing skills, and contributed extensively to class discussions, and when I conducted grade checks, Tavita asserted that he had his academic setbacks under control. Essentially, Tavita simply did not try very hard in school. Despite showing a sharp temper on occasion, Tavita was normally very well mannered and respectful. Though he was part-Hawaiian, Tavita identified more with his Samoan ancestry. Tavita also lived with both his parents in a middle-income neighborhood.

**Jay (Filipino):** Jay also played football for the school. Standing at about 5’9” tall and weighing around 260 pounds, Jay certainly broke the stereotype that all Filipinos were small in physical stature. Jay was also born in Hawai‘i and offered insightful viewpoints, but was very quiet. Having a more reserved personality and being one of the younger students (15 years old), Jay was more of a follower in the class. Less inclined to speak in discussion sessions, it was easier to attain Jay’s perspectives on various teen issues through in-class worksheet assignments. Jay was not struggling academically at all and had never been in any kind of trouble in or out of school. Jay was also the only participant in this study (from both phases) of full Filipino ancestry. Jay lived with both his parents.

**Tulipa (Samoan):** Tulipa was a junior at the time of the study and registered to partake in the research project after having gone through one of the YMCA’s other teen programs. She was a strong student academically and in some seasons played for the school’s volleyball team. Tulipa was not the most talkative student, but was a poised
presenter and could effectively express her viewpoints when she felt necessary. Though Tulipa’s parents were from American Samoa, Tulipa was born in Hawai‘i, and she had never gotten into any serious trouble in school. On occasion, Tulipa had difficulty attending class, as her family expected her to come home after school to care for her siblings and attend to other household chores. Such expectations are not surprising considering Tulipa was the eldest daughter in a Samoan family. Tulipa lived with both her parents and other relatives in a low-income housing tract.

**Ryan (Samoan):** A fifteen-year-old freshman, Ryan was a good-natured, good-humored, talkative, and very energetic freshman. Although Ryan admitted to having used marijuana occasionally, it was not a major issue for him and he stopped using it all together mid-way through the semester. Ryan was also born in Hawai‘i but his parents had immigrated from American Samoa. He was having some minor difficulties in school. Being a freshman and having a very non-confrontational personality, Ryan was never one to rock the boat during class discussions, but he regularly added on to others’ points of view. One might say Ryan was somewhat of a class clown, and this perception seemed pervasive among the Phase One participants as well as Ryan’s football teammates. Though Ryan did not garner the same levels of respect granted to other student participants, everyone seemed to like him very much. Ryan lived with both parents in a middle-income neighborhood.

**Shauna (Samoan, German):** Shauna was Phase One’s high school student assistant. She was a very bright, insightful, and responsible student who was on her way to attend a private university on the continental United States in the Fall semester where she planned to major in business. Shauna graduated with academic honors at the end of
the Spring semester, and disrupted any notions that Samoan students could not excel in school. Like Tulipa, Shauna had also gone through the YMCA’s other teen programs, and therefore, was able to apply for this part-time paid position. Also like Tulipa, Shauna had a hard time juggling her after school responsibilities for this research project with her familial duties at home. For example, there were times during the research project when Shauna’s relatives flew in from American Samoa and Shauna simply had to miss class. As Ryan once said in regard to Shauna’s responsibilities as a Samoan female adolescent, “Yup, that’s the way it is!” Shauna did not play any sports, but she helped out with the athletic portion of the Phase One project by timing other student participants in their athletic drills. Unquestionably, Shauna was a great role model for her peers. She met with myself and the YMCA teen counselors on a regular basis to help plan class sessions, and attended most of the class sessions as well. Shauna lived with both parents in a low-income housing tract community.

Alternative High School Participants (Phase Two)

Julie (Hawaiian, Filipino, and additional ethnicities): Julie was an 18-year-old senior who was born in Honolulu. She had been expelled from school for fighting and using illicit substances, and was arrested once for assaulting another girl. As will be overtly evident, many of the student participants in Phase Two of this study (including Julie) had far more difficult childhoods than those in Phase One. Child and Protective Services took Julie and her younger sister, Joelle, away from their parents when Julie was in middle school. Prior to this, Julie claims that her childhood was by and large happy, until her parents began using and selling drugs, at which time things began to change for
the worse. Julie has bounced around, living in a number of O‘ahu neighborhoods with different family members and friends since her parents were arrested and incarcerated. During most of the study, Julie’s mother was incarcerated and her father had recently been placed in a drug treatment center. Towards the end of the 2005 Spring semester, Julie’s mother was released from prison.

Julie expressed a great deal of pride in being a tough and respected participant in O‘ahu’s “punk rock” scene. She was also extremely outgoing, garrulous, and openly provided numerous stories about her often times violent upbringing. Julie wrote of herself, “I’m easy to get along with, outgoing, a crazy, spontaneous, chick that loves to have fun, [wants] to graduate and get a good paying job.” As will be described in later chapters, Julie was one of the few girls in either of the research phases who spoke adamantly about girls’ gender roles and the need establish independence. Julie lived with relatives in an upper-middle class house during the time of study.

Joelle (Hawaiian, Filipino, and additional ethnicities): Joelle was Julie’s 16-year-old sister. Like Julie, Joelle was born in Honolulu and was forced to endure the same familial challenges, although the harsh changes in Joelle’s life began when she was in her later elementary school years. Joelle was even more talkative than her older sister and did not hesitate to discuss her anger as it related to certain family members and a romantic partner. Though outwardly positive at the time of the study, Joelle also described a personal history of depression and substance use that lead to many of her problems in school. She wrote of herself, “I was born here in Hawai‘i, and grew up with my family til’ about 6 years ago and we all got separated. I am/try to be a very happy person.” Unlike her older sister, Joelle had more conflicting perspectives on being an
adolescent female and the unique challenges that girls of color can experience. This is not
terribly surprising since Joelle lived with her boyfriend who was in his early twenties
(who had official custody over her) and his parents, in an upper-class O‘ahu community.
Joelle and her classmates often times chatted openly about her ongoing “drama’s” with
her boyfriend, and her frequent desire to leave him. That notwithstanding, Joelle was also
a confident and highly intelligent adolescent, who counselors frequently stated would
benefit by returning to her old school and succeed academically. By the middle of the
Spring 2005 semester, Joelle had broken up with her boyfriend, moved out of his parents’
house and moved back in with her mother.

Karen (Korean, and additional ethnicities): Karen was born in Honolulu and
was 16 at the time of the study. As with Julie and Joelle, Karen was one of the most
loquacious student participants in either phase. Likewise, Karen had an arduous
upbringing, and she was not shy about describing it. Karen’s teachers also expressed that
since she was highly intelligent, and only a sophomore (though she should have been a
junior, as this was her third year in high school), they hoped she would return to her old
high school and attend classes that were more challenging for her and in line with her
academic capabilities. Karen lived with her parents at the time of the study in what she
described as “one of those homeless solutions buildings,” but had lived with friends in
the past all over urban Honolulu when life at home had become violent. Still, Karen spent
most of her time outside of school working in a small accessories store for girls and with
her boyfriend, who was in his late twenties. Despite having a boyfriend who was
considerably older than her, Karen steadfastly conveyed that she was in control of the
relationship. Due to her family history, Karen also expressed she had gone through severe
periods of depression and dependence on various illicit substances. At the time of the study, however, Karen always attended class and proved to be a responsible student with a high degree of potential.

**Matt (Filipino, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Japanese):** Matt was also born in Honolulu and was 15 years old during his time as a participant in this research project. Being lean and standing at about 5'5" tall, Matt was relatively small in physical stature, and Matt’s physical size impacted his outlook on life. In Matt’s journal, he described himself in the following manner:

Some qualities that best describe me is that I’m small, can be quiet, I can get really angry, I smoke, I like the beach, like to listen to the radio, kick back, play the ukalele with my friends, like to drink, cruise with friends, I am shy, I like to play PS2 (Play Station 2), and that’s about it.

As will be shown in upcoming chapters, Matt felt that because of his size, in order to protect himself from being targeted as a frequent victim of violence, he needed to prove his physical toughness and courage with other males. Thus, Matt had engaged in his share of physical confrontations and fights in recent years. Matt lived with his father and his father’s girlfriend and reported serious conflicts with both figures regarding his independence and their substance use. Matt also resented his mother for leaving him earlier in his life since he now had to negotiate living with a mother figure who he disliked quite intensely. With regard to his overall upbringing, Matt credits his father and uncles as his primary adult influences. In this phase of the study, Matt was one of the few male participants who expressed his viewpoints with me and the rest of the group and did so quite effectively, both verbally and in writing assignments. Overall, Matt was a laid-
back, relaxed individual who seemed to be able to get along with most people, but who also felt slighted by too many adult figures in his lifetime. At the beginning of the 2005 Spring semester, Matt was expelled from the high school and effectively, excluded from this study, after he was reportedly caught stealing cigarettes from another student.

Lani (Caucasian): Lani joined the Phase Two part of this research project late in the Fall 2004 school semester. She was a very polite and well-spoken student, though not as talkative as the other female participants. As with all other participants, Lani was born in Honolulu, but was the only Caucasian student in this study. Like Joelle and Karen, Lani’s teachers felt that she could re-integrate into her old school and thrive academically if she desired. Lani had run away from home a number of times and experimented with drugs, but had never engaged in any severe forms of delinquency. Lani lived with her mother, and I never determined where her father was in her life. Her family and school troubles emerged in large part because of her mother’s use of various illegal substances, though it is quite possible her father’s absence also contributed to this. Lani was the other female participant in this study who consciously asserted more progressive views on girls’ and women’s gender role expectations.

Greg (Hawaiian, Tongan, Japanese, Portuguese): Greg was a junior level student from Hawai‘i, who had recently visited Tonga and kindled a newly found Tongan identity, writing of himself, “So now as you can see I’m so Tonganed out!! I’m just a person trying to make it through life!!” Greg grew up on the west side of O‘ahu and in different sectors of town (Honolulu) with his mother and extended family. In his late elementary school years Greg was incorporated into some family members’ drug selling businesses as a “runner” (someone who transported drugs since police would be less
inclined to suspect a young person to be carrying drugs). Greg was also very open about his family’s past issues. However, Greg was unable to attend most class sessions due to health problems that inhibited him from attending school. By the middle of the Fall 2004 semester, Greg was receiving home schooling on a regular basis, effectively eliminating him from the research project.

**Josh (Hawaiian, Chinese, Caucasian):** Josh was a fairly reserved 16-year-old student from a rural part of Hawai‘i who had come to this alternative high school after having been chronically truant from his previous school. For about a month during the 2004 semester, Josh had also skipped out on school but ended up returning after having a discussion about his absences with the school staff. Josh stated that he had a content childhood and did not encounter the same types of heavy parental problems described by his peers. However, Josh’s older brother had abused a number of illicit substances, including steroids, and was incarcerated at one point for assault. Josh, on the other hand, had stayed clear from his brother’s influences and never even experimented with substance use. Still, Josh recognizes his older brothers as some of the more influential persons in his life, who taught him through sports to grow up fast. Though Josh and I got along very well – sometimes working out together after class sessions – I had a difficult time getting him to contribute in class discussions and on class worksheets. He repeatedly fell back on the phrase, “I had a happy childhood.” Still, he offered important viewpoints on different issues and illustrated how having a supportive mother contributed to his positive mental health.

**Brooke (Filipino, Caucasian):** A sophomore student, also Hawai‘i born, Brooke was one of the most difficult students to engage in class discussions. It was not just that
she was shy, but Brooke also told me that she was not comfortable talking about her business in front of the other students, in particular the others female participants who Brooke thought would gossip about her business later. In turn, Brooke preferred writing in her journal and on class worksheets. Brooke expressed two major family problems from the past, her estranged father, who failed her and her mother, and her uncle, who Brooke loved dearly, but who passed away when she was about seven years old. The only current (and relatively minor) family-related conflict Brooke really wrote about revolved around her mother’s efforts to keep her from spending too much time in person or on the phone with her boyfriend.

Demographically, the student participants offered a number of strengths and weaknesses for this project. In terms of gender representation, the project included eight girls and six boys, and most adolescent participants were of Hawaiian, Samoan, and/or Filipino ancestry. Unfortunately, none of the students who ended up partaking in this project were born outside of Hawai‘i, which probably points to a flaw in some of the recruitment strategies utilized, especially for Phase One of this project (please see Appendix I for a more detailed description of the recruitment strategies). Nevertheless, the students involved in this project were dynamic in voicing their opinions on important subject matters. The upcoming chapters will present qualitative data simultaneously from both phases of the study, although participants from the two separate phases never interacted with one another. Data presented will include information gathered during group discussions, from class worksheets on specific teen issues (see Appendix II for worksheet examples), and from journal entries (only Phase Two students kept journals).
In Chapter 4, the student participants portrayed above will offer their perspectives on one of the issues they have identified as most crucial in their communities and personal lives – interpersonal violence.
CHAPTER FOUR: FIGHTING FOR RESPECT

It was towards the end of the school semester in Phase One of the study. Regular school hours were over. One of the YMCA counselors, the student participants, and myself were walking from the school library to one of the other classrooms to practice for an upcoming community presentation. I was in the front of the group, and as we were bypassing some other students, I vaguely noticed Jay and Tavita joking around, mildly shoving each other and laughing. I paid little attention to it, casually thinking it typical, jovial male behavior between teammates. The next thing I knew, Jay and Tavita were entangled in a heated brawl. Admittedly, despite Jay’s physical size, I feared for his safety since Tavita was roughly the same size, but considerably stronger and a year older. However, Jay held his own, as both boys wrestled one another to the ground.

Though it took extensive efforts, I somehow managed to wedge myself between the two and temporarily held Tavita back. At only about 170 pounds, it is almost humorous to picture myself trying to break up a fight involving two high school football players who each weighed at least 240 pounds. Dianna moved in, trying to assist me in calming Tavita down verbally, while I asked Ryan to try and hold back Jay. Jay, however, maturely remained calm and did not attempt to advance towards Tavita. I stood in between the two, facing Tavita, telling him to cool off and asking him if he really wanted to hurt his friend. Tavita’s anger only seemed to intensify, as he continued to call Jay out. He then brushed me aside and went after Jay again. The two only ended up pushing each other, as I immediately got in between them a second time. Tavita then yelled at Jay and stormed away.
After we made sure nobody was physically hurt, the YMCA counselor and I thought it would be best to go on to the classroom and collectively talk about what had just happened. As we walked to class, a group of students were aggressively yelling at Jay, “What, Jay, you think you’re bad now?” I recall wanting to yell aggressively back at the group of students myself, telling them (in an even more forceful manner) to be quiet, but I just told Jay to try and ignore them. Jay seemed emotionally upset since he looked up to Tavita, as both a friend and teammate. To say that class morale was low would be an immense understatement. This notwithstanding, I asked students to write down what happened and what they thought of the whole situation, considering we had been discussing violence as a major problem among youth in their community in previous class sessions.

As the students were writing, Tavita entered the classroom, smiling and clearly calmed down. Jay immediately extended his hand in hopes of reconciling their friendship. The two shook and hugged, and I felt a wave of personal relief flow through my body. After some extensive joking around by Dianna and mild class discussion, I asked all students to resume with their new writing assignment. Ryan summarized his viewpoints on the altercation by writing the following:

I thought it was pretty cool, but [it] was not very cool. I thought Jay was gonna get his ass kick, but nah, yup, it was all cool. I was gonna break it up but I never like get my ass kick you know what I mean.

Jay and Tavita wrote fairly similar synopses. Jay wrote, “I think that the fighting started because someone started teasing each other and then the other person is offended and then they fight.” Tavita’s rundown of the conflict was slightly more descriptive:
I think the fight started because we were playing around and Jay was already irritated so he teased me. I didn’t take it seriously until he was pushing me all out and then I took it seriously. I didn’t want to hit him so I walked away.

Dianna’s write-up indicated that there was a dimension of the fight that involved a race-based insult. Her write-up was provided in the following manner:

_Tavita and Jay_

1. Pushing
2. Nudging
3. Teasing
4. Wrestling
5. BEEF!

1) Tavita and Ryan pushing around Jay.
2) Tavita kept on nudging him and Jay get more mad.
3) Jay teased Tavita you Stink Samoan!!
4) Tavita gets pissed & starts wrestling
5) BAM Jay is MAD, poof, Tavita is up against the wall and on the floor!!
6) Where am I in all this??

Laughing my ass off cuz I never know it was a real fight until I tried to hold Tavita back but he was Sole Mad!! Oopps my bad.

“Sole” (pronounced So-le) is a local term in Hawai‘i for Samoans, though when used strictly by itself is not considered disparaging. According to Dianna, the male students’
interactions with each other were not serious until Jay made the derogatory remark about Tavita's Samoan ancestry (stink Samoan), at which point things intensified. However, Dianna's use of the term "Sole" in her write-up to express Tavita's intensified anger should also be highlighted as a marker of Samoans' supposed violent and temperamental tendencies.

As odd as it may sound, we finished class that day, and I spoke with Jay and Tavita afterwards. They had visibly patched things up, class morale was raised substantially, and everything seemed back to normal. Still, I informed the two that I had to tell the school's Athletic Director about what happened, but that I would tell him we had all resolved the conflict maturely. Everyone was fine, we called it a day, and nobody was formally punished. In the aftermath of this conflict, I realized how quickly fights could materialize, even if I was in close proximity to the potential participants.

A critical aspect of the community-based participatory research (CBPR) process is reflection. In reflecting back on this incident, knowing that Jay and Tavita were friends beforehand (and afterwards), it would be difficult to predict this altercation. Still, Tavita had been expelled from another high school for assaulting a football teammate, so it may have been prudent to position myself closer to him, simply to monitor the class dynamics more consciously, without trying to constantly police everyone. It may have also been beneficial to talk with students candidly earlier in the semester, stating that racial slurs would not be tolerated, even in jest. While not downplaying the conflict, the YMCA counselor tried to get me not to worry about the situation too much, stating that though not normal, neither was it terribly uncommon for students in their teen programs to get into fights with one another during YMCA activities. In fact, as the student participants in
both phases of this project indicated, fighting was perceived as an almost normal aspect of adolescent life.

In this chapter, I illustrate the ways that the adolescent participants in this project conceptualized violence in their communities and in their personal lives. However, it should first be noted that in terms of racial stereotypes, the widespread characterization of Hawaiian and Samoan students being dangerously violent is hardly recent. Describing results from a survey given to high school seniors from four O'ahu schools in 1976, Blanchard and Blanchard (1983) note that Hawaiian and Samoan students were typically viewed as school bullies far more than students from other ethnic groups:

In terms of ethnic factors in school violence, students were asked: “Do the students in your school who hassle you or “bully” other students tend to come from any particular ethnic group? If so, which ones?”

Of the 1139 respondents, 34.4 percent indicated that no group was more responsible, but of the 65.6 percent who did single out a group, the great majority selected either Samoans or Hawaiians as the bullies. The proportions selecting one or the other of these two groups differed from school to school. In an “urban high status” school and in a “suburban” school, 57.0 percent and 42.8 percent of the total respondents, respectively indicated that Hawaiian students were the troublemakers. Samoans were selected by 23.6 percent and 24.9 percent of respondents in the two schools. In an “urban cosmopolitan” school, these proportions were
reversed, with 52.8 percent singling out Samoans, and 20.4 percent accusing Hawaiians. (p. 173, 174).

As the passage above indicates, as far back as 1976, Hawaiian and Samoan students have been typecast as the typical “bullies” and “trouble makers” on high school campuses in Hawai‘i. Filipino students have been labeled as students who more commonly join gangs and carry knives for protection (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind, & Koo, 2001; Okamura, 1982). Ostensibly, one might simply argue that juvenile arrest data appear to substantiate these racial stereotypes, as overviewed in Chapter One. But as the student participants in this study will demonstrate, violent behavior holds a number of different meanings, emanating from complex social circumstances that are rarely accounted for in quantitative data sets.

**Learning to Fight in Gendered Context**

All student participants in both phases stated that fighting was one of the two most serious teen issues in Hawai‘i, the other being substance use. After collaboratively coming up with class rules, one of the first activities we engaged in was identifying and ranking the teen issues student participants felt were most important for them personally, and in their respective communities. Students in Phase One created their own survey on teen issues, which they distributed to 77 of their peers and then analyzed themselves. As we had expected, fighting and substance use topped the list, with “rumors,” “family problems,” and “car racing” rounding out the top five. Among the Phase Two group of students, violence and substance use were also the two teen issues brought up most frequently, along with depression and family problems. In fact, the participants’
perceptions coincide with those expressed by Hawai‘i high school students in general, who claim that fears of violence and drugs are the greatest concerns on school campuses (Keesing, 2000; 1999).

When talking about different forms of violence with the students, I asked a whole slew of questions that prompted a variety of responses and related discussions. Typical questions I asked in class discussions included, “How do fights start?”; “Do certain groups of students fight more than others?”; “How much do gangs play into fighting?”; and so on. However, no rigid interview schedule was used during class discussions; rather, our conversations were fluid, and I asked questions that related to students’ shifting answers. As our discussions progressed, it became immediately evident that for students who had been in their share of fights, the process by which they learned to fight tended to differ by gender. Showing similarities with youth from other ethnic minority groups, male participants were far more likely to report learning to fight through interactions with older male family members (e.g., fathers, cousins, and especially brothers) and peers. Moreover, in learning to fight, male participants pointed out that violent interactions with male family members and peers were not always perceived as a type of abuse. Instead, they were more frequently distinguished as a necessary and inevitable learning experience that substantiated their male development – a hyper-masculine rite of passage, so to speak. For example, Ryan, Tulipa, and Tavita stated the following during a group discussion:

DM: Where do students learn how to fight?
Ryan: Their older siblings.
Tavita: Yeah, from their brothers or sisters or like their family.
Ryan: Yeah, mostly their brothers.

Tavita: Or people they hang out with.... Yeah, you cruise with gangs and stuff.... Our family, we used to like, if you get mad at somebody else, you gotta put on gloves and stuff and go outside on the patio and whoever get licken’s, get licken’s some more after they get licken’s from their brothers and sisters. So, whoever the loser, that’s how it was when we was young.

Ryan: Nah, me I just ask my brother. He gave me couple lessons with the gloves, couple knock outs.

Tulipa: Some people they have older brothers or sisters, they get forced by their older brothers or sisters to get that person.

Tavita: Yeah, like if you with your brothers and stuff, they like...force you go.

In particular, Tavita (whose family apparently had a boxing system established to resolve intra-sibling conflicts) went on to articulate how fighting among family members could induce youth into becoming fearless fighters, who would not acquiesce to threats by others: “Some people...some families, they fight so much that the kids come like, used to it and like, they fearless already, like, they don’t care who they fight with.” Considering Tavita’s comments above, his propensity to settle conflicts via fighting is much less surprising.

Students also said that family members were expected to back one another up if one person got into a fight. Shauna stated, “Oh, another reason for fighting is like if your brother or sister is in trouble. It doesn’t matter if you are not in the problem, you are just over there to back them up and you just jump in.”
dynamic to fighting was more common among boys or girls, students said it applied more
to males. Josh provided a personal example, written on a worksheet assignment. “We
were just pushing each other, then all his boys came out. So then my friends came out
with all my cousins, so we licked all of them.”

Matt also talked about learning how to fight with friends as a seemingly necessary
aspect of behavior among male peers, with Karen chiming in at the end, stating that
fighting between boys did not tend to jeopardize friendships as much as it does for girls.

_Matt:_ You learn to fight with friends, cuz if you show that you can scrap,
people won’t pick on you no more.

_DM:_ Has that happened with you?

_Matt:_ Yeah.

_DM:_ What happened?

_Matt:_ One of my friends just kept teasing me and I got sick of it, so I wen’
lick him.

_DM:_ And what did that accomplish for you?

_Matt:_ (Chuckling) He stopping picking on me and my other friends saw
not to mess wit’ me too much.

_DM:_ How did it affect your relationship with your friends?

_Matt:_ Nah, we was all cool after that.

_Karen:_ Boys they get into fights, and then afterwards, they like all cool.

Girls, they get into fights, it’s like still, “I hate you bitch.”

Moore (1991) has also noted how fighting amongst males can be a ritualized process by
which young men bond, such that physical violence is not constructed as problem
behavior. To the contrary, for males, it is frequently heralded as an honorable form of male bonding.

On the other hand, when asked about learning to fight, girls in this project were much more likely to bring up witnessing family violence or being victims of parental violence as their learning experiences. In the midst of a class discussion, I asked Julie where she learned to fight, and she responded:

I don’t know, my parents. Yup, parental violence. They were fighting over drugs I think. I just remember seeing them fight.... I don’t know, I was really small. I was in like elementary school. It made me think they were crazy and that I was scared of them.

Karen also went into great detail during class discussion explaining how her father’s negligence and physical abuse caused her to go into deep depression at one point, and furthermore, how she began seeing violence as a feasible reactionary mechanism to solving conflicts.

I don’t know, my dad’s just an idiot, so like I don’t know, he smokes right, so and he doesn’t have a job so like, my dad, and like we’re going through a lot of shit, like we’re gonna get kicked out of our house, and like we didn’t have anywhere to go or whatever and like...dad would just stay on his fuckin’ ass and do nothing and just smoke.... he’d have mood swings, like where he would fucking hit my mom. He used to get into some mean fuckin’ scraps. He would hit us for no fuckin’ reason and shit, and like I don’t know. Like fuckin’ I wanted to pound him out.... I used to just stay home in my bed.
In her journal, Karen had explained that her father was a chronic user of marijuana and crystal methamphetamine (commonly referred to in Hawai‘i as “ice” or “batu”). After Karen made this statement, I asked her, “And then what did you learn from that?” She responded,

I learned how to kick really hard. My dad used to hit me and shit, and I’d be the only one that fights back. Like my mom won’t fight back, well, my mom will fight back once in a while. I wasn’t scared of nobody after that. Cuz my dad is like 6’2”, 250 pounds and I’m not gonna be scared of some little chick if I’m not scared of him…. he was fighting my mom, so I got pissed off and I started bitching at him and then like he pushed me against the wall and was holding me against the wall by my neck. And I kicked him and I kept on kicking him, and I don’t know, I slapped him in his face, and I don’t know, he let go.

Karen’s response, indicating that she was not scared of anyone, resonates with Tavita’s comments regarding family violence and its impact on youths’ propensity to fight without any trepidation. However, as Tavita, Ryan, and Matt explained, family violence and fighting with friends could be viewed as an unquestioned, almost beneficial learning process that males typically experience. Julie’s and Karen’s stories are loaded with anger and resentment, as they recalled the processes by which they learned to fight, watching their fathers victimize their mothers, and being victims of violence themselves. As Karen states, she learned to fight back in order to survive, rather than to learn simply for the sake of learning and bonding with family members or peers.
Perceptions of Race

As the students and I continued to discuss fighting, I asked them what started fights. Initially, students stated that boys would "eye each other out" in passing. Josh, for instance, stated, "All my fights were just stupid.... Just stupid stuff, like us just looking at each other. Strangers, friends, all kine." As might be expected, girls more commonly stated that gossip and rumors were the impetus for fights with other girls. Ryan even cited his class's survey project, stating, "You saw on top of the survey. Mostly all the girls, like, on rumors they put all 5's," indicating rumors to be a major teen issue. But when we talked further about what caused fighting, students in both phases incessantly brought up the pursuit for respect as being a core cause of fights in their communities.

Before this, however, students also explained why they felt disrespected, at which point racial stereotyping and race-based inequality emerged in discussions. Amongst the Phase Two students I asked, "For Hawaiians...what are the stereotypes that are put on them?" Julie responded:

*Julie:* Yeah, we’re trouble makers, we’re just a bunch of punks. We’re just punks.

*DM:* How do you know that? How do you know you’re stereotyped that way?

*Julie:* I don’t know, once you open your mouth, most people just look at you, and they’re like (sarcastically) "Oh God, okay."

And Julie’s younger sister, Joelle wrote in her journal, “…’cause Polynesian people are down! and street smart, or at least they think they are street smart...Polynesian people are
poor so they need to go out and hustle for whatever it is they need/want.” These comments made by Julie and Joelle substantiate Kanahele’s (1996) work, which states Hawaiian youth are more commonly frustrated with the external racial taggings cast upon them and the lack of opportunities afforded to them.

Samoan students from Phase One also agreed that they were not valued by teachers and other adults for their mental aptitude.

*DM:* What do people think about Samoans?

*Tavita:* No good in school, we can mob you.

*DM:* Are there ways that Samoans get respect?

*Tavita:* Yeah, on the field, that’s where I get respect.

As Tavita suggests, Samoan students are forced to manage being labeled academically inferior. Shauna (also Samoan) stated, “A lot of the teachers, they don’t like, think that we can do well in school” to which the other students in the group agreed, including the non-Samoan students. Yet, at the same time, Samoan students were respected commodities in athletics, especially boys in football, and to a lesser degree, girls in volleyball and basketball. While students in this project did not talk directly about how teachers or coaches valued them athletically, Tavita does express using football as a means to gain respect. In fact, prior research has shown that Samoans are racially typecast as having an innate physical body-type that enables them to succeed in high-contact, explosive, collision sports such as rugby and football (Miller, 1998). The flipside of this stereotype is that Samoans supposedly lack the intellectual aptitude to excel in school and hold tempers that would benefit those involved in collision sports, like football.
And Samoan girls were not absolved from this hardened stereotype. Julie stated that Samoan students were “Tough. Like they can beat you down.” She then followed by describing a fight she witnessed, which she used to “verify” her opinion that Samoan girls were big, tough and violent:

Like the big Samoan chicks all hang out in the cafeteria, yeah, you don’t want to talk about them, cuz word gets back to them, they’re gonna mob you when you’re like standing in line for your food or something. One time I saw that, these two big Samoan chicks surrounded this girl and they just started mobbing her.

With regard to racist stereotypes directed towards Filipinos, Ryan and Tavita stated, “Filipinos pull knives” when getting into fights, to which Jay responded in disagreement “Nah, you guys always say that, people always say that.” Although Tavita and Ryan both made it a point to say they were not stereotyping Jay as an individual in this discussion (Ryan even stated, “Nah, I scared of Jay”), Tavita went on to explain that by pulling knives in fights, Filipinos were showing less courage, or so-called manly qualities. In essence, Filipino adolescents were compared directly with Samoan adolescents in this community, with Filipino youth being labeled as physically smaller and the less “manly” of the two racialized groups, at least with regard to their said innate inability to fight and perceived reliance on using weapons in fights. In this case, one can see how external markers of race are used in a comparative framework, in turn creating a competitive dynamic between youth from these racialized groups.

The ongoing racial characterization of Filipino youth as dangerous combatants who carry knives shows that Filipino stereotypes have persisted over time. According to
Okamura (2005), between 1911 and 1944, Filipino men were grossly over-represented as murderers in court cases that resulted in capital punishment. During this time period, Hawai‘i’s print media emphasized the supposed violent, temperamental, and knife wielding tendencies of young Filipino men by spotlighting their racialized background in criminal newspaper headlines. Today, Filipino (as well as Samoan and Hawaiian) youth and families are funneled into over-crowded, low-income, ethnic hodgepodge communities and schools, where male students more often feel the need to earn respect by posturing with one another in hyper-masculine ways that emphasize physical superiority. In turn, Filipino and Samoan students are pitted against one another since they occupy these same spaces and are racially stereotyped in demonizing but different ways. In the discussion, below, students describe a racialized brawl that occurred at their school, with Samoan student participants underscoring the Samoans’ reported success.

Shauna initiated describing this group brawl at school that she states pitted Samoan and Filipino students against each other.

Shauna: …when I was a freshman, that’s when they had a big riot at the school.

Ryan: Filipinos and Samoans, yeah?

Shauna: Yeah, from the cafeteria to the gym.

Tavita: Filipino, Samoan rumble, yeah?

Shauna: Yeah.

Tavita: Samoans won that one.

Ryan: I heard they went in the cafeteria and every Filipino they see, they blast ‘em cuz.
Shauna: Some of [the Samoan students] were jumping on the tables and grabbing their heads and pounding them and then some of the Samoans and Filipinos they ran up and they fight again and then towards the gym they were fighting. Had a major fight.

Participants said afterwards that racial tensions were not so pronounced now at their school. However, it was clear that some students from both research phases had a clear awareness of how racism impacted their internal ethnic identities. The racist stereotypes cast upon them made students feel undervalued intellectually and increased tension at school. At times, Tavita appeared to take pride in the fact that Samoans held the reputation of being physically big and were not to be crossed or challenged in social settings. And recall that while race may not have been the primary motivator that caused Jay and Tavita to get into the fight described at the beginning of this chapter, the derogatory racial comment made by Jay did trigger the altercation.

Other students, such as Matt and Josh, tended to identify more with Hawai'i’s broader “local” identity, which values inclusion of Hawaiians, other Polynesians, and those ethnic groups who struggled historically as laborers through the oppressive plantation experience (Okamura, 1994). For instance, even when I questioned them directly, neither Matt nor Josh would say whether or not the fights they had been in had a racial element. Virtually all students did say, however, that fighting was about earning respect, and furthermore, that respect was a concept tied heavily to rigid constructions of masculinity.
The Pursuit for Respect and the Downgrading of Femininity

Knowing how students from these racialized groups were devalued in school, it is not surprising that they sometimes looked to be valued in other physically aggressive arenas that supported racial stereotyping. Messerschmidt (1993; 1986) theorizes that lower- and working-class boys who feel constrained from attaining scholastic and occupational success are more apt to view violent crime as a positive means to achieve the esteem that they are denied in socially acceptable institutions. For the boys in this project, fighting was the primary pathway by which to build self-esteem, or as they put it, to earn respect.

In discussions and on worksheets, I would repeatedly ask student participants what different outcomes were accomplished by partaking in fights. Over and over, boys would say one earned respect. In turn, I would ask, “Well, then where are you not respected?” to which they would quickly answer, in school and amongst family members. However, being respected as a male was constructed in direct opposition to being female. In other words, the concepts “male” and “female” were not understood to simply be different. Rather, positive understandings of masculinity emerged at the expense of a negatively constructed femininity.

Connell’s (1987) theorization of gender organization is particularly useful at this point. Connell coined the term “hegemonic masculinity,” defining it conceptually as a constructed “ideal” masculine identity that yields and maintains power by repressing other groups of men and women. “‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women” (p. 183). Cavender (1999) adds that presently, hegemonic masculinity “is characterized by
heterosexuality, the subordination of women, authority, aggression, and technical
knowledge” (p. 159). Thus, hegemonic masculinity includes the privileged components
of upper-class masculinity (e.g., wealth, technical knowledge), as well as forms of
masculinity accessible to men from multiple class backgrounds (e.g., the subordination of
women, authority, aggression). Among working- and lower-class males of color,
attaining access to wealth, technical knowledge, and authority over upper-class groups
and individuals often times appears (and is) unfeasible. In turn, some working- and
lower-class males of color over-emphasize those components of hegemonic masculinity
they see as within reach, in what Pyke (1996) calls “compensatory masculinity” (p. 531).
As will be evident in male participants’ statements and writings, fighting was a key
activity used to prevent being feminized by others and establish a sense of hegemonic
masculinity (or “compensatory masculinity”), coded verbally as a respected male.

In one group discussion, I simply asked, “What do people get out of fighting?”
Ryan responded, “You get, what, respect.” Likewise, on a worksheet assignments Matt
wrote the following two passages that clearly demonstrate how the willingness to fight is
tied to earning respect:

• To earn respect you have to give respect. Or if you fight someone
and you beat him up and [he’s] supposed to be some bad ass, then
next time he knows not mess wit you.

• Some things I did to gain respect was fighting a lot. Because I’m a
lot smaller than everyone I always had to fight, so I don’t get
picked on. I hate having to be picked on because it’s shitty. I mean
I don’t care if they tease me because I know it’s all good but if they keep on getting dumb then I would tell them “wassup.”

Also stating what students got out of fighting, Jay wrote, “They get bus up and dirty, but they get pride and bragging rights. Everyone know you can beef. No one mess wit you.” Shauna understood that respect gained through fighting had a negative connotation tied to fear, stating, “Respect in a bad way I mean…. Show everybody that they tough to make everybody be intimidated when they walk in or whatever. So, people can be afraid and will listen to whatever they say.” Boys, however, feared that by not fighting, they would lose respect and be tagged as feminine, or more specifically, as homosexual.

To begin with, earning respect through fighting was a public endeavor. When I asked why fights did not transpire in private settings, students from Phase One responded by stating the following:

**Shauna:** Yeah, but they want people to see.

**Tavita:** They like respect, so they going tell everybody.

**Tulipa:** Some fights, they want people to witness who won or lost.

**Ryan:** No sense fight in private.

**Tavita:** Yeah, no sense everybody going be there.

In turn, because fighting was understood to be a public event through which one earned respect, male students felt there was no alternative but to engage in fighting if one was challenged. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Tavita had been expelled from another high school for assaulting one of his football teammates. He describes what happened in the passage below (as he wrote on a class worksheet).
I was at school...and it was 7:45 in the morning....There was a rumor going around that there was [football] practice and we were starting spring ball....

We waited for 2 hours and I was getting mad. I went to the locker room and asked the P.E. teacher if we had football practice. She said no and I got mad. I went up to the guy who wen’ spread the rumor. I was mad and I didn’t think because there wasn’t any time to think. There was no way I could get out of the fight because a lot of the football boys looked up to me. So wen’ I crack ‘um and he wen’ drop and I just kept on hitting him. At the end of the fight the guy had one black eye and bruised ribs. After the fight I gained respect but it wasn’t worth it because I had to move schools and meet new people.

Tavita states that in the aftermath of the fight there were pros and cons, with the benefit being that he gained respect. Note how Tavita also says he could not stop from fighting because his other teammates were witnessing the conflict, thereby making him feel the need to maintain his reputation, as somebody physically tough and intimidating, who they looked up to. Making a critical observation, Pyke (1996) points out that when working- and lower-class males emphasize certain forms of compensatory masculinity (e.g., violence between one another and against women and girls), they perpetuate their own oppression as they relate to upper-class white males, who can then spotlight minority males’ supposed innate violent tendencies. Tengan (2002) adds, “When these lower-class men are also colonized men, these behaviors articulate with even larger colonial stereotypes and presumptions that have historically been used to disempower their
people” (p. 245). In Hawai‘i’s colonial context, when Samoan and Hawaiian boys and young men feel the need to achieve a sense of masculinity predominantly via fighting and football, racist stereotypes are cemented – that they are predisposed as physically exceptional in high impact collision activities, but not in the classroom.

When I asked students, “So what makes it hard to walk away from a fight?” the students responded with answers that subordinated another male group:

_Tavita:_ Cause they, it’s like some people are already known for fighting so like, if they back down then they, everybody going think they one fag.

_Ryan:_ People going think you one panty, gay...you don’t even think about walking away from fights.

_Jay:_ It’s hard to walk away because it is shame. Everyone tease you. And you turn your back they can mob you. They call you one gay. If you fight, everyone gonna back you up. If you walk away, you get one bad rep.

In other words, boys not only used fighting as a process of earning respect, which they had been denied elsewhere (namely in school and amongst family members). They also felt that being respected meant showcasing a distinct heterosexual identity. Presumably then, engaging in fighting protected boys from being called gay, an identity they vehemently indicated was not to be assigned on them, even if such labels were not directed at them literally. In other words, male students knew that other male adversaries did not literally think they were gay; however, the homophobic terms were constructed and perceived as insulting enough, that they incited fights between adolescent heterosexual males. Matt from the Phase Two group also used homophobic language to indicate that calling another boy gay (or a “fag”) could be used to provoke other males
into fighting. In his journal, he wrote, “If someone would piss me off, I would be like
‘What faggot, you like scrap?’”

Upon hearing the terms “fag” and “gay” used repeatedly in a derogatory manner, I
asked male students why homosexuality was stated to be such a despised identity. The
only boys from either of the groups who would respond to my question were Tavita and
Ryan from the Phase One group. Tavita responded by saying, “Nah, it’s not that we don’t
like gays. It’s that we don’t want other people to call us gay” with Ryan expressing
agreement. After I asked why they didn’t want to be identified as homosexual, both boys
chuckled and simply said because they were not gay, at which point I decided not to push
the issue further, sensing the conversation was becoming uncomfortable for them, as they
were clamming up. Boys and girls also used the term “bitch” when putting down others
and defining masculine ideals. Matt, for example, wrote on a worksheet, “To be a man is
have responsibilities...don’t be a bitch.” And girls from the Phase Two class used the
term “bitch” incessantly when describing other girls with whom they had fought.

The only student who offered any insight into how homophobia was carried out
by heterosexual boys in schools was Julie, who stated:

There are some guys that hate other gay guys. It’s just if you’re gay and
you’re proud of it, like you’re able to talk to people and stuff, you’re okay.
But if you’re gay, and you’re still trying to hide it and stuff, then you’ll get
shit.

According to Julie, at least in Hawai‘i, homosexual boys have a better chance of not
being discriminated against if they are open about their sexuality, whereas homosexual
boys who hide their sexuality risk a greater chance of being harassed, or worse, assaulted.
The other girls in the class agreed with Julie’s statements, even stating that openly gay boys could partake and be accepted in heavily male sports, such as football. I continued to ask questions on this topic with the Phase Two students, and the boys chose not to contribute. As their silence became more apparent, the girls began teasing them that they were gay. Though I attempted to state that their teasing remarks were inappropriate and should not be considered insulting, Matt and Joseph were clearly bothered, with Matt even telling the girls quite seriously to “shut up.” At that point I shifted discussion to another topic.

In summary, male students began by stating that fighting was an accessible and perceivably inescapable activity by which to earn respect. In fact, not fighting when “called out” was viewed as behaving in ways that supported a negatively constructed feminine image. In this process, gay men and boys were the males most heavily subordinated. Due to students’ uncomfortably in discussing homophobic behaviors and the subsequent homophobic teasing that emerged in class, I was unable to probe this topic further, though I had hoped to ascertain how extensive and intense homophobic attitudes were in these students’ communities. At the very least, I could surmise that the negative attitudes directed towards gay men and boys was enough to incite fighting amongst boys, in this case heterosexual boys. In effect, boys saw fighting as inevitable, to the extent that they would unquestionably prefer to engage in fighting and risk being physically harmed versus being labeled a “fag” and having a cowardly reputation.

On a gender roles worksheet, I asked the following questions, “What does being a man mean to you? What qualities does somebody have if he is to be considered a real man?” Ryan answered in a way that summarized most (if not all) of the boys’ feelings in
this project. He answered, “For me being a man is taking respect [for] yourself. Look big, don’t let people boss you round. Stand up for yourself. Oh and what it mean to me, BE TOUGH!” Manliness equaled standing up for oneself physically and being big and tough. This particular hegemonic or compensatory masculine ideal did not include being successful in school or occupationally successful – qualities for which youth from these ethnic groups were not known or encouraged. Worse yet, these so-called manly qualities were distinguished in direct opposition to the negatively constructed feminine images cast upon gay males and all women and girls.

**Emulating Hegemonic Masculine Attitudes and Behaviors**

According to Chesney-Lind (1982), historically, criminologists ignored girls’ issues when it came to investigating delinquency, until the 1970s, at which time, journalistic and scholarly interest in girls’ delinquency skyrocketed, as did arrests of girls: “Between 1960 and 1975 arrests of adult females were up 60.2 percent, while arrests of their younger counterparts increased by an alarming 253.9 percent” (p. 53). Chesney-Lind goes on to illustrate that girls’ (and women’s) increases in arrests were mistakenly attributed to the advent of the feminist movement and a presumed increase in the power of those girls arrested. However, girls’ greater arrest rates could actually be traced to a change in how the juvenile justice system treated girls – increasing police enforcement, namely for girls’ status offenses (e.g., running away from home), without addressing the abusive conditions that were likely causing girls to run away from home. Likewise, feminist movements have influenced journalists and scholars to suggest inaccurately that the presence of girl gang members points to girls becoming more like
boys, especially girls of color (Chesney-Lind, 1993), when in reality female gang
members still confront severe forms of sexism and are hardly privileged in society at
large (Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & Evans, 2002; Miller, 2001). The result of this misperception
that girls’ delinquency is “on the rise” and attributed to their empowerment relative to
males, is that most programming for delinquent and incarcerated girls mimics
programming for boys, in the name of “equality” (Chesney-Lind & Faith, 2001).

This section of the study will detail how Pacific Islander and Asian American
girls, who hold minimal material resources, cope with their victimization within a male-
privileged context, and furthermore how these girls’ violent behaviors develop in ways
distinctly different from boys. When I asked girls in this project what they thought about
boys using feminized terms to insult one another, Joelle went so far as to say it was
“funny,” as can be seen in the exchange, below:

*DM:* So when guys call each other out, what do they say to each other?

*Multiple:* Little bitch, fag, scrub, pussy.

*DM:* So a lot of those words are feminized words, why is that?

*Joelle:* I don’t know, why?

*Karen:* Cuz girls are supposedly weaker than guys are.

*Joelle:* So they wanna call them our names.

*Karen:* Yea.

*Matt:* A guy never wants to be compared to a girl.

*DM:* Yea, why is that?

*Karen:* Cuz if I was a guy, I wouldn’t want to be called a girl.

*DM:* What’s wrong with that?
Karen: Cuz if I was a guy, I ain’t no girl. (Directed to DM) Would you want to be called that?

DM: I don’t think it’s insulting.

Joelle: It’s just something you can just brush off.

DM: So what do you think about guys using feminine terms to put each other down?

Joelle: I think it’s funny.

Shauna and Tulipa from the Phase One part of this study saw use of these terms as more problematic and a disgrace against girls and women. However, girls who had endured more serious forms of abuse at the hands of men saw no problem with using the terms “bitch” and “slut” incessantly when referring to other girls with whom they had conflicts. It seemed, in fact, that girls who had been abused and/or who had been in a greater number of fights had begun ascribing to the same attitudes as some of the boys in this project, who believed power could best be gained by acquiring those traits and beliefs associated with aspects of hegemonic masculinity, in this case being respected as physically aggressive and tough, and asserting one’s power by oppressing other girls (or females in general).

Hegemony has been defined as “the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are the interests of all” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002, p. 116). In the case of hegemonic masculinity, this would mean convincing girls to think and behave in ways that supported male privilege. This is not to say that any of the girls (or boys for that matter) in this project had achieved a full sense of hegemonic masculinity. Rather, some of the girls’ attitudes and behaviors came to mirror those of
males in this study, using physical aggression and the degradation of femininity to assert their own personal power (compensatory masculinity). Other scholars have remarked, “There is a need for more research to understand the increase and nature of girls’ involvement with adult males and violence” (Schaffner, Shick, & Stein, 1997, p. 195). The following sections will exemplify how girls’ involvement with controlling and abusive males increased their likelihood to fight with other girls and impede a solidarity with one another.

Though only in her second year of high school, Dianna had been suspended from school on a number of occasions for fighting and was still a freshman academically. I found Dianna’s academic standing surprising because Dianna was also extremely outgoing, confident, articulate, a good writer, and a natural leader. She had all the tools to succeed academically. Interestingly, Dianna also found it very easy to switch back and forth between hanging out with girls and boys. She was a sprinter and middle distance runner in track, while also preparing to go out for the school’s football team as a wide receiver. When we were not working, Dianna joked around with the guys, played cards with the guys, and was in many ways accepted as one of the guys.

The previous school year, Dianna had been suspended for beating up another girl. She described this particular fight on a class worksheet. Her synopsis is presented below:

My conflict was an ongoing situation, rumors and talking smack was pretty much the cause of it. Last year I went up to the girl…and confronted her about the situation. No peer pressure involved, then she said something real STUPID cuz I just snapped and started hitting her…but she didn’t hit back though but I didn’t care. I just brawled on her but
oh well... No care... I felt good about it cuz she got what she deserved... I could have avoided the situation by I didn't... I got suspended for it (3 days). Afterwards the cons were that I got suspended but the pro's was she learned her lesson... She scared!! Ha ha.

Dianna went on to say in class discussion that due to her suspensions, she had missed school time, thereby contributing to her failure in certain classes and delayed academic progress. Dianna's description of her fight, however, illustrates that she is clearly more concerned with using violence in order to stop the spread of additional rumors and gossip than she is concerned with her scholastic progress or the girl she victimized. As described in the end of Dianna's narrative, it becomes even more obvious that her use of violence successfully fulfilled her goals and that she has no regrets about fighting in order to solve interpersonal problems.

Julie and Karen also seemed to assume many of the qualities associated with hegemonic masculinity, fully endearing a personal identity associated with violence. When discussing fighting in class, Julie flat out said at one point, "Yeah, I mean, I'm a violent person." She went on to explain that she felt alienated from and disrespected by her family and that she got into Hawai'i's local punk scene as a way to rebel against her abusive parents. As Julie states below, by holding a violent reputation in the punk scene, she has been able to attain feelings of respect not granted by her parents.

Well I am constantly disrespected by my family for being the way I am as a "punk rocker chick." They don't respect my own unique way of self-expression with my tat[too]s and piercings. The music I listen to and the way we dance through shows I have earned respect... for being "the evil
mosher” and “local scrapper.” I don’t know, kids look up to me and my friends. They have a lot of respect for us and how we run it.

As opposed to in school or among family members, Julie feels she is able to act in violent ways and attain a sense of respect in Hawai‘i’s punk setting, where physical toughness and aggression are more widely accepted and rewarded. Julie went on to say, “I’d take out all my anger in the mosh pit so I wouldn’t get depressed...I used to like knock people out, like literally. And just like swing and kind’a like, that was my anger.” It is in this environment that Julie feels accepted and where her hard lined personality is “looked up to,” or respected by others. Thus, it is hardly surprising that Julie has turned to assuming a violent identity, which resonates in many ways with stereotypically masculine qualities.

Likewise, Karen is decisive in stating that she is an angry person, who does not hesitate to begin fighting when provoked, for even the slightest of reasons.

Karen: Actually, it makes you feel a whole lot better after you beat the crap out of someone.... you know when you get so mad that you don’t even know that you’re bringing your fists up and swinging? I’ve had that happen, that fuckin’ I’m already so pissed off that I don’t know what I’m doing, and I just swing at them, and I don’t even know why I did that.

DM: So what puts you on edge?

Karen: I need to go to anger management. I swear I get mad over the stupidest shit, and really fast. Like someone will say something stupid and I’ll stay mad for like the longest time.

DM: Where does all that anger originate?
Karen: Family I guess. My dad’s like that too, das why. We’re angry people.

Although Karen says that her violent tendencies are problematic – citing a need for anger management – she has clearly assumed characteristics that are congruent with boys’ conceptions of a violent masculinity, described earlier in this chapter. In addition, Karen’s comments close out with an equally important remark, mentioning that her violent disposition stemmed from her father, who was clearly abusive to both Karen and her mother. When interviewing girl gang members from Northern California, Hunt and Joe-Laidler (2001) also found that girls who were violent with other girls sometimes traced their anger to having been previously abused by fathers or stepfathers. Knowing that some of these girls come from highly abusive families, it should not be surprising that they may seek safe companionship elsewhere. Julie, Joelle, and Karen also saw personal violent victimization and conflicts as fairly normal, an almost natural part of everyday life; whereas other girls in this study (including Dianna) viewed their own participation in interpersonal violence as idiosyncratic, even if violence was seen as normal in their broader community (Smith & Thomas, 2000). Unfortunately, two of the girls involved in this project, Joelle and Karen, were involved with boyfriends who were highly controlling and who had taken advantage of their prior life circumstances. As we discussed fighting in class, it became apparent that these girls’ boyfriends also contributed heavily to the girls’ propensity to get into fights with other girls, while the boyfriends were generally exonerated from any serious culpability.
Violence Between Girls and Exonerated Boyfriends

When Joelle and Karen first talked about their boyfriends in class, I was flat out shocked. After getting past my initial disbelief, I asked a few follow-up questions, and I became even more taken aback and disturbed when the two girls went into greater detail about their romantic relationships so openly and casually. Recall that Joelle and Karen were both only sixteen years old. The first time I heard anything about either of their boyfriends was during a class discussion, which is presented in the following exchange:

Karen: What the hell, where does your boyfriend work, he makes choke money yeah?

Joelle: He used to work at a bar das why.

Karen: Oh yeah.

Joelle: A ho bar.

Karen: Yeah, my boyfriend used to work at [names a strip club].

Joelle: A hostess bar, it’s so gross I swear. I hated all those girls. I used to walk in there and they’d just like look at me, and they’re all underage. They’re all underage, and they’re like ho’ing themselves. And they’d just stare at me.

DM: So does your boyfriend live with his parents, or friends?

Joelle: Yeah, yeah, he lives with his parents. He spoiled das why, he’s spoiled too. Everybody, all the workers there is all underage, it’s so funny though. And it’s like “I can get you busted any time I want”.... I hated those girls, they all used to talk shit about me, and it’s like so funny. And they all sniff coke over there too.... All of them go in the bathroom and
they’re just like sniffin’ and they’re all under 21 over there working, drinking. Their job is to drink and talk to guys.

Karen: Yeah, like the champagne rooms and stuff. Yeah, my boyfriend used to work at [strip club name] and he’s like telling me all this shit, and I’m like “Fuck, you’re not working there anymore, asshole!”

I later discovered that Joelle’s boyfriend had extremely wealthy parents, and he was in his early twenties. As Joelle mentions above, he used to work in a “hostess bar,” where men can legally pay women to drink and flirt with them, and it is commonly understood that in some of these establishments, men can also pay illegally for sex or other sexually-oriented activities. I was most surprised when Joelle (and the school’s counselors) told me that after Joelle’s grandparents could not handle her behavior anymore, they allowed her boyfriend to attain legal custody over her. Later, Joelle described the level of her dependence on her boyfriend:

Well, he pays for everything, he pays for like my food...he makes sure that I’m at like school every day, he makes sure that I get to work on time and I have a ride back everyday. He makes sure that I have lunch money. He makes sure that I eat every day, he makes sure that like everything. He makes sure that he pays for my phone, everything. So I depend on my boyfriend a lot, for everything I would say. Everything, everything there is.

Joelle had no problem conveying how her relationship was characterized as a dependent one in front of her classmates and myself. It was also clear that while Joelle knew she was dependent on her boyfriend, she did not see herself as being in a controlling
relationship, asserting her independence when I subtly questioned their relationship's dynamics. Still, Joelle was not entirely happy, often times stating verbally and in her journal that she had left her boyfriend on a number of occasions after their numerous verbal fights, only to return to him and his family after he cried and told her he loved her while trying to reconcile.

As seen in the exchange above, Karen's boyfriend also used to work in Hawai'i's sex industry, in a strip club. She unabashedly mentioned that he was in his late twenties and had a child from a previous relationship. As Karen describes, below, her boyfriend also sold drugs to make fast money and had some serious substance use problems himself.

...like my fuckin’ boyfriend he does not do anything. He sits and he smokes and he watches TV. And that’s all he ever does. And he fuckin’ can come home with like tree (three) hundred dollars. Go out for five minutes. I’m like “What the fuck, how the fuck did you get this?” Yeah, my boyfriend can smoke like a fifty dollar paper in like 5 minutes.

Like Joelle, Karen also saw her relationship with her boyfriend as relatively normal, and she would frequently tell me in class discussions and in her journal that she was in full control of her relationship and not dependent on her boyfriend. In reality, as I thought more about these girls’ prior life histories, especially the physical and emotional abuse they had endured, it probably should not have come as such a surprise to me that they were involved in relationships with men who provided some semblance of caring and financial stability. In a later discussion on substance use, Joelle spelled it out for me, stating, “I need my boyfriend to live. Because I live with him and he supports me, and my
parents aren’t there for me, and his love’s there for me, you know.” As students talked about various fights that they had been involved in, it became glaringly obvious that Joelle’s and Karen’s fights with other girls were actually products of scenarios that were instigated heavily by their boyfriends. Joelle wrote extensively about her despise for a girl who had allegedly made an advance toward her boyfriend. During class, Joelle also described how she beat the girl up later that night. Her verbal description is presented, below:

...so she goes up to my boyfriend and she grabs him and she pulled him. And they’re walking into the fuckin’ dark, and I looked at (my boyfriend) and he looked at me, and his eyes was like so big. And then he was like, “Oh, what do you want? Later, later.” And I was like “What? What the fuck is later? Why later?” you know. So I was yelling at him. And then so I pulled him away and I slapped him across his face, and we were gone....

[Later in the night] I went up to her and I was like “What the fuck? Why’d you grab my boyfriend’s arm?” She’s like “Who’s your boyfriend?” So I told her [who he was], and she says, “I wanted a beer.” I said “Fuck you, don’t fuckin’ grab his hand to go get a beer.” So she was just talkin’ shit and she started ignoring me. And so I went back and got my friend and so I just tackled her. I fucking started kicking her ass. She got a black eye, and she lost her cell phone. But fuck her. She’s a slut. She and her friend, those two are little sluts.

What is most disparaging about Joelle’s story is that her boyfriend was completely complicit in creating this deceitful situation. Although the girl allegedly approached
Joelle’s boyfriend first, he willingly accepted her advances, and at least in Joelle’s eyes, she caught him attempting to go along with the other girl. Hence, Joelle yelled at him and slapped him across his face. However, Joelle later states that the girl who hit on her boyfriend received much more severe and violent reprisals. While her boyfriend received a slap in the face for beginning to cheat on her, the girl received a physical beating from Joelle that resulted in a black eye. In comparison, Joelle’s boyfriend got off easy, at least in terms of physical victimization.

Later in the semester I asked Joelle further about her fight with this girl, attempting to ascertain whether or not she felt her boyfriend held any responsibility. In response to my question, her focus remained locked in on her female adversaries (the girl she beat up and that girl’s friend). “They know that that’s my boyfriend...that’s fucking disrespecting me, you know. That shit just doesn’t happen. They don’t get away with that, fuck that.” I responded, “But he was part of that situation,” to which Joelle finished, “Yeah, and I slapped him for it, like I slapped him in front of everybody...everybody’s looking at him...” Joelle clearly knew that disgracing her boyfriend was adequate, especially since it was done publicly and since she could not physically beat him up. However, in order to earn her respect back from the girl, Joelle determined that enacting more acute physical violence on her was both plausible and appropriate. And again, fighting is constructed as a means of earning respect, but in this scenario, the girl-on-girl violence branched out from Joelle’s boyfriend trying to hide his romantic actions with another girl.
Karen described a strikingly similar scenario, illustrating how she got into a fierce brawl with another girl that was initiated by her boyfriend’s questionable interactions. Below, Karen offers her version of this story:

...she used to come over when I wasn’t around and gave my boyfriend money and giving dope, and like, I don’t know, I just got pissed off.... And then, she fuckin’ showed my boyfriend her escort service website, and that really pissed me off.... [When the girl came over to Karen’s boyfriend’s house] She tackled me to the ground and I got on top of her and started crackin’ her in the face and slammed her face into the fuckin’ ground. My boyfriend pulled me off cuz we weren’t supposed to fight at his house, and he was telling us to take it to the park or whatever. And I don’t know, she just fuckin’ left, and all I remember was her wiping all the gravel and shit off her face and off her body.

In this example, Karen discloses that this girl and her boyfriend interacted on a fairly regular basis, interchanging drugs, money, and discussing a sex-related business. Karen fully describes how her boyfriend is an active participant in this state of affairs. However, Karen takes out all of her aggression on the girl, and in turn, her boyfriend is completely exonerated. Worse yet, her boyfriend only intervenes in the fight in order to tell the two girls to fight at a venue other than his house, rather than attempting to get the two girls to stop fighting all together and take responsibility for his own complicity in this conflict.

When I first asked Joelle and Karen where they thought their boyfriends’ responsibilities stood in these situations, only Karen responded, saying, “He should have told us to fight somewhere else, because she deserved to get her ass beat and he knew I could do it.”
Karen’s focus was firmly focused on fighting with the other girl, rather than on critiquing her boyfriend’s involvement in the conflict.

During most of the time I was working with the Phase Two group of students, Julie did not have a boyfriend, though she had forged a romantic relationship with a male friend towards the middle of the Spring 2005 school semester. Prior to this, while still single, Julie talked about how she had confronted and humiliated a girl who had slept with a girlfriend’s boyfriend. Julie’s description of the conflict is presented below, as she wrote it on a class worksheet:

…I punked [this] slut cause she was a dumb bitch, and she slept with my friend’s boyfriend. The urge of rage. Not at all was I going to stop. I cornered her then I spit in her face, was yelling at her, made her cry, then I flicked my cigarette at her. She then ran away from me. I got the message through because everyone was scared. As of now we are at peace.

In symmetry with Joelle and Karen, Julie conveys that the girl who slept with the boyfriend is most culpable, and the boyfriend (who cheated on Julie’s girlfriend) is essentially exonerated from blame. I also asked Julie if her friend’s boyfriend got into trouble, and she said he did, but that he just received a lecture from her friend. Conversely, Julie publicly confronted and disgraced the girl and was ready to fight with her physically if necessary.

As shown earlier, girls expressed that they learned what violence was and how to be violent themselves from men. However, the only time girls were violent towards other males was when they were fighting in defense of being abused or in response to catching a boyfriend beginning to cheat (e.g., Joelle slapping her boyfriend). When initiating more
serious forms of violence, girls were violent with other girls, despite their boyfriends’
complicity in the situations described above. Artz (1998) refers to this dynamic as
“horizontal violence,” a process by which girls learn violence from men, but enact
violence upon each other, leaving the men (or boys) free from any serious responsibility.

On a final note, Joelle and Karen stated that they had never been in physical fights
with their boyfriends or been physically abused by them in ways that they saw as
extreme. At most, Joelle said that her boyfriend slapped her after she had slapped him in
a department store, and immediately afterwards, he apologized profusely. Karen actually
made it a point to tell me that although she and her boyfriend fought verbally, they both
felt that the verbal aggression helped them to get their frustrations out so that they did not
get into physical fights; in other words, she saw the verbal aggression as a prevention (or
“protective”) measure. Because Joelle’s and Karen’s boyfriends were not extremely
physically violent with them, their boyfriends appeared not to be manipulative or abusive
at all. In comparison to Karen’s physically abusive and unemployed father, her boyfriend
seemed a great catch. Likewise, Joelle had witnessed and experienced physical abuse at
the hands of her parents and other relatives, and therefore, as she mentioned, she felt she
needed her boyfriend’s emotional and material support. So when these girls fought with
other girls over their boyfriends, they were fighting for something (or someone) they felt
they needed. Unfortunately, their sense of need had been nurtured by their prior violent
and neglectful family lives. Moreover, their jealousy surrounding their boyfriends was
magnified by their boyfriends’ previous jobs in the sex industry and flirtatious behavior
with other girls. Joelle, for example, once referred to her boyfriend as a “man-whore.”

Taking all this into account, Joelle’s and Karen’s boyfriends were able to covertly control
them without being extremely physically abusive, appear as male saviors, and provoke
them into fighting with other girls.

Re-Conceptualizing Adolescent Fighting as “Risk”

The academic literature on adolescents and youth violence claims that the “risk”
factor, fighting, can be correlated with a multitude of other social factors, some of which
include school drop out and being employed full time (Elliot, Huizinga, & Morse, 1987),
being a witness to or victim of family violence (Smith & Thornberry, 1995; Thornberry,
1994), and being affiliated with gangs (Huizinga et al., 2003). I have no doubt that these
social factors do influence youths to engage in violent behavior later in life in various
areas of the United States. However, the literature rarely illustrates how these stated
“risk” factors shape adolescents’ perceptions of their world, such that fighting becomes a
more common or accepted aspect of their lives. In short, the quantitative studies used to
make these assertions do offer useful information, but they are constrained by their
number-oriented parameters.

In the present chapter, I have attempted to show how Hawaiian, Samoan, and
Filipino girls and boys sometimes view fighting as a justified and necessary aspect of
their life. These students do see the risk in fighting. As Jay mentioned, by fighting, one
can get “bus(ted) up.” However, in weighing the perceived risks and rewards, it is not
uncommon for students to perceive that the rewards that come along with fighting
decisively outweigh the risks. So what are these so-called rewards, and how can we better
understand them in order to reduce youth violence in these ethnic communities?
With regard to males, the most powerful reward is respect. Virtually all male youth in this study and some female youth (mainly Julie) stated that the willingness to engage in fighting yielded respect. Conversely, students in this study (both male and female) felt disrespected in school, especially Hawaiian and Samoan students, who were keenly aware that they were not heralded as intellectually gifted students. Jay (the only full Filipino student in this study) also intimated that he disliked how Filipino adolescents were disrespected by peers, said to be "cowardly" since they allegedly had to use weapons when fighting. However, as students divulged further about what fighting really accomplished, it became evident that male students viewed fighting as an activity that would verify their hegemonic masculinity, or a publicly respected heterosexual, aggressive, and physically tough masculine ideal.

In terms of risk and reward for these male students, fighting was not risky. To the contrary, it was more risky to not fight and be labeled a "fag." In turn, our class discussions revealed that homophobia and the wide-spread demeaning of femininity stood as a primary cause of fighting amongst boys, especially those boys who felt estranged from attaining respect in more socially accepted arenas, such as school, due to racism. Obviously, homophobia is not a form of discrimination unique to Hawai‘i; it is rampant and likely far more intense in many other communities across the United States (Wyss, 2004).

Still, Hawai‘i’s public and private schools are not a safe heaven for gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender youth by any means (Bombard, 1998). Moreover, Hawai‘i and much of the Pacific is unique in that historically, gay men were not an ostracized group who faced extreme negative stigmatizing and more violent forms of discrimination.
Rather, gay men in Hawai‘i (called māhū) were embraced as part of the traditional society, and presently, māhū still work to contribute in Hawai‘i’s major cultural movements (Robertson, 2002). It is only with western colonialism that homophobia has reached the degree that it has, and in turn, contributed to adolescent problems such as youth violence. Thus, for some boys, being Samoan, Hawaiian, or Filipino did not only mean respecting elders or behaving in ways that reflected family ideals, as might be expected from those groups’ traditional cultural ideals. In addition, boys from those ethnic groups felt the need to rely on racial stereotypes to move towards a hegemonic masculine image (e.g., Samoans are big and tough, and can mob people).

Girls in this study also felt disrespected by school personnel and family. However, for those girls who had gotten into more serious and numerous fights, violent family life and/or association with controlling boyfriends played a much larger role in perpetuating girl-on-girl (or “horizontal”) violence. While boys learned to be violent largely from older male role models and friends in almost ritualistic violent male activities, girls learned to be violent primarily by watching domestic disputes and by fending off abusers. In some cases, girls began to acquire attitudes commensurate with hegemonic masculinity, commonly using the terms “bitch” and “slut” to refer to other female enemies, and victimizing other girls even though boys were heavily at fault in creating interpersonal conflicts.

In comparison, Tulipa and Shauna, who did not report being abused by family members, did report having been in fights with other girls. However, Tulipa’s and Shauna’s descriptions of their fights were much more in line with the academic literature on “relational aggression,” or the ways that youths (predominantly girls) victimize one
another through gossip and social alienation (Vail, 2002), sometimes leading to physical altercations (Talbott et al., 2002). Tulipa and Shauna, however, did not report an ongoing deep hatred for the girls with whom they had fought. Though they did not necessarily like their former adversaries, they were able to easily move on and dismiss their fights as relatively minor incidents in their lives. What’s more, they did not endorse the use of terms like “ho,” “whore,” “bitch,” and “slut” to put down others. Julie, Joelle, and Karen, however, having witnessed and experienced abuse at the hands of men seemed to internalize some attitudes of female inferiority. Their incessant use of terms like “bitch” and “slut” to describe adversarial girls reflected this male-privileged internalization.

Ultimately, “risk” for the girls in this study was also linked to patriarchy. Initially as victims, they learned to be violent from men and then exonerated other men who were actually heavily responsible for starting their fights with other girls. Prior to colonization, women in Hawai‘i held extremely prominent positions of political power (Green, 2002; Linnekin, 1990). In addition, cultural systems were established that allowed women and their children to more easily exit violent relationships; with the arrival of colonialism, these systems that provided for women’s and children’s safety were obliterated (Merry, 2000). Even today, these systems have not been adequately replaced (Merry, 2002). Had these cultural systems not been dismantled, it is quite plausible that Julie, Joelle, and Karen would have been able to evade their violent families and not be as violent with other girls.

It must be stressed, the stories expressed by the students in this study should not be used to characterize most boys and girls from marginalized ethnic groups in Hawai‘i. As stated in Chapter Three of this text, students recruited for this study were already
designated "high-risk" students; in fact, all the students in Phase Two of this study were in an alternative high school. As I have also mentioned, many of the students in this study were highly articulate, proud, and refuted the racial stereotypes tagged upon Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino adolescents. Dispelling Samoan stereotypes, Shauna was an exceptional student and Tavita was highly articulate. Breaking gender norms, Diana was an exceptional leader.

And despite demonstrating some sexist attitudes, many of the girls in Phase Two of this study also showed that even girls who were going through very troubling periods in their lives could also hold perspectives highly in line with feminist concerns (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). A good example of this is illustrated in a journal entry written by Julie. When her younger sister, Joelle, was talking about her dependence on her boyfriend, I noticed Julie showing disagreement, displayed through her body language and through the following comment she made, directed to her sister: “You gotta depend on yourself not him soon.” So I asked Julie in her journal, “…do you think independence is important? Why or why not? Is it harder for girls to be independent in some ways? Please explain.” Her response is presented below:

Independence is very important to young teenage girls. If you don’t have independence you’ll be lost. When you’re parents kick you out or your boyfriend breaks up with you then you’d be strong enough to move on and up from it. Yes it is definitely harder for chicks to be independent in the way of being loved by another gender because they are often trying to seek affection and romance or some crap. I don’t know, we are supposedly more gentle like flowers that constantly need water to live longer.
In March 2003, Julie’s younger sister, Joelle, broke up with her 21-year-old boyfriend and moved back in with her mother, who had recently transitioned back into the community. Joelle’s process of establishing her independence was an arduous one that took an extensive time period since she lacked adequate support systems and was under her boyfriend’s control on multiple levels.

I was able to ask Joelle about the process by which she left her ex-boyfriend (who again, was her legal guardian). She made the following comments, illustrating how her disempowered state, relative to her boyfriend, influenced her to carry out so-called violent acts against him and other girls. True, Joelle, yelled at her boyfriend and even hit and slapped him on occasion (and again, once he slapped her back). However, her supposed violent behaviors were learned and reactive acts of rebellion against the persistent grip her boyfriend kept on her. Joelle offered the following statements, over the course of a class session:

Violence in [dating] relationships it can be just, normal, routine....

Sometimes, he (Joelle’s boyfriend) gets like, scared of me, like sometimes I’ll get pissed and I’ll be over there yelling at him, you know, and I’ll just do something with my hand and he’ll just flinch, like I’m going to hit him, cuz he knows that I’m pissed. I’ll hit him. Crazy cuz my Mom used to do that, das why, like I see her, I used to see her doing it when I was young you know.... That’s why we’re (she and Julie) fucking like this (laughing), because of our parents.... Like sometimes my boyfriend says “Hit me, hit me!”
As Joelle states, she learned to be violent by watching her parents fight. Also of note here is that despite his flinching, Joelle's ex-boyfriend is not terribly intimidated by her physical threats directed towards him, as he tells her to hit him. His requests to have her hit him illustrate a physical power difference between the two; he communicates to her that any use of physical violence enacted upon him will ultimately yield minimal impacts.

As already shown (and will be shown again shortly), Joelle instead directs her more serious threats of violence to other girls since physical acts of violence inflicted on her ex-boyfriend were relegated ineffective. Next, however, Joelle explained the difficult process by which she left her then boyfriend:

\[
\text{When I used to live with my boyfriend, we used to get into fights all the time, and I would pack my clothes like once a week. I would pack my stuff and then I would unpack it. Then I would get it to the car, and unpack it. Then I would drive it to my house, and then I would go back (to his house) and unpack it. And then one time I took half my clothes and I set them up on my slate and then I still ended up going back over to [his house]. And this last time I just moved out and it was just crazy. Like I got a step further each time.}
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Without a strong support system, Joelle had a hard time leaving her ex-boyfriend. Being only sixteen years old and without significant familial support, she lacked the financial and social resources that would have helped her to escape her controlling relationship. Tolman and colleagues (2003) state that financial need keeps proportionately more lower-class girls of color in violent relationships and perpetuates horizontal violence between those girls, who feel the need to compete with one another over a limited

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number of males that seemingly provide scarce material resources. Conversely, middle- and upper-class white girls generally do not feel trapped in violent relationships and get into heated battles with one another for this same economically-based reason. Campbell (2004) adds, "...as women face greater poverty and are unable to support themselves, rates of intrasexual assault rise.... cross-cultural evidence (both quantitative and qualitative) supports the view that women’s dependence on men increases competition for resource-rich males” (p. 23). In addition, being economically dependent on violent, controlling males in girlhood sets up girls to feel trapped financially in these same types of restrictive relationships as adult women (Tilley & Brackley, 2004).

Once Joelle did leave her boyfriend, she explained how he continued to control and manipulate her.

Joelle: Like I broke up with my boyfriend, right, so like we’re broken up okay. And yesterday, he just comes over, uninvited and he doesn’t tell me he’s coming over...you know he’s forcing himself to me, and like he wouldn’t leave. And I was telling him like the whole frickin’ time, like “Leave, get out of here, leave” you know. And it was crazy, and he’ll just call me and oh, the other day, um, I left my phone in the living room and I went in the other room, and I come out like thirty minutes later. I look at my phone, eighty-five missed calls...eighty-five, freakin’ missed calls, and he leaves thirteen messages, voice messages. He’s just crazy.... He knows my password (to her cell phone). He’s like always checking my messages and shit, like deleting messages.

DM: Can’t you change your password?
Joelle: He can change my password. He can figure it out cuz it’s under his name, like he pays for my phone, yeah. It was crazy, like I hadn’t even known him like two weeks when we first started going out, like only two weeks and he got me a fucking phone.... Like he was weird when I first met him. Like the reason why I broke up with my boyfriend is cuz he always used to talk to these two ho’s, like I’d tell him to not bring them in the car and he’d bring them in the car. Like I’d tell him not to give them my wine, and he’d give them my wine, and like I’d tell him all this shit, and the other day he was dancing with them.

DM: How long did all this go on?

Joelle: Like a long time. They’re like ho’s and he’s a ho too, so I’m gonna kick their ass this weekend and we’re broken up.

In this passage, one can clearly see some of the distinct warning signs that practitioners can address when working with girls who are not fully aware of dating violence warning signs. Boyfriends who purchase and continue to pay for their girlfriends’ cell phones should be viewed with heavy skepticism, as should boyfriends who continue to deliberately make their girlfriends jealous by flirting with other girls, without having mature discussions about their relationship. Unfortunately, too many young people are unaware of these and other forms of dating violence that so often foreshadow girls’ and women’s imprisonment in violent relationships (Smith, Winokur, & Palenski, 2005; Tolman et al., 2003).

Joelle finishes her account by declaring that she is going to beat up the two other girls, who flirted and danced with her ex-boyfriend, over the weekend. Again, Joelle’s
anger towards these girls is fueled by the power imbalances between she and her ex-boyfriend. He is able to purchase and fund her cellular phone and use it to constantly monitor her. He is considerably older and has far wealthier parents than her. He enters her house at will, and incessantly flirts with other girls, making her feel jealous and disrespected. And physically, she cannot beat him up. Consequently, Joelle redirects her anger and threats of physical violence to the girls, since her ex-boyfriend is in a protected position, manipulating his greater access to wealth and physical size. Academicians would normally cite Joelle’s threats of violence towards other girls as a “risk” indicator. Clearly, however, the real risk factors in this situation are Joelle’s lack of social support and her possessive and domineering ex-boyfriend. Joelle’s story clearly illustrates that risk factors are not merely individual attitudes or behaviors that correlate with or predict one another, as suggested in so many quantitative risk and protective factor studies. Ultimately, the risk factors are significant power imbalances that repress adolescents’ natural progress in life, in this case the oppressive, patriarchal behaviors that impede Joelle’s quests for independence.

Every two years since 1991, a large national sample of students are asked a series of “risk and protective” factor questions in the “Youth Risk Behavior Survey” (YRBS; Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004), though it is not necessarily administered to youth in Hawai‘i each round. That the survey is not always administered to youth in Hawai‘i is of little importance here; what is important is to illustrate how these nationally respected and utilized surveys so easily decontextualize adolescent risk. If Joelle were asked in the YRBS survey, “During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight?”, she certainly could not
answer “0 times,” as she had been in a number of fights with other girls. But her so-called risky, violent behaviors emerge from her disempowered state, coming from a violent, fractured family that does not support her financially, educationally, or emotionally. All this contributes to her perceived need to have a supportive boyfriend, and real need to simply have support. Unfortunately, Joelle’s history is so traumatic that she is more susceptible to young men who take advantage of her history, control her behaviors, and ultimately influence her to come into conflict with other girls. Although the YRBS also asks a few questions on dating violence, sexual victimization, and other sexual behaviors, the survey by itself cannot capture the deep processes by which patriarchy influences violence between girls, regardless of how many youth are surveyed biannually.

At this point, it is also important to illustrate how Hawai‘i – the historical and contemporary racial project – interplays with these gendered violence patterns. As touched on before, Tulipa and Shauna (both Samoan) did not hold malicious grudges against the girls who they had fought with in the past. And, unlike Julie, Joelle and Karen, Tulipa and Shauna both had strong support systems from their immediate and extended families. This is certainly not to say that their families did not struggle (and Samoan women do strain to deal with domestic violence issues across the Pacific; see Crichton-Hill, 2001; Cribb & Barnett, 1999). In fact, both Tulipa and Shauna lived in low-income housing tracts. However, their families were not fractured by substance use. As more recent immigrants to Hawai‘i, Samoan families and communities (though

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6 I use the term “immigrants” here rather than “settlers” since Trask’s 2000 article does not list other Polynesian groups as settlers. In fact, other Polynesians and Pacific Islanders are not discussed in the article at all as they relate to Hawaiians in Hawai‘i. Being another Polynesian ethnic group along with Hawaiians, that also lacks economic and political power in Hawai‘i and that was colonized by westerners, I felt it was more appropriate to refer to Samoans in Hawai‘i as immigrants.
highly over-represented in arrests for violent offenses) are still relatively cohesive and
have not been splintered by substance use to the same degree as Hawaiian families.

Recall that Shauna and Tulipa frequently had to miss class, specifically because
they were told by their parents to contribute to family functions. Whether or not Shauna
and Tulipa agreed with the gender-role expectations cast upon them as Samoan girls,
their parents’ requests to have them assist in babysitting and preparing for family
functions with other family members illustrates how they were incorporated into
important family activities. Consequently, as valued family members, supported by their
families, Shauna and Tulipa did not feel the need to turn to boyfriends for support, let
alone exploitive boyfriends. Jay (Filipino) and Tavita and Ryan (Samoan), expressed why
Filipino and especially Samoan boys are so over-represented in arrests for violent
offenses, despite also having supporting families. Feeling undervalued for their
intellectual proficiency, these boys learned where and how they could attain a sense of
admired masculinity, or power – in the violent contexts of football or on the street, where
Filipino and Samoan boys competed for respect.

Karen (Korean, Portuguese, and Caucasian) lived with her younger sister, her
mother, and her abusive and neglectful father, while also spending heavy amounts of time
with her boyfriend, who was in his late twenties. Julie and Joelle, however, represent the
fraction of Hawaiian families that have been ravaged by substance use, contributing
profoundly to the disproportionately large numbers of Hawaiian youth living in foster
families. In fact, “Native Hawaiians represent about 50 percent of the roughly 2,700
children placed in about 1,900 foster homes” (Viotti, 2004, p. A1) in Hawai‘i. Of course,
only minorities of Hawaiian families are impacted by substance use, and this study
should not be used to characterize all or most Hawaiian families and communities. At the same time, it would be remiss to overlook how centuries of colonialism have damaged Hawaiian families – destroying their land, displacing them within their own homeland, and corrupting their culture.

As Hawaiian families and communities struggle to resist ongoing forms of western colonialism, some families inevitably fall through the cracks and withdraw in substance use. As will be illustrated in the upcoming chapter, within those families, youths’ vulnerability increases substantially. In the case of Joelle, she could not turn to her aunties or her uncles or any other responsible, financially secure family members after she (and her sister) were taken away from her parents; she did not have a resource-heavy extended family. Consequently, she turned to a boyfriend from a wealthy family, who then took advantage of her deprived circumstances and drove her into conflicts with other girls. Gaarder and Belknap (2002) refer to this dynamic as “structural dislocation,” where adolescent girls are isolated from institutions (e.g., family and school) that would normally support them, and therefore, turn to other institutions for support (e.g., gangs, pimps, manipulative boyfriends) that end up perpetuating girls’ victimization. As academicians and federal think tanks attempt to identify risk factors as a way to better understand and prevent youth violence, they must recognize that broader structural forces create structural dislocation and other forms of adolescent risk. In the case of Hawai‘i, patriarchal cultural tendencies (sexism and homophobia) and the ramifications of colonialism must be held accountable as risk factors in and of themselves.
CHAPTER FIVE: DOING DRUGS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Student participants in both phases of this study mentioned decisively that fighting and substance use were the two most critical issues facing teenagers in their communities. Students felt, however, that illegal drug use was a greater cause of family break up. Fighting between family members, though serious and traumatizing in its own right, was not said to be an impetus for major family distress. Instead, students in this study saw drug use as the primary precipitating factor that fractured families and led to violent family conflicts. Blaisdell (1989) reminds us that alcohol and illicit substances were introduced to Hawaiians by westerners and are therefore, part of the colonial process that still haunts Hawaiian communities and other minority communities in Hawai‘i.

With regard to students’ own illegal drug use and opinions on their peers’ drug use, participants had a multitude of perspectives to share. Early in our discussions, however, students were not shy about asking me if I had ever used any illegal drugs. Since I have not, I used my lack of experience to tell students that they could educate me on why teenagers in their communities used drugs, how drug use affected their lives, and how schools and communities should best address student substance use. When investigating why students began using various illegal substances, I discovered that some of the student participants were introduced to heavy drug use early in their life and that the learning process was quite extensive.

Among the Phase One students, only Ryan had experimented with using any illicit substances, and he had only used marijuana recreationally with friends. Shauna and Tavita had tried drinking alcohol, but they had literally only tried it, taking only a few
tastes. Among the Phase Two group of students, however, more students had used drugs and the severity of their usage was also far greater. At one point I asked Phase Two students, “Why is it that there are more Hawaiian and Samoan kids who are in jail or are arrested than kids from other groups?” Julie responded by making the following statement:

Um, also our parents are the ones that’s like fucked up over drugs and stuff and, like, our parents give us licken’s, like most kids don’t really get licken’s, like, or like we’re brought up in different ways...like we’re brought up in a tough way from our parents. Does that explain it? You get what I’m saying, yeah, Josh, like you have cousins in like CPS (Child Protective Services) and stuff like that, and they’ll like turn into bad kids, eventually. I don’t know, we see a lot of things that go on through our parents.

Just as I was shocked to hear about Joelle’s and Karen’s older and controlling boyfriends, I was equally shocked to hear students describe how they learned to use illegal drugs. As Julie proclaimed, many of the students in this study had seen a lot of disturbing “things” through their parents and friends. Among the Phase Two students, Julie, Joelle, Karen, and Matt had all used various substances in their lives and considered their use a serious personal problem. The “things” these students witnessed and experienced as they grew up illustrate effectively why they were more susceptible to using drugs during their adolescence.
Learning About Drugs

Covington (1997) argues that ethnographic studies relying on a small sample of participants from minority communities (like the present study) inaccurately suggest that minority substance use is ultimately the product of structural inequality. Covington argues further that by making such assertions, substance-using youth from majority communities are portrayed as teenagers who use drugs predominantly for recreational reasons, on a personal and temporary level. In contrast then, minority youth are characterized as chronic users who cannot cope with acute structural hardship.

In fact, most students from both phases of this study stated that teenagers began using drugs largely as a result of peer pressure. Ryan, for instance, from Phase One stated simply that he began using marijuana after being pressured into it from friends. Providing an example of how students pressure one another into using, Ryan stated, “Peer pressure. Like...with other people who like smoke weed, they like force the guy like, ‘Come on, you panty.’” Ryan’s example again illustrates how boys can pressure each other into drug use by feminizing those males who choose initially to decline. Ryan’s quote shows that like fighting, partaking in taking drugs can be a form of accomplishing masculinity (Measham, 2002).

Matt stated a number of times that friends and the people who one hangs out with can best determine whether or not a teenager will begin using drugs. Julie, Joelle, and Karen also explained how peer pressure can influence teens to use drugs, as presented on the following page:
Joelle: Peer pressure, um, they wanna be cool. Yea, cuz they see a lot of the popular kids like comin’ to school all stoned and stuff, so they’re like “Oh, is that how you get cool?”

Julie: They’re just like “Just take a hit, it’s not gonna do anything to you, just one hit won’t do anything to you.” Like, I don’t know. Or they’re like, “You’re cruizing with us right, so you’re gonna do what we’re gonna do.”

DM: And it’s hard to say “no?”

Julie: Yea, for some people it is.

Karen: I don’t know, cuz like a lot of my friends were doing it, yeah, and then like, I don’t know, I just wanted to know how it felt like. And they’re like “No, I’m not gonna start you.” And I was like, “Well, it’s either like I do it with you or I’m just gonna find some random person to do it with, like who I see doing it” or whatever.

Thus, as Covington asserts, adolescents of color are influenced to use drugs in many of the same ways as adolescents from wealthier majority communities. For the youth in this study, succumbing to peer pressure and simply experimenting to fulfill curiosity were common causes of substance use; observing friends and hanging out with friends who used drugs were significant parts of the learning process.

In addition, however, youth also learned about drugs by witnessing parents and other family members engage in drug-related activities, namely purchasing drugs and using them. In a class discussion that I did not tape record, Julie and Joelle stated that after their parents had been arrested for producing and selling drugs, the two sisters were sent to live with an aunty and uncle, who were also heavy drug users, of both marijuana

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and crystal methamphetamine. The two girls stated that their aunty would wake them up in the middle of the night (usually around 2:00am) and take them to go purchase drugs. I followed up on this topic in another class session:

*DM:* Oh yea, you guys talked about how, I think it was your aunty, would take a child, or you, down to Chinatown...

*Joelle:* Yeah...

*Julie:* Yeah, the river, I hate that place.

*Joelle:* She used to wake us up, she used to wake us up to get us to go walk with her to the frickin river and it’s like “Uh, hello...”

*Julie:* It was because, yeah, like, like even drug dealers they know like children you don’t screw around with, and because like they’re yeah, like that’s the #1 thing.

*DM:* So how old were you?

*Julie:* Intermediate for her. I was like 9th or 10th grade.

*DM:* So how did that make you like, I mean obviously you’re tired and pissed off and stuff...

*Julie:* Nah, it made it, it gave us more of like knowledge of what was going...

*Karen:* What’s going on...

*Julie:* ...yea, what was out there, yeah.

*Joelle:* But it’s like weird though, yeah.

*Julie:* But only a true chronic would do that kind of stuff, you know.

*DM:* Did that kind of stuff happen to anybody else?
Karen: When I was a lot younger I used to go down there, but like I was
totally oblivious to what was going on.

As Julie and Joelle explain, their aunty would use them as a form of protection when
going to purchase drugs in the middle of the night since other drug users would be less
inclined to assault someone who had young children with them. Karen chimes in, stating
that she was used in a similar manner, but that she was too young to recall the details of
her experience. More importantly, the girls add that by being drawn into these types of
activities, their knowledge of how to attain drugs was enhanced.

Greg from the Phase Two group, who had to drop out of the study due to health
problems, also commented on learning about the drug business as a young child. Said
Greg, “When I was young, before intermediate, my aunty used to give me drugs to take
to other people.” I asked Greg to expand on this, and he explained further, “Because no
one expect one young kid to be holding drugs, yeah. I used to take them everywhere, to
their friends, other aunties, uncles, and then they gave me the money to bring back.” For
many of these adolescents, then, it became clear that peer pressure and mere curiosity
were not the only factors that played into their use of various drugs. In addition, they
were educated about the drug scene at a very early age, and in very blatant manners.

Finally, Joelle and Julie discussed how their aunty (the same one who used them
as a form of protection) would take their valuables and sell them in order to get drug
money, while also asking the girls to be lookouts when she was using:

Joelle: She’s like weird because of the drugs I guess like, and like she
used to always tell us like she used to tell me “Oh, like go watch the
door,” cuz like she’d be all high and stuff and she used to tell me, “Oh
yea, I give you batu if you go watch the door,” and I’m like “Uh, no, you
crazy like that...”

*Julie:* I know...

*Joelle:* And she used to like pawn our stuff and she used to be like “Oh,
don’t worry, I give it to you on Friday, I give it to you on Friday when I
get paid.” Never, and then Friday would come and she wouldn’t give it to
me.

*DM:* Give what to you?

*Joelle:* My jewelry, she wouldn’t go get it from the pawn store.

*Julie:* No, she’d just go and buy more crack with it instead.

As a result of their families’ drug-related activities and usage, these students were savvy.
They had a well-developed sense of where to get drugs and how to get drugs. As will be
shown the next section, these students also learned how easy it was to use drugs, even in
settings where one might normally think adult figures were present who would try to
impede adolescent drug use and nurture adolescents into healthier activities.

**Institutions Facilitating and Encouraging Teenage Drug Use**

When student participants told me about their early “educational” experiences
with drug sales and drug use, I began asking them follow-up questions with regard to
how different institutional groups in their lives impacted their use of drugs. As the Phase
Two students went on and on about how different organizations facilitated their prior
drug habits, I eventually said in a state of wonder, “Well it sounds like all the significant
areas of people’s lives, like school, family, friends, like there’s none of those areas that
are making it difficult to get drugs or to use drugs.” Joelle replied, “Yeah, they’re making it easier,” and all the other students quickly and vigorously agreed.

As discussed previously, friends facilitated the substance use process as mediators of peer pressure. Students said family members also influenced adolescents to use drugs. Tulipa wrote the following excerpt, based on her observations in her community: “Other students started using drugs because they have family members that use them, so it’s within their surroundings, whether it is at home, around their house or community, or at school, within their friends.” Family influence was very evident among some of the Phase Two students. Joelle discussed how she first began smoking cigarettes in elementary school, an action that initially resulted in punishment from her parents. However, her cigarette smoking became an accepted family activity when her father ran out of cigarettes, and since he wanted one, he asked her if he could have one of hers. Joelle said she only had one cigarette left, and so she said they split it. This was a major moment for Joelle because it was the first time she realized she could win over a parental figure’s approval for using illegal substances.

Other students also stated that parents were instrumental in initiating their use of marijuana. I once asked Matt if his dad knew he smoked marijuana, which set off a series of responses from participants, presented below:

Matt: I smoked with him.

DM: But didn’t you get started through friends?

Matt: Yeah, but I smoked with my dad couple times.

Joelle: A lot of kids tend to smoke with their parents.

DM: How does a parent start that with his or her child?
Julie: I don’t know.

Joelle: I don’t know. It’s hard to tell...

Matt: Nah, nah, my dad just said, “Oh, you like smoke?” That was my first time.

Julie: Yeah, that’s how I drank with my parents.

Joelle: Yeah, like I always used to come home stoned, and like my mom used to know, and she used to smoke too, so like she knew and then like, I guess like one day, she’s like “Oh here,” she’s like (gestures handing out a marijuana joint).

Julie: For us it’s like a joke because they’re like, they already know that, that you’re on something.

Joelle: Yeah, they already know. I was like “Mom can I have buds for my birthday?” and she was like, “Uh, we’ll see,” and then like I got this altoids box, and it was like all wrapped up, and there was buds in there, and I was like “Whoa.”

Karen: My friend’s dad, we used to go home every night, and he used to just give us a pipe and he used to fill it for us and then he’ll come out of his room and be like “Oh you guys done? You guys want more?” And he’d just like keep filling the bowl for us. Every night, cuz he used to deal too.

DM: So it seems really easy, like through family.

Joelle: Yeah, cuz our family’s chronics anywayz so you know.
For the four Phase Two students who had used drugs fairly extensively, family members (including parents) were instrumental in making substance use an accepted part of everyday life. Josh, who was proud of the fact that he had never used any drugs, offered a very different story, singling out his mother as a positive familial influence. With regard to when his older brother would come home high, Josh stated, “My mom would, she wouldn’t let my brother come in if he, you know, and then he went to jail.” Josh indicated further that his mother was a more supportive figure in all aspects of his life. When Karen said that her younger sister was beginning to experiment with drugs and that she was going to let her sister learn about the dangers of drug use on her own, Josh interjected, “Nah, she should never start. Don’t even let her start.” Likewise, the Phase One students all indicated having supportive family members, who did not use drugs and who discouraged their children from using.

Still, families were not the only institutions that facilitated drug use for Julie, Joelle, Karen, and Matt. Being a former high school football coach, one of Matt’s stories shook me in particular. Matt mentioned, “In 8th grade, I used to play pop warner (football), the football coach used to sell buds to me.” Matt explained further that this football coach and his father were long time friends who had a drug-related relationship:

No, no, my dad knew my coach from when he was young, ah, and my dad started smokin’ buds, so he just used to get ‘em from him (the football coach), and he (the football coach) stay in jail now, cuz they tap into his phone line, and he was making deals with ice and stuff li’dat, so he got busted.
After hearing this, I thought about how so many coaches talk incessantly about sports being an institution that is supposed to help children and adolescents to resist using drugs and getting into trouble. Here was a coach and role-model doing the exact opposite—selling drugs to one of his eighth grade players.

Last of all, students stated that their schools made using drugs an easy endeavor. Ironically, security guards were identified as the school personnel who made on campus drug use virtually effortless. According to participants, one simply had to befriend security guards, who would then look out for befriended student drug-users and prevent them from getting into trouble.

Karen: No, I used to get warnings from security. They used to come in and get me right, and they’d be like “Oh Karen, you’re gonna get searched again,” so I just gave all my shit to security.... or they let us go to the bathroom and like put it in weirdo places.

Matt: The security guards at our school, they just take ‘em away and they just smoke ‘em themselves.

Karen: Yeah.

Joelle: Yeah, no, yeah, when we get busted, they take away our cigarettes and like my mom gets pissed cuz like that’s what she used to buy me.

Matt: The security guards at our school take away our weed, and they smoke ‘em.

DM: So I hear this from a lot of students, that security guards have favorites and stuff, that they do favors for. How does that...

Matt: You just gotta cruize wit’ dem...
Karen: I don’t know, I guess if you just get in trouble a lot, they start getting to know you.

Matt: ...If you cool wit’ da security guards, they cool wit’ you.... Sometimes they catch us smoking weed, they wen’ just tell us “beat it, you guys no come around ovah here.”

Karen: Oh, I remember during summer school, my gosh, our security, we used to all smoke behind the gym, and like the security used to stand there and watch for us if any other people were coming like the teachers or whatever. And he used to like take hits whatever, and he’d just stand there all stoned, just watching for us, at...summer school.

DM: So to me it sounds like everything’s set up so that it’s really easy.

Matt: Yup.

Joelle: It is easy, it’s really easy. It’s easy whatever you want basically.

You can do whatever you want.

Matt: Just don’t, just don’t do something stupid.

Joelle: Like it’s really easy, like you’d think it’s so hard. It’s really easy.

It’s like nothing. You just have to not do it though; it’s bad to do it.

Security guards were identified by students as the adult figures on school campuses who would cover up for students, warn students, and look away from students when they were using drugs. In addition, students stated that security guards even used the drugs themselves, further reinforcing that drug use on campus grounds and in general would be tolerated and was a relatively normal activity.
Considering the support these students received in using drugs, it is not surprising that Matt and Joelle finish off this conversation by saying that getting away with using drugs is “really easy.” In actuality, it was not only that adult figures, such as school security guards, made using drugs easy. In addition, parents and other adult family members introduced these students to using drugs. And for Matt, his football coach actually sold him marijuana. In other words, the very adult figures who would normally be expected to decrease adolescent substance use were encouraging it.

**Breaking Up the Family**

Prior research with lower-class adolescents and young adults of color has found family substance use to be major cause of family disruption (Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & Evans, 2002). When talking about substance use in the present study, Matt stated emphatically, “Drugs break up families.” After Matt made this statement, the following exchange transpired:

*Joelle:* It broke up our family.... We got all separated, um, our house got evicted. We got evicted from our house, like I don’t know, everybody wanted to arrest our parents, and the cops was after our parents. They were after our family.... And we got taken away from the CPS. Like I don’t know. And my mom went to jail for drugs and my dad had to go into rehab, and that’s where they still are.

*Julie:* Well mom moved out to a halfway house.

*Josh:* My brother went to jail, for drugs.
DM: Alright so, so when drugs break up families how does it affect the kids?

Julie: They’re scarred for life, yeah! Yeah, and you, it’s like, it’s mental on the children.

Joelle: And it gets harder on us too.

Julie, Joelle, Matt, and Karen were fraught with anger regarding the different ways family members had hurt them, and these students tied their pain to family substance use. Julie and Joelle talked about how they witnessed their aunty and uncle get into physical fights over who could have the last hit of different drugs. Matt talked about having to pack up in the middle of the night and stay in hotels when his parents thought the police were going to raid their house. And Karen expressed her resentment of her father, who abused her and her family physically and financially, using marijuana and crystal methamphetamine while not working for years.

After listening to the students vent, I decided to have them write a mock letter in their journals to someone who they would want to confront. My directions were written, “Part 1: If you could confront 1 person and know that nothing would happen to you, who would that person be, and why? Part 2: Write a mock letter to this person…” Presented, below, is a portion of some of the students’ answers.

Matt: Part 1: To me I would (write to) my mom because she does a drug and it’s not good. I would tell my mom that it’s not good to use it because to me I think that ice slowly takes your life away. My mom starts to sell
all of our games, CDs, clothes just to have money to buy the drug. One
day I will get courage enough to tell her that it ain’t good.

Part 2: Dear Mom, I would like to tell you that the drug you use is not
good. It’s your choice to quit but just have a strong mind. If your mind is
strong then you will know when it’s time to stop for a while. I would want
you to quit and have a life, like have a job to support yourself. THE END!

Joelle’s mock letter was directed towards her aunty, who used to steal and sell her
belongings in order to buy drugs:

Aunty (name), Airight, well here is my confront letter to you! You are a
fucking bitch for doing all the shit you did to me! All I know is you need
to get off the shit! and pay me back for all the shit you took from me!

Karen wrote that she would write her mock letter to her dad because “he doesn’t do the
things he supposed to be doing as a parent.”

Shithead...

For how many years now have you not helped out mom with
supporting us. You don’t even help us around the house. You don’t even
know that I know you smoke batu. Look now even I have a job and you
don’t. When are you going to wake the fuck up and realize that you need
to take some responsibility.

Grow up…Karen
Clearly, these students had an extensive amount of compressed sadness, anger, and frustration, emanating from various family members' substance use patterns and their resultant behaviors. Recall that in Chapter Four, Karen stated that she was constantly on edge, ready to fight when even the slightest insult was directed her way, stating subsequently that her family had made her the angry person she is today. Students in this project, especially some Phase Two students, were able to explicate how drugs fractured their families.

Phase One students, who had more supportive family support systems, were more likely to state that substance use in their community impacted them in school. For example, while giving a community presentation for class, Tulipa stated, "...knowing that students bring drugs to school could be the main distraction in many classrooms, such as students going to class stoned and high with red eyes and then falling asleep and doing nothing in class." Clearly, these students did not have the same anger tied to community substance use. It was a major issue for them, but not an issue tied to personal resentment and frustration with their families. Although most Phase One students felt racially disrespected and generally that their parents were overbearing and too strict, they at least had their family in tact.

**Student Perceptions on Drug Policy**

Just as Phase One and Phase Two students had varying perceptions on how substance use impacted them personally, they had differing opinions on how communities should address teen substance use problems. Not surprisingly, since Phase One students saw drugs impacting them most heavily in school, their suggestions
revolved around school drug policies. Initially, Phase One students went back and forth, unsure if tough sanctions imposed on students for using and selling drugs on campus were ultimately beneficial. Tavita stated that if a student was caught using drugs, “you get suspended for like four days...but if you’re a dealer then, what happens then, you get suspended for ninety days.” With regard to the penalties, Ryan stated, “Drugs is drugs. They should make it worse, cuz then people not gonna do ‘em yeah. Automatic flunk they should make ‘em.” However, other students stated that although teen drug use was a major problem that using and dealing did not merit such severe punishments.

Eventually, our conversation shifted, and students began talking about how the school’s drug policies were predominantly reactionary, meaning services were only set up to address drug problems after they had already manifested. Specifically, students stated that those school officials who were understood to deal with drug issues (namely Vice Principals) were also the school officials designated to administer punishments. Thus, these students stated that the school did not offer a sympathetic venue where students with potential drug problems could go for help. In the following exchange, Phase One students state that high school counselors should be the school figures who deal with student drug problems, but as it currently stands, the students felt counselors only dealt with issues surrounding academic coursework.

Tavita: We don’t talk to counselors [about drug issues] though. We only talk to them about our grades and stuff.... And if we get problems, we talk to the VPs.

DM: Okay, so is that easy?
Tavita: No, I think we should go counselors first because they’re like one step down so you feel more comfortable talking to them than going straight to the VPs because the VPs is the one who makes the decision if you can get suspended or not.

Ryan: Cuz if you talk to the VPs, bam, suspended then.

Tavita: Yup.

Jay: No more nothing in our school for help us stop.

DM: How about this. If you could tell a principal or VP something about how you think they should be handling the drug issue, what would you want to tell them?

Jay: Oh, be more confidential…. So they not suspend you, cuz you like get help.

In short, these students felt that systemically, schools need to reconfigure what personnel addresses drug issues. Since counselors were understood as the school officials who were there to help students, they were said to be the most appropriate and appealing personnel for students dealing with drug problems.

Although Jay mentions that there was “No more nothing...” in the school to help lessen student drug use, students did mention some services were available. However, they noted that the services provided were mainly for students who were already “in too deep,” or who had already developed a dependence on drugs. Instead of providing prevention services or early intervention services for students in the experimental phase, students perceived that the school’s existing services were established in response to the drug problem. Moreover, students felt that an inadequate number of school staff persons
were available who would empathize with students and work constructively with students who had drug problems, which has been found in prior research with adolescents in minority communities (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002).

Phase Two students had a different perspective on how drug interventions should function, focusing more on strengthening family connections and practitioner trust. Again, for Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino communities, family is central. These students believed that if adolescents were beginning to use drugs or were deeply involved with drugs, effective intervention specialists should be those people who the students already trusted and who could communicate successfully with teens’ family members. In particular, Phase Two students stated that temporary psychiatrists were ineffective in helping adolescents to work through their substance use issues.

I asked students, “How come in today’s world, families don’t sit down and talk about their issues as much as they used to?” This question evoked the following exchange amongst Julie, Lani, and myself:

* Lani: Too busy with work and stuff.
* Julie: Well, most of them just pay to go to psychiatrists and stuff. And that’s mostly like marriage counselors, or like some kid that they can’t control, so they send him to a counselor.
* DM: So instead of having the family work it out, they’ll pay to have...
* Julie: A psychiatrist or somebody.
* DM: Okay, so does the psychiatrist work?
* Multiple participants: No.
Julie: No, it just makes you more pissed off.... Nah, you make up some bullshit lies so you can get drugs and sell them to your friends or take it yourself.

Lani: Cuz you don’t trust them, so I don’t know. Like you talk to your friends about your problems cuz they know like, how you are, and your life. But you can’t really talk to a stranger about your problems.

Phase Two students expressed the need for interventions to focus on family reunification. Recall that Matt had hoped to build the courage to confront his mother about her addiction to ice. Julie and Joelle also regretted having their relationship with their mother and father severed, only to be placed by CPS with an aunty and uncle who were heavy drug users themselves. Karen wished her mother could have a better life, shielded from her abusive father.

Unfortunately, in these students’ experiences with psychiatrists, treatment was centered on individual change, rather than on family and community relationships. More to the point, the students noted that treatment was medicalized, as students were commonly given legal drugs as a temporary “quick fix” for their problems. As we were talking about substance use and family problems, the conversation shifted a bit to the topic of depression. I asked the students, “What are some other ways that people could cope with depression better?” Students responded:

Karen: Like see, those depression pills are not good and stuff.

Julie: You know zolof, it makes you just hyper. Like it makes your emotions just hyper. Like I took it once and I wasn’t depressed, and I was
just bouncing off the walls. Like that’s really bad stuff you know, the
drugs that they give you is not good.

Karen: Doctors believe that depression is a chemical imbalance.

Joelle: You can’t ever stop depression. It’s just like, it’s situations. A pill
is not gonna help you like get you out of a situation that you’re in that’s
making you depressed. It’s how you act.

Julie: Yea, it’s like the drugs doctors give you, they just help you run
away for a little bit, that’s all.

Joelle makes an interesting and valuable point, stating that legal drugs do not address the
root causes of depression. She states that depression is caused by “situations,” or
relational problems and exploited power imbalances with family members, friends,
and/or romantic partners, not simply by individual, internal difficulties or chemical
imbalance. Julie then follows up by stating that medically proscribed drugs only help
students to “run away” from their situational problems temporarily. As will be described
later, legally prescribed drugs served the same function as marijuana – a temporary
escape from tumultuous life circumstances.

Students also suggested that family connections with younger siblings helped to
keep them from giving up during times of heavy depression.

Julie: It was my family mostly. Everything that was my family. Cuz my
friends were always the get away. Like I wouldn’t drink and stuff or like
anything, hardly anything at least. And like it was all good when I was
with my friends. We never had any problems. It was just family.... But
when you’re depressed, you don’t think of it that way. You just think
about getting your life over with already and whatever, and like who cares. Like the only thing you’re probably thinking about is like your little brothers and sisters and stuff like that.

Karen: Yup.

Julie: And that’s sometimes the only reason why you stay alive.

Karen: Yup.

Julie: Cuz you’re like, who’s gonna back up your brothers or like who’s the one that’s gonna take their side?

Thus, it appears that effective prevention and intervention efforts should focus heavily on family-based bonding and reunification, rather than on individually-based treatment that fails to acknowledge how situational problems with family members manifest among adolescents. Later, Julie closed the conversation by making the following statement, further confirming the need for family-based interventions: “Yeah, and eventually, they gotta get us to talk to our family again cuz that’s like the cause of all our problems. That’s not gonna happen if the person trying to help us is someone we don’t trust.”

Notably, the students in this particular conversation were almost all girls since Josh was absent that day. Matt was the only male student present in this discussion. Earlier, the female participants mentioned that although girls do tend to gossip, their willingness to talk with one another about their problems was also a gender-based strength. I asked students how substance use and depression affected boys and girls differently. Karen responded first, inducing the following exchange:

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Karen: Yea but guys keep it in and they tell somebody close like their girlfriend or whatever, but like I mean, they don’t feel like they can talk between guys.

DM: Or some people say that when guys get depressed or have problems, it’s more common for them to blame other people, whereas girls more often blame themselves.

Karen: Yea, I think that’s true.

Joelle: Like my boyfriend will tell me, one day you’re gonna come home and I’m not gonna be there.

Karen: Yea, why do guys do that? They like, they’re not well. My boyfriend always tells me that too. “Watch you fall asleep and you wake up and I’m not gonna be here.” It’s like what the fuck is wrong with you? I don’t know, I think they take it out differently. Like girls, they’re able to talk to each other. They’re able to relate to each other. Guys, I don’t know, guys keep it in.

Julie: They’ll talk about some things.

Joelle: They have to bring out their manly part, you know.

Matt: It’s pride.

Joelle: Yea, they have to keep their, um, ego big.

Karen: Why are guys like that? Why do they always have to be like hot shit?

DM: Always or usually?

Multiple participants: Most of the time.
Karen: Guys are scared to admit their issues so how are they even gonna talk to each other about it?

DM: So for girls, how does that help?

Joelle: Yea, it helps us, because we get it out because we have somebody to talk to you know. Like it’s not just in us building, it’s out, you know.

These girls confirm Freitas and Chesney-Lind’s (2001) prior research with adolescent social workers in Hawai‘i, which found that practitioners can rely on girls’ readiness to open up with each other about various issues, rather than simply pinpointing girls’ relational tendencies as a risk factor that contributes to relational aggression. Conversely, Matt briefly adds that boys’ pride impedes them from talking about their problems with one another, thereby contributing to their built up anger and/or depression. Thus again, the student participants in this project illustrate how wide-spread cultural constructions of masculinity prohibit adolescent males from engaging in help-seeking behaviors. Girls, on the other hand, can more readily draw on each others’ knowledge for advice.

For example (though not related to substance use), when Joelle was talking about the level of control her ex-boyfriend exerted over her — particularly that he could monitor her via her cell phone, which he continued to paid for — Lani provided the following advice:

Lani: Sooner or later, if you keep being strong about it, sooner or later he’s gonna get the point that you’re serious, and either he has to change or he can’t get you back.

Joelle: He’ll never change though, he’ll like…
Lani: Then you know then...you gotta be like strong, for just like two weeks out of your whole life that you are serious about this, that he needs to be better to you.

Joelle: Like the other day when he was calling, calling, calling, like I couldn’t do nothing. Like he called the whole day, non-stop. Like honestly, honest to God, the whole day, non-stop.

Lani: So turn your phone off!

Joelle: I know, but then I miss calls from my other friends.... Like I miss my sister’s calls, my Mom’s calls.

DM: So I see this as control...

Lani: It’s pretty much, his phone. He just uses it, like, to know where you are. Get a pre-paid phone, like you can do that at T-Mobile.... It’s good, it doesn’t cost a lot of money, like it does cost money if you have to refill your minutes.... Like if someone calls you, you can just use someone else’s phone to call them back, like that’s what I do so it saves you minutes.

Whether discussing substance use or other teen issues, it became more apparent that girls’ relational tendencies were a not risk-related quality. Rather, they were a strength that assisted girls in building support, confidence, and information on problem solving. Accordingly, girls and boys should be nurtured to express their life dilemmas with one another in non-threatening, non-judgmental settings, such that issues such as substance use and interpersonal violence can be attended to in manners that are realistic and
supportive for adolescents. In addition, effective substance use prevention services would focus heavily on family bonding, and intervention services on family reunification.

**Re-Conceptualizing Adolescent Drug Use as “Risk”**

When I asked students in this project why teenagers used drugs, Jay stated, “I think cuz, I heard this through my friend, he get problems with his family and stuff, and it’s the only thing that will numb the pain.” The academic literature on substance use states decisively that parental support is a critical protective factor that can mitigate a slew of risk factors, including substance use and other forms of delinquency (Wills & Yeager, 2003; Wills et al., 2001a; Wills et al., 2001b; Kung & Farrell, 2000; Kafka & London, 1991). As Parker and Benson (2004) comment, “Adolescents who perceived their parents as supportive were more likely to have less delinquency, school misconduct, drug, and alcohol abuse” (p. 527).

Though the findings in these studies make perfect sense, they all assume substance use to be a risk factor. Although students generally stated that drugs were harmful to themselves, their families, and the wider community, Phase Two students did not always construct their personal drug use in a negative manner. On the contrary, they frequently viewed marijuana use as a healthy response to their often times chaotic and violent lives.

Just as the students stated that psychiatrists gave them legalized drugs to help them escape their problems, some students used marijuana to help them get through turbulent interpersonal conflicts. Joelle stated with regard to smoking marijuana, “You go back to your own world, das why...you don’t really care what everyone else is thinking...
about you...you’re stoned and you’re with your friends and you’re all happy...” In addition, students viewed marijuana’s effects on family dynamics as it compared to how more serious drugs like crystal methamphetamine affected their families. Julie, Joelle, Matt, and Karen for example, stated that when smoking marijuana, their personal and familial lives seemed much more enjoyable, and that it was an acceptable part of family life.

Karen: ...see like buds doesn’t break up no families, everybody smoke buds, everybody all happy.

Joelle: Every time we used to smoke buds with my mom, like we used to just laugh and we just used to go eat. And then we just used to come home and sleep. So like, that was cool.

Julie: Yeah, if you’re doing any other, I think that bud is alright, but if you’re doing any other drug, then it’s like yeah, just like even shrooms, or like anything that like just doesn’t, just buds.

DM: But people also realize, like even parents who are using, realize that buds can lead to other stuff.

Joelle: Yeah, well our mom used to tell us that “If you do anything else, I’m gonna kick your ass.” And I was like “Okay.”

Julie: Yeah.

Matt: My dad used to say, “You do anything else, and I’m gonna kick your ass.”

For these students, marijuana was not just an escape from problems. Smoking marijuana was also a kind of “protective factor.” Joelle provided more clarity to this point by
explaining that when her mother used to get volatile while using ice, she and her sister would encourage their mother to smoke marijuana so that she would calm down. Joelle stated:

Stoners are cool, but chronics, if you’re a chronic then that’s like yeah, you need to stop and smoke a joint. Like every time my mom used to tweak and stuff, I’d be like, “Mom, just shut up and smoke a joint, go to sleep or something,” you know.

This is not to say that students in this project were unaware of the risks that came along with smoking marijuana as well. The students stated that alcohol and marijuana were the two primary gateway drugs that led to more serious substance use. Julie said that when drinking alcohol, teens were especially susceptible to peer pressure: “Alcohol should be the number one, cuz when you’re drunk, you’re just like ‘Give it to me, I don’t care any more.’ You’re just like, you’re drunk, you’re just like ‘Bring it on.’” And Joelle said teens sometimes move from smoking marijuana to smoking ice by putting crystallized methamphetamine rocks into their marijuana joints before smoking them. Still, in terms of understanding risk and protective factors, for these youths, marijuana use was seen in some ways as a protective factor, helping their frequently violent family members to become more peaceful. Considering the highly explosive family dynamics students recounted, it is not surprising that in terms of risks and rewards, students often felt smoking marijuana offered more rewards, including a safer family environment.

Julie also made a comment that resonated with Blaisdell’s (1989) assertion that illicit substances are western and foreign items that have been imposed on Hawaiians,
and are therefore contemporary indicators of colonialism. These comments made by Julie are presented, below:

*Julie:* I wish there was no drugs, you know. Just like what naturally grows, that grows. But the drugs that people make, I wish there was never such thing. That’s what I wish…. Cuz like there’s kids doing coke and stuff like that, and like, kids that you hang out with, of course you don’t want to do what they’re doing, but eventually you get sucked into their whole stuff cuz that’s the people that you hang out with you know. I mean, it may not happen in one or two years, but eventually if you keep on hanging out and they get addiction, they you’re gonna see it happening every day, and the soon enough, they’re gonna be like, “Oh, are you sure you don’t wanna try some of this?” And you’ll be like, “Whatever, just give it to me.”

*DM:* So you wish there were no drugs in the first place?

*Julie:* Yea, that’s what I wish as a teenager. There was no drugs, only the ones that grow, like maybe weed. That’s it. Like, there wouldn’t be a screwed up a system as it is, and like a lot of kids wouldn’t have to deal with a lot of problems, you know.

Julie did not have the same political consciousness as Blaisdell when she made the above statements. Nevertheless, her declaration exemplifies how Hawaiian youth, families, and communities have been fractured by the external invasion of manufactured drugs, and further, how marijuana is not viewed as a harmful drug since ice, cocaine and other more serious drugs are so much more destructive. Taking all this into account, it is not as
surprising that approximately 50% of all adults and adolescents who seek community-based treatment for ice use are of Hawaiian ancestry (Apgar, 2003).

Finally, students mentioned that they sometimes used various substances to rebel against those authority figures who constantly put them down. Whereas students from both phases of this study were more likely to talk about fighting as a means of earning respect, Phase Two students were more likely to assert that drinking alcohol and using various drugs were a means of rebellion. Julie and Joelle both wrote about the ways that they used drinking alcohol in order to rebel against various authority figures. Describing a time that Joelle and her sister rebelled against their uncle, Joelle wrote on a class worksheet:

We stole a case of beers from my uncle...grabbed clothes and hopped two fences and ran down the street. My friend picked us up and we partied for couple days...WONDERFUL, it was fun! I always used to run away and stuff but not like this. It felt really good to get out of the house and party.... Yes, I would do it again any day and I would do it exactly the same way too.

Joelle and Julie's uncle was a frequent drug user and their aunty stole their personal valuables. That Joelle says it felt good to get out of the house and party is hardly surprising. Julie wrote about drinking alcohol as a method she used to rebel against her family. She wrote the following excerpt on a class worksheet:

All the people who would tell me what to do or try to have the authority over me, like my parents, my family, and schooling. It seemed like everyone had something to say about how to live my life. I would run
away and cruise with my friends, go to punk shows, get drunk, go to
school and fly paper ball at my teacher, jump out and climb through
windows, cut their phone lines... for my family I just always did what they
thought I was going to be. If they say “You’re going to be an alcoholic,”
I’d go over to their house all drunk and be like “What?” My rebellion life
made me feel way better in the inside. It made me feel that I was in charge
and that no one can tell me what to do.

Recall, Julie was a child abuse victim, whose parents were incarcerated. She was then
sent to live with other abusive and substance using relatives, and consequently, Julie
continually traced her anger back to her family, who she felt disrespected her and let her
down. Thus, in this case, Julie claims to drink alcohol as a means to turn her families’
accusations around, and confront them while drunk, thereby earning back a sense of
respect. During a discussion involving her younger sister, Julie also mentioned that she
drank alcohol in order to rebel against her abusive father and more easily endure his
physical assaults on her. The two sisters stated the following:

Joelle: I try to look away when I’m all stoned. I try not to look in their
eyes. And sometimes with my sister, she sits over there laughing, and my
dad hits her, and then she laughs more, and then my dad gets more mad...

Julie: And it’s like I cannot help it. And like he’ll start yelling louder, and
I’ll be like laughing at him even more. I didn’t care about the pain, it was
just so funny. You’re just so high, no matter how much he hits you, you’re
just like “whatever.”
In Julie’s eyes, the rewards of using drugs and drinking alcohol as a form of rebellion clearly outweighed any risks. By getting drunk and high, she is able to increase her sense of physical prowess (Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & Mackenzie, 2000), rebel against her abusive father, endure his physical attacks, and even mock his abusive onslaughts. In fact, all students from the Phase Two group wrote about different ways that they rebelled against authority figures, stating that their rebellious actions provided them with a sense of power, which was not granted to them in school or by family members.

Just as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) asks adolescents nationally about their participation in violence, the YRBS also asks about substance use – tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other substance use consumption. Results from the 2003 survey indicate “current marijuana use” was “higher among black male (29.8%) and Hispanic male (27.1%) than black female (18.1%) and Hispanic female (20.4%) students, respectively…” and “higher among black male (29.8%) than white male (23.3%) students” (Grunbaum et al., 2004, p. 13). What these data do not capture are the institutional factors that cause prevalence rates to vary by way of ethnicity and gender. Are black and “Hispanic” males simply more at-risk to use substances? Do greater numbers of black and “Hispanic” males use marijuana because of family break up? Are there larger structural issues that influence family break up and increased substance use in these ethnic communities, such as job exodus (Bourgois, 2003; Wilson, 1997)? These are not questions the YRBS can address or attempts to address.

In the same way, similar surveys administered to youth in Hawai‘i that measure substance use prevalence rates by way of ethnicity, gender, grade, and so forth (e.g., the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Survey) lack the capacity to acquire information
on the ways adolescents conceptualize risk and protection, and do not account for structural inequality. As an example, if Julie were asked in a survey about having consumed alcohol or used marijuana, she would indicate she had used both. Such responses could be correlated with her quantified reports of “family conflict,” “exposure to family (substance) use,” “family (sibling) history of anti-social behaviors”...even to her Hawaiian ethnicity. Still, these quantitative correlates could not possibly tie Julie’s substance use patterns to the historical and contemporary forms of colonialism that have ruptured too many Hawaiian families and communities. In addition, the varying ways that adolescents view using illicit substances, are completely negated and are redefined by researchers strictly as maladaptive. Erased, for example, is Julie’s use of alcohol and marijuana, consumed so that she could endure abuse, and defy and mock her abusers. Julie’s use of various substances as a way to rebel against oppression is completely obliterated and is rigidly reframed as a statistical “risk” factor. This is not to say that Julie’s (and other youths’) use of various illegal substances should be romanticized, strictly as forms of defiance. On the other hand, to systematically ignore the ways marginalized adolescents (predominantly of color) turn alleged risk factors into forms of rebellion is equally irresponsible.

I asked Phase Two students if they would be willing to write a poem about their personal identity that also reflected on some of the issues we had been discussing in class. Only Julie was willing to complete this assignment. Her poem is presented on the following page, and it clearly exemplifies how she views smoking marijuana as a protective factor that eases her pain:
A lot of anger
A lot of rage
Music took me out of this place
I got it out
I took some hits
I drank a lot of alcohol
After the show I'd leave to go home
Smoking the trees
At home, at ease
A chick at peace with herself.
CHAPTER SIX: REVAMPING PREVENTION EFFORTS WITH YOUTH IN HAWAI‘I

I began this study by discussing recent abuses likely carried out against youth who were incarcerated in Hawai‘i’s only juvenile detention center, the Hawai‘i Youth Correctional Facility. The youth in that facility had reached the tail end of Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system. Notably, research has consistently shown that Hawaiian and Samoan youth are over-represented in that center, especially Hawaiian girls. Thus, the alleged scandals carried out at the detention center have a racialized and gendered undercurrent to them – if a youth comes from either of those ethnic groups and is caught engaging in delinquent activities, he or she stands an increased chance of being arrested and being sentenced to stay in this corrupt facility.

Of course most youth who are arrested for committing some form of delinquency are not incarcerated. Still, Hawai‘i arrest data show that Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth are arrested at rates that exceed their youthful proportion in Hawai‘i, and this disproportionality issue cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, these juvenile disproportionate minority confinement rates are related to the juvenile justice system, and by the time youth are being arrested, or worse yet, incarcerated, we already know that a problem exists and has probably been in existence for quite some time. Addressing the problem at this point through the justice system is predominantly reactionary, and in too many cases, too late. However, state and federal resources are still poured heavily into the juvenile justice system, because as Prothrow-Stith (2004) reminds us, society still inaccurately assumes that youth violence and other forms of delinquency are 1) based on individual choice, 2) deterred by threats of punishment and actual punishment, and 3) an inevitable aspect of juvenile behavior (p. 85; see also Prothrow-Stith, 2002). In reality, as this study
has attempted to demonstrate, juvenile delinquency is a product of systemic inequalities that can be traced to historic and contemporary forms of colonialism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.

If policy makers are serious about decreasing the numbers of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth who are incarcerated, arrested, and who are engaging in different forms of “risk,” then more omnipresent, community-based prevention efforts will be encouraged and supported with robust resources. I find it inexcusable that politicians will publicly lament youthful concerns and show commercials of themselves with children while campaigning to be elected, and then once elected direct the bulk of their efforts and state resources towards the ongoing development of Hawai‘i’s repressive tourist industry. Still, this should not be terribly surprising. Those who represent the State of Hawai‘i commonly use propaganda to herald tourism as Hawai‘i’s economic savior (Trask, 1999; Kent, 1993), just as sugar plantations were espoused to be this island archipelago’s savior decades ago. Moreover, this type of socio-economic dynamic occurs across the United States. In Nashville, Tennessee, the state was recently willing to invest $300 million into a new football stadium for the Tennessee Titans while the Nashville police force remained understaffed and underpaid (Websdale, 2001, p. 94).

Presently, Hawai‘i does have its share of delinquency prevention institutions for youth, including various Boys & Girls Club units, YMCAs, and other non-profit community-based organizations scattered across the more populated areas of the island chain. However, having been involved in Hawai‘i’s delinquency prevention field for roughly eight years now, it seems to me that most prevention activities are typical recreation programs, teaching pre-teens dance, basketball, and volleyball skills, with
periods of academic tutoring thrown in for good measure. This is fine, but it is hardly adequate, and if this is predominantly what Hawai‘i has to offer in the form of delinquency prevention, we can expect to see disproportionate numbers of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino youth get into fights with one another, use drugs, be arrested, and get incarcerated in the years to come. As Bourgois (2003) writes with respect to prevention programming on the continental United States:

The fact that Head Start is widely considered to be the most successful poverty intervention program indicates the banality of policy debates in the United States. Essentially, Head Start seeks to take inner-city preschoolers who live in lead-painted, rat-infested tenements without steady heat or hot water, and metamorphose them into bright-eyed, upper-middle-class overachievers. (p. 325).

Similarly in Hawai‘i, recreational after-school dance and sports programs are not going to effectively impact minority youths’ current levels of serious delinquency.

As I argued in Chapter Two, Hawai‘i is in many ways a racial project that has been manipulated historically by the American empire’s international push for economic and militaristic supremacy. It would be remiss to forget America’s historical complicity in creating Hawai‘i’s current situation. The United States intruded upon Hawai‘i by revamping Hawaiians’ ways of life religiously, educationally, legally, and economically, and in 1893, the United States literally claimed Hawai‘i by way of militaristic force. Filipinos, who had already felt the negative effects of Spanish colonialism, were colonized again by the United States and then manipulated into coming to Hawai‘i as exploitable labor beginning in the early 1900s. In many ways today, Filipinos are still
treated like exploited plantation workers, but in Hawai‘i’s powerful tourist industry. And Samoans’ immigration to Hawai‘i was prompted by the United States’ self-serving desires to gain power in the Pacific during World War II, but as American Samoans began migrating to Hawai‘i in the 1960s and 1970s, they were propelled into an unforgiving service-based economy and tagged with demonizing racial stereotypes.

In the aftermath of all this, the very cultural core of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino communities has been threatened – the family. Waters (1990) suggests that ideally, people from various ethnic groups should be able to pick and choose which ethnic traditions they engaged in historically and continue practicing those cultural traditions from the past that they see as beneficial in contemporary society. Unfortunately, Waters’s research found that due to pervasive racism, members of oppressed minority groups are frequently labeled ethnocentric and discriminating against majority group members when promoting politicized aspects of cultural pride. This is true for many Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino families and adolescents in Hawai‘i, who are labeled with degrading racial stereotypes, and who are discouraged from advocating for their rights in ways that critique the current political-economy.

In addition, Hawai‘i’s restrictive capitalized economy makes it more difficult for Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino communities that are financially strained to maintain culturally-based family traditions. With a greater degree of youth from these ethnic communities living in and around dense, low-income public housing tracts and on economically isolated Hawaiian homestead, the hunt for pride – or respect – is intensified. Anderson (2000) states of urban ghettos on the continental United States, “There is a generalized sense that very little respect is to be had, and therefore everyone
competes to get what affirmation he can of the little that is available” (p. 308). Likewise in Hawai‘i, adolescents from marginalized minority groups fight for respect in whatever form is perceivably available, even if that means respect somehow morphs into a violent masculinity and is accompanied by the degradation of women and gay men. On top of that, this study illustrated how youth who have been dependent on various substances frequently come from highly abusive families who are also heavy drugs users. What then can the United States do to seriously rectify these serious adolescent problems?

**Federally Funded Community-Based Interventions**

Federal dollars must be granted to ethnic communities so that pervasive community mobilization efforts can be designed internally and independently by Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino community groups, who then collaborate with schools. More specifically, community leaders (including elders, parents, and adolescents representing various risk levels) must rectify what they view as the positive cultural traditions and beliefs that have been eclipsed with western colonialism. As an example, this study found that homophobia and the degradation of women stood as two of the primary factors that perpetuated violence between adolescent males and to some degree females. As males felt insecure about establishing a sense of manhood in school (due largely to racist stereotypes), sexist and homophobic accusations were used to push those males into fighting, an act that supposedly enabled them to reclaim a sense of publicly acceptable masculinity. Unfortunately, this reclaimed masculinity was one rooted in violence. True, heterosexual boys’ homophobic attitudes and actions are not unique to Hawai‘i, as research has found that heterosexual boys in other locales also use
homophobic terms to provoke fighting (Swain, 2003). However, in traditional Hawaiian and Samoan culture, homosexuality was not frowned upon. Today, western notions of homophobia have overtaken Polynesians’ cultural values enough that these discriminatory beliefs against gay males contribute heavily to violence between young Polynesian males.

Holding Heterosexual Men and Boys Accountable

In these community mobilization efforts, heterosexual males must take leadership roles in dispelling sexism and homophobia if violence prevention efforts will truly be prevention oriented since hyper-masculine attitudes drive a considerable portion of violent conflicts (Katz & Jhally, 1999). In Chris McKinney’s novel, The Tattoo, the story’s protagonist, Ken (or Kenji), reflects back to his middle school years in Hawai‘i and the initial meeting he shared with his future best friend, Koa:

My first impression was, “what a fuckin’ asshole. Thinks he’s hot shit.” I looked back and his eyes met mine. We shared that moment, that moment when two guys who think they’re hot shit mentally communicate to each other: “What the fuck are you looking at? You better turn your eyes away before I kick your fuckin’ ass.” We were two complete strangers ready to kill each other because one wouldn’t look away. I was scared shitless, but potent pride can always overcome fear. (p. 49).

I have no doubt a substantial portion of men who read that passage can relate. It is absolutely crucial that conscientious males begin to systemically dispel the notion that violent supremacy over others yields successful manhood. Enlisting responsible males to
teach other males (in particular boys and fathers of young children) appropriate and healthy methods of achieving manhood that do not include denigrating women or people from various sexualities will be crucial to preventing adolescent violence in the future. Men must be held accountable for teaching other men and boys that a healthy masculinity revolves around respecting others intellectually and emotionally, and does not include masculine-feminine power struggles. As Tolman et al. (2003) argue, holding girls and women responsible for stopping their own victimization and domination equates to pathologizing their own oppression, since girls are forced to alter their own attitudes and behaviors in order to dodge males’ attacks. These scholars suggest instead, “There needs to be greater emphasis on prevention for boys,” that questions and reconfigures unbending societal notions of masculinity and femininity.

Of course, achieving this is contingent upon schools and the broader political-economy offering minority youth from all genders equal access and opportunity to succeed. Although the “No Child Left Behind” Act has put public schools under tremendous pressure to only increase math and reading scores, the Hawai‘i Department of Education must invest in culture- and gender-based curricula that dispels racist stereotypes, violent notions of manhood, and addresses gender-based discrimination. Connell (1996) suggests that schools can effectively play a role in the remaking of masculinity by implementing gender-relevant lesson plans in gender-specific and co-ed settings. It is crucial, however, that ethnic communities plays a major role in culture- and gender-relevant curricula development projects. In doing so, protecting girls and women will not only be accomplished by reproducing punitive measures that punish men, who are already over-represented in Hawai‘i’s juvenile and adult justice systems (see Merry,
Rather, the re-making of masculinities will transpire in the form of school- and community-based prevention.

It is also highly important that culture- and gender-relevant programming reaches male athletes, preferably before and throughout high school (Men Can Stop Rape, 2005). Regrettably, athletics have been a venue in American culture where violent masculinity is reinforced (Cahn, 1994; Messner, 1992), and it is not unusual for high school coaches to teach their athletes violent methods of in-sport intimidation (Shields, 1999). One of the periods from this project that I found particularly illuminating was talking with the head football coach from the high school that Phase One students attended. As we were talking about my research project, we explored the possibility of me coming on board as an assistant coach. During our conversation, I told the head coach that I felt high school athletic coaches had responsibilities that were similar to social workers because student-athletes tended to develop closer bonds with their coaches than with most teachers.

At this point the coach told me a coaching strategy he used that blew me away. He said that he makes it a point to hug his players and tell them that he loves them. The coach said he did this explicitly so that as they grow up and become parents themselves, these future young men know that it is okay and appropriate for them to express their affection to their children verbally, physically, and emotionally. Through all the years that I have played, coached, and studied athletics, I have never heard a coach say something so progressive, let alone a football coach. But this is one coach, with one coaching staff, in one community. Identifying, recruiting, and rewarding more adult males like this one to partake in community mobilization and curricula development efforts is critical. For in Hawai‘i, and likely across the United States, it is not uncommon
for football and other male coaches to verbally and physically abuse their athletes, demeaning them with hyper-masculine, sexist and homophobic language, thinking this to be normal sports-related mentoring strategy (Perez, 2005).

Finally, as participants in this study suggested, boys must be socialized at earlier ages so that they can more easily talk about their problems with others. Male gender-role expectations of maintaining pride and silence without asking for help certainly do not assist adolescent boys who are also stereotyped racially in ways that track them out of academic classrooms. Also, as mentioned previously is the need for more responsible quantitative research that augments the type of qualitative data provided in the current study. Burk, Burkart, and Sikorski (2004), for example, designed a useful and innovative survey that can be used to ascertain quantitatively how group measures of “hypermasculinity,” “sexual identity,” “dominance and aggression,” “conservative masculinity,” and “devaluation of emotion” interplay with males’ (and possibly females’) reported attitudes and behaviors throughout community-wide mobilization efforts. History has taught us that masculine tendencies are changeable (Bederman, 1995). The move towards youth violence prevention calls for adequate resources to be designated for the altering of masculinity in ways that support gender equity, especially for those ethnic groups over-represented in the juvenile justice system.

Risk Reduction for Girls

Again, Katz and Jhally (1999) suggest that preventing violence between men and against women and reducing alcohol consumption must begin with changing the ways men conceptualize masculinity. And although the emphasis should not be taken away
from holding males responsible for ending sexist tendencies, it would also be wise for community mobilization efforts to educate girls on safe relationships. Katz and Jhally coin these efforts as “risk reduction” for girls and women since violence prevention begins with holding males responsible first. As some of the participants in this study illustrated, girls who come from violent households can have difficulty identifying unhealthy romantic relationships that appear enticing and even loving when compared to their abusive families. Early risk reduction efforts for girls would include educational awareness lesson plans that identify harmful dating behaviors (additionally, as prevention measures, boys should be taught healthy dating behaviors, as part of the remaking of masculinity). Youth should be taught in health education courses to identify the early warning signs of more serious dating violence, such as controlling tactics used to manipulate romantic partners (e.g., not letting dating partners talk to members of the opposite sex, making dating partners check in constantly through cell phones, telling dating partners what they can and cannot wear, interacting with others in ways that deliberately incite jealousy, etc.). Older high school students should also be encouraged to create their own methods of disseminating information on appropriate and inappropriate dating behaviors to younger students in action-based projects (Grasley, Wolfe, & Wekerle, 1999).

According to the participants in this study, gender-based lesson plans would also include teaching girls the importance of being independent. As Julie mentioned to her younger sister Joelle, she would soon have to learn to take care of herself without being dependent on her boyfriend. Enriching girls’ independence would also include helping girls to recognize how girl-on-girl physical violence and relational violence (e.g., gossip
and group alienation) is so frequently tied to males' dishonest actions and male privilege in general. One of the more disparaging findings in this study was hearing how girls beat up other girls for having romantic interactions with their boyfriends, while in comparison, their boyfriends were essentially let off the hook. It appeared that some of the girls in this study learned that the way to assert one's power was through physical violence—something they first learned from their abusive fathers. Thus, it is critical for girls to be taught that embodying components of violent, hegemonic masculinity will not help them in reclaiming a sense of respect. Miller (2001) writes of girl gang members who sometimes ascribe to hegemonic masculine ideals:

> Although it is understandable, it is unfortunate that the notion of equality that many young women adopted was not one that encouraged solidarity with other young women, but instead was a version suggesting that females with the "right stuff" could be accepted as "one of the guys." This meant being willing to denigrate or accept the denigration and mistreatment of other girls..." (p. 197).

In the present study, this same dynamic was apparent in Karen, Julie, Joelle, and to a lesser degree Dianna, who did not see a major problem victimizing other girls physically or verbally. Considering solidarity with other girls was completely dismissed, as those girls who had boyfriends essentially remained loyal to them.

As Artz (1999) writes, too many girls who engage in violence with one another "have internalized notions of being female that assign low general worth to women, [and] hold that women achieve their greatest importance when they command the attention of males" (p. 195). This dynamic appeared to be true for Karen, Julie, and Joelle in this
study. Therefore, future violence risk reduction programs for girls should help participants to realize that self-worth does not require male approval and that forging solidarity with other girls is vital since using hyper-masculine behavior as the standard for appropriate behavior clearly leads to girl-on-girl violence (Artz, 1998, p. 201). Still, girls in this project did rely on one another for verbal and emotional support, and they fully recognized their ability (specifically as girls) to express intimate problems to each other as a strength. Thus, in teaching girls independence, practitioners should also support girls’ solidarity, encouraging group sessions where girls discuss how they can “relate to each other,” as stated by Karen.

Developing Ethnic Studies Curricula in Schools and Community Programs

Student participants in this project were clearly aware of the racial stereotypes they had to tolerate as they traversed through school. They were aware that both adults and their peers held racial stereotypes that did not tie them and others from their racialized groups to high academic achievement. Since youth from these groups lived in the same communities, in adjacent neighborhoods, and attended the same schools, they felt forced to search for respect in whatever ways appeared tenable, even if that meant using harmful substances or risking physical harm while fighting with one another. Although the schools these youths attended were not “war zones” with fights occurring on a daily basis (though they were often stigmatized as such in sensationalized Hawai‘i print and television media), these schools’ student bodies did hold undercurrents of racism between students who did not fully understand each other’s issues, let alone each
other's ethnic histories in Hawai‘i and the ongoing socio-political issues that affect their respective ethnic communities.

As Pinderhughes (1997) advocates, for schools that include a diverse population of underprivileged minority students, inter-ethnic violence can be reduced by systematically and consistently enhancing “cross-cultural interactions and supplying information to young people about cultural similarities and differences, which can help shape the way young people interpret their cross-cultural interactions” (p. 159). Pinderhughes goes on to explain, this does not merely include teaching racial tolerance. It would also include educating students about the historical and ongoing forms of oppression that continue to foster inequality and hardship for their ethnic groups. In addition, such classes would encourage students to educate each other, teachers, and the broader community on the emerging forms of racism (and other forms of discrimination, such as sexism, classism, and homophobia) that continue to impact their lives. In that way, youth will be identified and respected as the experts on their own issues, as has also been suggested for girls’ programs (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1998, p. 230). In taking the “expert” role, students will also have a safe and constructive environment in which to express their anger, both verbally and in writing.

With regard to Hawai‘i, middle and high school ethnic studies courses would flourish by emphasizing family engagement since family is considered a central component of Polynesian and many Asian and other Pacific Islander communities. As this study has shown, family break-up was a critical area of concern for youth. Having students conduct and present oral histories on their family members, identifying the hardships their family members endured and resisted would help to 1) engage family
members in students’ lives (including their school lives), and 2) pinpoint similarities and differences across indigenous and settler youth. Teachers and community-based agency personnel must be creative in designing projects with youth that bolster family connections, inter-ethnic appreciation, gender equity, and a greater awareness of ethnic minorities’ past and present socio-political struggles. What is more, scholars have recommended that greater emphasis be directed toward family reunification for girls in the juvenile justice system (Schaffner, Shick, & Stein, 1997, p. 206). Thus, actively fostering family connections throughout students’ lives is a scholastic and community-based endeavor worthy of heavy investment if policy makers are serious about reducing and preventing youth violence and substance use for boys and girls over-represented in Hawai‘i’s juvenile justice system.

Finally, ethnic studies classes for middle and high school students would focus on two aspects of Hawai‘i: 1) the historical and contemporary contributions that Hawaiian, Samoan, Filipino and other minority groups have made to Hawai‘i. This may include, for example, many of the ways that ethnic minorities have shown resilience, enduring harsh working conditions in the capitalist plantation and tourist industries. However, by only focusing on the contributions ethnic minorities make to the current political structure, it appears as if ethnic minorities have labored passively and uniformly to support the very structures that oppress them. Thus, ethnic studies courses would also work with middle and high school students in Hawai‘i (and across the United States) to illustrate how their ancestors resisted oppressive, discriminatory systems (Okihiro, 1994). Students would

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7 I would like to thank and credit Gregory Mark (California State University Sacramento, Department of Ethnic Studies) and James Fabionar (Hiram Johnson High School, Sacramento, California) for illustrating to me how this particular teaching tool works in practice with high school students in Sacramento, California.
then learn how and why their ancestors allied as plantation strikers, stood up against military exploits, challenged the western legal system, and fought for cultural preservation. Teachers could rely on “resistance literature” (i.e., literature supporting oppositional and liberation social movements; Dudoit, 1999) that was meaningful and accessible for middle and high school students. Such teaching tools would provoke class discussions and encourage students to create their own class projects on their families’ and communities’ relevant issues.

In turn, students would have the opportunity to learn how their families’ current struggles are connected to historical and contemporary global inequality, thereby providing students with a deeper insight into their own experiences, their peers’ experiences, and offering them a guide to redirect their frustrations constructively as future community activists. In the early years of Asian American Studies, “activists linked the day-to-day struggles of Asian Americans to larger events and issues” (Omatsu, 1994, p. 31). The disciplines, Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies, were founded on giving those who were oppressed an effective voice to air their grievances and on connecting local minority plight to international forms of imperialism and patriarchy. Youth of color, particularly those over-represented in the juvenile justice system, must be afforded this opportunity for personal, familial, and community-connected growth.

**Ending “Zero Tolerance” Policies and Reconceptualizing “Risk”**

Student participants in this project clearly felt that the drug policies in their schools were reactionary and predominantly punitive. The academic literature clearly shows that “get tough on crime” and “zero tolerance” type policies do not lessen
adolescent delinquency (Giroux, 2003a; Giroux, 2003b; Ferrell, 1997). To the contrary, highly punitive strategies will only serve to make already marginalized adolescents feel even more disrespected and powerless. Therefore, it is critical that prevention policy attunes itself to how teenagers conceptualize “risk” and “protection.”

Students in this study knew that because of their racialized identities they were not respected for their intelligence. Some students also were abused by family members and simply felt undervalued by virtually every significant adult figure in their life. Some students were actually taught by their older family members how to fight in systemic fighting contests between siblings, while other students first learned to use drugs directly from their parents. Considering these circumstances, it should come as no surprise that many of the students in this project came to view some aspects of fighting and substance use as forms of protection. Yet as a society, we continue to rigidly identify these behaviors as irrational forms of delinquency that merit callous, punitive responses. Juvenile courts continue to lay out delinquency policies based on punitiveness first, rehabilitation second, and in the end, prevention is relegated as a virtual afterthought when it comes to federal dollars. Even academicians, who are undoubtedly aware of how fighting and drug use are impacted by prior life circumstances, continue to define these behaviors rigidly as “risk.”

I am by no means arguing that fighting and substance use are healthy forms of adolescent behavior. However, the research gathered in this study illustrates the process by which some Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino adolescents came to view fighting as one of the few pathways to earning respect. For them, fighting was perceived as a protective factor, and as responsible adults, we should offer our respect for the process by which
these adolescents rationalize their behaviors. In doing so, we are able to uncover other forms of demographic inequality and discrimination (in this case homophobia and sexism), which can then be combated more constructively in culturally-engaging community-based prevention efforts.

Similarly, scholars and policy makers continue to identify drug use strictly as a risk factor. On the other hand, some students viewed smoking marijuana as a protective factor that when used by themselves and other family members (instead of ice), safeguarded them from physical abuse. In some cases, getting high and drinking alcohol were recognized as forms of rebellion, used to get back at family members who students felt were overly punitive and poor adult role models. Clearly, increasing punitive sanctions on these and other adolescents will not rehabilitate them or prevent them from engaging in future acts of delinquency. Future delinquency prevention will require us to respect youth, both in terms of investing in robust prevention resources and in terms of how we interact with youth interpersonally.

By talking with youth and by respectfully listening to youth, can we come to understand why they rationally engage in behaviors that we firmly view as “risk.” During a class discussion Joelle described a time she was watching a movie in class, and her teacher thought that because she was laying down, she was not paying attention. After Joelle’s teacher told her to get up, the two got into an argument. Joelle’s description of the interaction is presented, below:

I was like lying down watching the movie, and the teacher was like “Sit up!” And I was like “I can see the TV.” And then she’s like, “You have to get up.” And I don’t know, we was like talking and [arguing] I guess, and
I just walked out of the class, and she wrote me up for insubordination and I got like suspended for like a day or something. She wrote me up cuz I wasn’t paying attention and I walked out’a the class, and I was like, I’m not gonna sit there and talk to her you know. Like, shouldn’t we be walking away from a fight you know? And then I walk away from a fight and I get busted you know. Like, if I stayed there talking to her, I would have fucking like got so pissed off. I would have just liked to fight her. I would have said some bad stuff too and I would have never talked to her again.

As Joelle states, her actions were perceived only as forms of insubordination, and consequently, she was punished. However, Joelle states that at least part of her actions were made with very rational intentions – she thought it was best to walk away from a potential fight and not end up saying or doing something else she regretted. Should Joelle have been punished? Maybe. Perhaps she was not paying attention to the class movie. However, that her subsequent action of maturely walking away from a potential fight went completely unrecognized symbolizes national juvenile justice policy – punish first, hopefully rehabilitate later, and listen to youths’ rationale for their behaviors in the rare case that we make time. It is time for that we as a society come to view adolescent “risk” factors in more fluid, constructive manners that enhance delinquency prevention and respect youths’ thought processes.

As scholars, practitioners, community activists, and policy makers, we must also begin to expand the ways we conceptualize and frame “risk.” Currently, a major portion of the risk and protective factor literature theorizes that adolescent risk and protective
factors exist only on three levels: 1) at the individual level; 2) at the peer and family level; and 3) at the school/community level (Murray, 2003; Riner & Saywell, 2002; Bogenschneider, 1996). Figure 1 offers a visual presentation of this commonly used risk and protective factor model.

Figure 1: Risk and Protective Factors: Social Ecology of Violence (Simon, 2005).

Under this three-tier model, adolescent studies measure risk and protective factors only at the individual, family/peer, and/or school/community levels (see also for example, Mosher et al., 2004; Prelow & Loukas, 2003; Willis & Yaeger, 2003; Carr & Vandiver, 2001). In turn, studies utilizing this model may advocate briefly for policy changes to be made that address broader, systemic discrimination (i.e., colonialism, poverty, sexism, and racism). However, since these types of quantitative studies only measure risk and protection at the individual, peer/family, and/or school/community levels, they cannot argue powerfully for wide-ranging social change (e.g., Lagana, 2004). Instead, it is more frequent that the burden of change is placed on disadvantaged families (who are expected to communicate more with their children, do better jobs of nurturing their children, and stand as better role models), and on schools/communities (that are expected to provide more and improved services for youth with limited resources), rather than on the state or
federal government, who in the end carry virtually no responsibility for making families
and communities disenfranchised in the first place.

A perfect example in Hawai‘i includes the numerous Micronesian communities
that have recently emerged in areas of urban Honolulu and on some Neighbor Islands. If
one were to ask a group of teen or family practitioners what new ethnic groups are really
struggling to get by in contemporary Hawai‘i, undoubtedly, a number of practitioners
would mention Micronesians (families from Chuuk, Palau, Pohnpei, the Marshall Islands,
etc.). If a large sample of Micronesian (in particular Marshall Islander) youth were
administered the YRBS survey, they would likely show high levels of unhealthy eating
habits and substance use rates. If they were surveyed on school attendance and
attachment to school, they would likely show high levels of truancy and feeling alienated
in school. They would be defined as an “at-risk” adolescent ethnic group, and they as
individuals, their families, their schools and their communities then would be assigned
the task of improving their lives under the predominant risk and protective factor model.

Now take into consideration that in the 1940s the United States military ravaged
numerous atolls in the Republic of the Marshall Islands when attacking Japanese military
headquarters located in the region (Poyer, Falgout, & Curruci, 2001). Then in 1945 after
having already dropped nuclear bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan,
United States President Harry S. Truman decided that further nuclear testing was
necessary. In the latter half of the 1940s and in the 1950s, the United States military
tested nuclear bombs off the coast of the Marshall Islands, displacing the indigenous
population to unlivable islands and exposing them to nuclear radiation (Ferguson &
Turnbull, 1999; see also www.bikiniatoll.com; Arakawa et al., 2002). Today, Marshall
Islander families move to Hawai‘i to attain adequate health care, needed explicitly because of the long-term after effects of the nuclear test bombings (i.e., high exposure to nuclear fallout). Again, virtually any social worker in Hawai‘i will tell you that many Marshall Islander and other Micronesian children and adolescents are not fairing well in Hawai‘i’s public schools. Should Micronesian communities, who have migrated to Hawai‘i for needed health care, hold the primary responsibility in addressing their youths’ risks – risks that were created largely, if not entirely, by the United States government?

A more appropriate model for addressing youth risk would respect the different ways adolescents define so-called risky behaviors, and also account for how global inequality and global imperialism create adolescent risk. Reese and colleagues (2000) offer a model that accounts for these larger, macro variables, as seen in the fourth concentric circle of Figure 2, below.

Figure 2: Risk Factors for Violence (Reese et al., 2000, p. 62).
Although the bulk of Reese and colleagues’ (2000) article focuses more on implementing effective parenting and family-involved programs in order to prevent youth violence, the article also states, “…our ability to have an impact on the systemic causes of violence requires our involvement at multiple levels, not just within the family or within the community” (p. 74). This point needs to be driven home much more in the current risk and protective factor literature.

Individual teens, families, friends, communities, and schools cannot be the only people and institutions that carry the burden of lessening risky youthful behavior. And as long as we continue to frame risk only as it relates to the individual, peer/family, and school/community levels, we are merely contributing to a neoconservative agenda that weighs down the working-class and disenfranchised with the additional tasks of revamping communities and competing against one another for scarce funding. Instead, as mentioned previously, communities should be given the opportunity to develop their own community-wide interventions independently, as funded by state and federal agencies via a system that does not foster inter- and intra-community competition.

**Socio-Economic Restructuring**

It would be remiss to overview Hawai‘i’s history as a colonized racial project and not discuss its succeeding influences on adolescent delinquency in this study’s conclusion. Unfortunately, the cold reality is that we will not see the decline of the tourist industry, the exiting of American military bases, or resource-heavy lands given back to Hawaiian communities any time soon. Likewise, we will not see public housing tracts significantly renovated or economic infrastructure invested in these overcrowded urban
communities in the near future. This does not mean activists should halt their efforts. For as social movements have shown us in the past, struggles for abolition, suffrage, and civil rights can yield monumental victories, even if they take extensive amounts of time, effort, and sacrifice.

In the mean time, however, other intermediary efforts can also be made to restructure Hawai‘i’s political economy, which would nicely augment the community-based interventions suggested earlier in this chapter. First and foremost, lucrative tourist institutions must provide increased wages and benefits for their employees. Of course these suggestions contradict all capitalist ideals, but we have seen how capitalism has devastated Hawai‘i, its indigenous population, and immigrant/settler communities already. Major hotels, retail stores, golf course resorts, and so on can start by providing their employees with free daycare for children who are too young to attend school. Jobs should be structured so that employees can work full time and receive full medical benefits, rather than forcing parents to work multiple part-time jobs without adequate health care for themselves and their families.

Rather than only building economic infrastructure in O‘ahu’s “Second City,” of Kapolei, the State of Hawai‘i should be building economic infrastructure and creating stable jobs in rural areas of O‘ahu (e.g., Waianae, Nanakuli, Wahiwa, Waimānalo), the Neighbor Islands, and in lower-income urbanized areas, such as Kalihi and Waipahu, with community input so not to infringe upon or disrupt important cultural and neighborhood dynamics. And military bases can begin to exit Hawai‘i. Despite claims that the U.S. military protects Hawai‘i from highly unlikely acts of terrorism, having the military here gives would-be terrorists the only reason to attack Hawai‘i.
Until these larger structural changes are made in Hawai‘i, Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino families will continue to struggle economically. In turn, elevated rates of delinquency, arrests, and incarceration will persist for youth from these ethnic groups. As Mauer (1999) points out, the peak age for males' involvement in violent behavior is age seventeen (regardless of ethnicity); males of color tend to age out of engaging in violence when they have steady employment. Thus, the problem is not just systemic poverty, but ongoing concentrated poverty, which as Mauer argues, affects more young African American males than males who are white, thereby prolonging African Americans' disproportionate minority confinement rates. Mauer goes on to state, “This does not suggest that a job creation approach to the problems is sufficient, of course, since the interaction of family and community supports can also play a significant role in the behavioral outcomes of individuals. But jobs help” (p. 169).

Highly reputed scholarship has already taught us that estranging communities from employment leads to crime (Bourgois, 2003; Websdale, 2001; Wilson, 1997; Moore, 1991). The difference with Hawai‘i is its history as a colonized racial project, where the indigenous population is forced to compete with settlers and refugees from Asia and the Pacific for limited jobs, caught in the grip of more powerful international capitalists. The United States empire ultimately played the central role in creating Hawai‘i’s current economic disparities that vary by way of race, and in turn, its juvenile disproportionate minority confinement problem, where so many Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino boys and girls must steer their way through various levels of violence and substance use. As much as politicians claim to care about children and Hawai‘i’s future
leaders, one would think they would more seriously advocate for the United States
government to rectify its international offenses across the Pacific.
APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES
Reflecting on the Community-Based Participatory Research Process

This study utilized a community-based participatory research (CBPR) process to investigate elevated rates of delinquency with Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino adolescents. In Phase One of this study, I worked with a public high school’s athletic department and a local YMCA to teach and after-school, for credit health class that explored the topic of teen issues. As a former high school and college athlete and a former high school football and track and field coach, I have held a vested interest in the ways that athletics interplay with various forms of adolescent health. Thus, I pitched the idea of creating this after-school class for student-athletes, also knowing that having a sports-oriented focus would probably draw a greater percentage of Samoan participants into the project.

One could easily, perhaps even justifiably argue, that my tactic of using sports to engage more Samoan participants actually perpetuated the racist tracking of Samoan students onto athletic fields and out of classrooms. I have no qualms with hearing such critiques. Sports, while discriminatory in their own right, have also been used progressively by women (Cahn, 1994) and people of color (Wiggins, 1997) to support progressive social movements. In addition, my hopes were to find a rapport-building activity that I could use to bond with student participants outside of the classroom, in turn enhancing the overall research project.

Thus, the school’s athletic department and I agreed that I would teach a plyometric course for participants prior to the more academically and research-oriented portion of the class on teen issues. Plyometric exercises involve jumping over cones and
off of boxes, sprinting through obstacles, passing medicine balls (weighted balls), and working on quick footwork through obstacles such as speed ladders (ladders laid down on the ground). Oddly enough, as I have presented results of this research project to community groups in Hawai‘i, some audience members find this to be the most interesting aspect of my presentations. Truthfully, this was little more than a rapport-builder.

The recruitment techniques utilized for the Phase One students did have their problems. As mentioned previously, no students in the Phase One group were born outside of Hawai‘i, which I view now as a major shortcoming in this study. This is probably reflective of my desire to recruit student-athletes, who are more frequently locally-born students. I also believe that my personal demographic as an American born individual could have inhibited students born in the Philippines or American or Independent Samoa from registering for the course. Finally, as requested by the athletic department, recruitment strategies focused on drawing in students who were having academic difficulties in classes; the school’s administration reported that Filipino students at this school who were born in the Philippines tended to do fairly well in school. In retrospect, I should probably not be surprised only locally-born students ended up participating in Phase One of this study.

In class sessions, for both Phase One and Phase Two, I began classes with ice breakers (co-created by Shauna, Phase One’s student assistant). We then had more formal introductions, and next, collaboratively established class rules. After these customary introductory activities, student participants identified what they thought were the most critical teen issues in their community. Phase One students also created a survey that they
distributed to their friends, which verified for them that fighting and substance use were the most important teen issues in their community. Phase Two students simply prioritized those two issues as most being most critical on their own.

In reflecting on this CBPR project, I feel that having the Phase One students participate in an after-school activity ultimately had more negative than positive aspects. I had no choice in making this an after school class since that is how the local YMCA had structured all of its classes with this high school. However, if possible, I would advise trying to conduct future CPBR studies with high school students during regular school hours. In particular, the two Samoan girl participants in the class (Shauna and Tulipa) had periodic difficulty attending after school class sessions due to the cultural expectations given to them as girls. They simply could not get out of babysitting or preparing for family events. As I did not want to pressure them into challenging their parents’ requests, they missed a greater share of class sessions. In addition to this, a fair number of student-athletes could not partake in the project because they were playing other sports (e.g., girls’ basketball, baseball, track & field, etc.), and at one point, Tavita felt pressured to drop out of the program since he wanted to attend Spring football practices, stating, “I have to fight for my position.”

Holding the CBPR project during regular school hours also had distinct advantages. For example, in meeting with Phase Two students once per week, they felt they got a break from their regular class sessions, and they were excited to talk about the teen issues each week. Additionally, students were rarely absent since they had to be at school during that time, whereas there were a few times when Phase One students simply wanted to skip our class and go hang out with friends after school.
Because so much of my data analysis focuses on gender dynamics and zeroes in so heavily specifically on girls' patterns of violence and drug use, it is also necessary that I discuss how my status as a male researcher impacted the study. Truthfully, I never intended on having this study's focus be centered so much on adolescent gender dynamics in Hawai‘i. Instead, I had hoped colonialism, race, and ethnicity would be distinctly central (hence, my heavy focus on these topics in Chapter Two), with aspects of gender intertwined in the analyses along the way. And while this still occurred to some degree, gender issues emerged much more powerfully than I had ever expected. In hindsight, a good portion of this study may actually be more focused on adolescent gender development and inequality, with aspects of racism and colonialism augmenting the gender-centered topics and discussions. Whatever the case, I do not see this as a shortcoming in the study; it is in line with the CBPR school of thought, as the study’s direction was not up to me. Rather, girls in this study directed a major portion of the research focus, and they took the focal points where they wanted.

In Chapter Three, I also explained that the CBPR should have helped me to gain trust and develop a better rapport with local (Hawai‘i born) and indigenous student participants. On the same note, I had hoped that by working collaboratively with all participants over a long period of time, female participants would gain my trust and express their forthright opinions to me. As is probably evident from the presentation of data, getting girls to express their viewpoints was rarely a problem. Again, Shauna and Tulipa did miss more classes, specifically because of gender role expectations within their culture, but they were hardly shy about sharing their thoughts. Some girls were not
as loquacious (e.g., Brooke and Lani) as others, but overall, it was not difficult at all getting girls to open up and fervently express their opinions.

Miller (2001) notes that “in some instances women are more comfortable speaking with sympathetic males,” (p. 32) especially when they had suffered negative experiences with males in the past. Miller also suggests that when researchers come from different demographics, their social distance can help respondents to realize that they are the true experts in the field. Thus, I asked girls to educate me on what made their experiences so uniquely female and what issues girls face as opposed to boys. I found this to be a successful technique, as it was integrated into the CBPR process. When I asked the girls in the Phase Two part of this study if it was odd to have a male adult asking them questions on interpersonal violence and substance use, they were initially confused by my question. I rephrased it by saying that some people would feel that girls would be more comfortable talking about their issues with another female. The girls disagreed and told me that was a stupid suggestion. I am definitely not using these girls’ responses to suggest that males be identified as the primary counselors or researchers who talk with girls about various adolescent issues. In fact, any males who do work with female or male youth must be highly trustworthy and have extensive experience in gender-specific programming for girls. Rather, I am arguing that if males do conduct research with girls, it is critical that adequate trust and rapport building phases be incorporated, just as it was important for me to build trust as an ethnic outsider with these students.

Still, I found it much easier to bond with the boys than with the girls. Despite some of the girls’ openness and honesty in expressing their anger, they still seemed to want to show me they were not vulnerable, which is completely understandable.
considering their past experiences with men. A good example of this occurred after Joelle told me she was going to beat up two other girls over the weekend. After class, I told Joelle that I had to inform the school principal of her weekend plans since she expressed wanting to hurt someone else (in attaining permission to conduct this study from the University of Hawai'i Committee on Human Studies, I was forced to disclose to a school counselor/official any participant's intentions to hurt him/herself, another person, or if someone was hurting the participant). Joelle said it was fine that I told the principal, and he counseled her later in the day, without punishing her. The following week, I found out from one of the teachers, however, that Joelle was angry with me for "ratting her out" and that she was going to drop out of the study.

Nevertheless, Joelle came to class with me and the other Phase Two students the next week as if there was no problem. Therefore, after class I asked her if she was upset that I had told the principal of plans to beat up the other girls. She said, that things were okay and that she was not upset, but then finished off by saying to me, "But I beat them up anyways, I did it anyways." Joelle's final comments made me think about how she made distinct efforts to not present herself as a stereotypically vulnerable girl (Hollander, 2001), and this made me question how my status as a male researcher impacted her responses and comfort level throughout the study. Actually, I did and do not question the validity of Joelle's or the other girls' statements, but I do question what was not stated in terms of their vulnerable feelings. Whereas, with the boys, if they said something that spoke to the pressures which come along with being male (for example, being peer pressured into doing something because another male called them a feminized term), often times I could immediately respond by saying, "Yeah, yeah, I know what you
mean.” With the girls, this researcher-participant bonding mechanism was not available that might have helped to evoke additional information. It is also possible that participants did not disclose ongoing victimization by boyfriends or family members at the time of the study, because they knew I was required to report any current forms of victimization to a school counselor or administrator.

I should also note that I deliberately did not bring up the topic of sexual victimization, for three reasons. First, it is an inappropriate topic for group sessions that include participants from varying demographics (namely, different genders) and experiences. Secondly, as a male researcher, it was inappropriate for me to move discussions in that direction with female participants. Admittedly, this is a major shortcoming in the current study since research has found child sexual abuse to be a strong precursor to adolescent substance use (Bailey & McCloskey, 2005; Buzi et al., 2003) and interpersonal violence (Swanson et al., 2003; Gaarder & Belknap, 2002; Artz, 1998) for girls and boys. And although a female social worker in Phase One of this study assisted me in carrying out this project, I was not able to attain assistance from a female practitioner in Phase Two (notably the Phase that included Julie, Joelle, and Karen) on a consistent basis. In future studies with girls, it would definitely benefit to have a female researcher talk with girls about their gendered dimensions of risk and protective behaviors, absent of males’ presence.

The third reason I did not include the topic of sexual victimization in this study, admittedly, was my own discomfort and fear of liability. For the Phase One part of this study, a female social worker was always present, in every part of the study (the athletic plyometrics component, and in all class discussions). For the Phase Two part of this
study, female full- and part-time teachers were busy working with the other students in the school who were not engaged in the research project. Thus, I only requested that a female part-time teacher participate in our class discussions when there were no other male students in the class, due to male students' absences. As Okamoto and Chensey-Lind (2000) write:

male practitioners may need specialized training on appropriate therapeutic boundaries with female clients and with female youth (e.g., having an adult witness in situations involving physical restraint between a male practitioner and female client). Training for male practitioners might also focus on dealing with client flirtation and sexualized behavior in the therapeutic setting. (p. 381).

I agree wholeheartedly with the above passage. In one class session with the Phase Two students while I was looking in the room for napkins, Karen said to me “They’re over there dear.” I do not believe there were any romantic feelings attached to Karen’s statement, as her general language was quite provocative, and that was the only time during the study she made that type of comment to me. However, I made sure to ignore the last word in her statement as if it were meaningless. Perhaps I should have addressed her word choice right then and there in front of the other students, or later with a female teacher present. My point being, I did not know exactly how to deal with her statement. Returning to the exclusion of sexual victimization as a topic in this study, even if a female practitioner or part-time teacher were present consistently in Phase Two of this study (like in the Phase One part), I would not have brought up the issue with the students because it was simply not an appropriate setting. In addition, knowing Joelle and Karen
had boyfriends who were considerably older than them (Karen’s boyfriend was not much younger than me) made me feel even more uncomfortable with any discussions of sexual behavior and victimization.

In terms of turning the CBPR projects into “action,” Phase One students gave two community presentations. First, the students presented to a group of adolescent practitioners and state representatives from the Office of Youth Services’ Youth Gang Response System. By request, the students each wrote about their perceptions of gang influence in their community and in school. However, students also noted to their audience that they felt fighting and substance use were more serious teen problems in their community than gangs. In their second community presentation, students wrote skits that illustrated how students could evade being pressured into using drugs and fighting. They presented their skits to the school’s coaches at the end of the year’s coaches’ meeting. At the time of this writing, I am still working with Phase Two students to prepare their community presentation.

Overall, I feel that the CBPR process was successful, though there was and is ample room for improvement. Brooke, for example, rarely spoke, and none of Brooke’s writings are provided in this write-up since she only wrote of her minor quibbles with her boyfriend, or conflicts with her mother about her boyfriend. Thus, this project admittedly presented some students’ viewpoints much more than others. And ideally, a more complete investigation into adolescent issues as they relate to Hawai‘i’s colonial history would include students’ parents or other family members in the CBPR process in order to explicate how or if their lives as parents were strained, living in Hawai‘i’s current socio-political climate. Still, this study represents the first of its kind – a naturalistic, long-term
research project conducted with predominantly Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino adolescents in Hawai‘i, who offered their perceptions on what they defined as the most critical teen issues.

The most valuable lesson that was reinforced for me when working with these youths was that in conducting participatory research and in supporting community efforts, the most important perspectives to keep in mind are that the researcher talks with participants (not to them) and is patient in listening to participants, without interrupting or trying to implant his or her own perspectives on the participants. Regardless of how passionate researchers are about their own, specific research agendas, they should acquiesce to participants’ concerns and allow participants to voice their own opinions that are not manipulated by researchers’ foci. That, after all, is showing participants a validation of their viewpoints and proper respect.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative data for this project was gathered using a variety of different methods. As mentioned briefly in Chapter Three, most class sessions were basically focus groups, during which time I would guide student participants through topics that they had identified, relevant to teenagers in their communities. Of course, the two most common topics were fighting and substance use, but students also discussed issues surrounding school and relationships with teachers, depression, family problems, and romantic relationships. Students also filled out class worksheets that I created collaboratively with Shauna, the Student-Assistant from Phase One of this study. Often times, students would
fill out these worksheets at the beginning of class and then we would use them to prompt further discussion of the topic at hand as a group.

All data from class discussions was transcribed, verbatim, as were students’ responses that were written on class worksheets. I analyzed the data by coding different quotes and categorizing them into the two major themes of “fighting” and “substance use” (as determined by student participants), and then sub-categorizing quotes within those major themes. For example, some quotes that were placed under the major theme of “fighting” were then sub-categorized under the theme of “homophobia,” while others were sub-categorized as “girl-on-girl violence” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My hope was to present those quotes that best “gave voice” to the student participants from this project (Stein & Mankowski, 2004; Bond & Keys, 1993).

As I continued to give presentations based on the emerging data, I shared my presentations with student participants (much more so Phase Two students than Phase One, simply because I worked with Phase Two students during a longer time period), and asked them to verify and correct my interpretations. I also showed students my transcriptions of our conversations periodically and asked them to check for mistakes. In most cases, student participants did not take much effort to read through the lengthy transcripts, but when they found mistakes, they were quick to show me.
APPENDIX II: STUDENT WORKSHEETS
Fighting
Personal Experience

Think about a time that you got into a fight, or could have gotten into a fight. In reflecting on this experience, please write about it and address the following points:

➢ How did the conflict start; what was it over?
➢ How did you feel when the conflict began? What were you thinking? Did you have time to think about it?
➢ At the time, did you feel that avoiding the fight in any way was realistic?
➢ Describe the fight itself. What happened?
➢ What was the outcome? If you got into the fight, what happened during it and afterwards? If you avoided the fight, what happened afterwards?
➢ Thinking back about this experience, what things did you think you might gain by fighting, and what things did you think you might lose? What were the pro’s and con’s?

You may write about a fight that happened (or almost happened) with anyone. There are no right or wrong answers to this assignment. Just follow the outline above and write what you feel.
For Friday (November 12, 2004) Class
Rebellion

Assignment:
It is common for people to rebel against authority. Rebellion can be expressed in mild ways and in stronger ways. Explain a situation where you rebelled against someone (or against a group of people) and where you got in trouble for rebelling. Be sure to answer the following questions:

➢ What/who caused you to rebel in the first place? Provide some background.

➢ What did you do in order to rebel? And why did you do that?

➢ How did your rebellious actions make you feel?
What were the consequences (good and bad) of rebelling?

Would you do it again, and if so, would you rebel differently? Why or why not?

Anything else you’d like to add?
GENDER ROLES ASSIGNMENT: MALES

Throughout our lives, we all learn what it means to be male and female. Please answer the following questions in paragraph form; be sure to answer all parts of every question. Just write what is true for you. There are no right or wrong answers.

➢ What does being a man mean to you? What qualities does somebody have if he is to be considered a real man?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

➢ In your culture, what does it mean to be a man? How are men expected to act in your culture? How do these cultural expectations for men and boys influence you?

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

➢ How can a teenage boy in your community prove his manhood? What are some of the things he can do to earn respect as a male?

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
➢ Where do boys in your community learn to become men? In school? From family members? From television/movies? From coaches/teachers? From friends? How do boys learn to become men from these different groups?

➢ If a teenage male in your community does not act like a real man, how do other males treat him?

➢ In your culture, how do think women and girls are expected to act? How do women’s and girls’ duties differ from the males’ duties, and why do you think these differences exist?
In your community, how do you see teenage boys treating girls? How do you see men treating women?
Throughout our lives, we all learn what it means to be male and female. Please answer the following questions in paragraph form; be sure to answer all parts of every question. Just write what is true for you. There are no right or wrong answers.

What does being a woman mean to you? What qualities does somebody have if she is to be considered a real woman?

In your culture, what does it mean to be a woman? How are women expected to act in your culture? How do these cultural expectations for women and girls influence you?

How can a teenage girl in your community prove her womanhood? What are some of the things she can do to earn respect as a female?
➢ Where do girls in your community learn to become women? In school? From family members? From television/movies/magazines? From coaches/teachers? From friends? How do girls learn to become women from these different groups?

➢ If a teenage girl in your community does not act like most girls, how do other people treat her?

➢ In your culture, how do you think men and boys are expected to act? How do men’s and boys’ duties differ from the females’ duties, and why do you think these differences exist?

➢ In your community, how do you see teenage boys treating girls? How do you see men treating women?
Dating Violence Worksheet

I. How would you describe a healthy dating/romantic relationship for teenagers?

II. What does “dating violence” or “relationship violence” mean to you?

III. What are some examples of “dating violence” or “relationship violence?”
IV. Can girls commit dating/relationship violence on boys? If so, how?

V. If teenagers are in violent relationships, are they always able to recognize the situation that they are in? Why or why not?

VI. For those who are in violent relationships, what things make it hard for them to get out?
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