

FIGHTING, SELF-RELIANCE AND BEING THE "BIGGER MAN":
NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND SAMOAN GIRLS' EXPERIENCES
AND PERCEPTIONS OF PEER VIOLENCE

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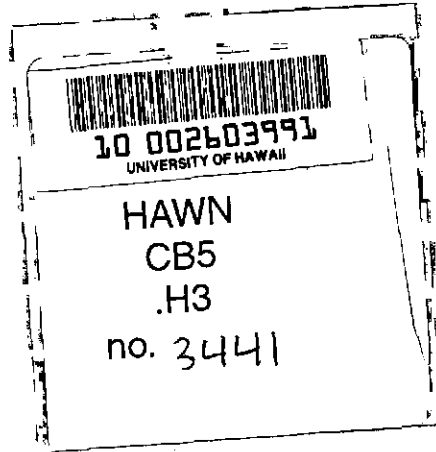
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Review of the Literature.....	4
Girl Peer Fighting in Communities of Color.....	4
Masculinization.....	5
Pacific Islanders: A Colonial History.....	9
Methodology.....	13
Data Collection.....	13
Student Focus Groups: Sequest and Alekona High Schools.....	13
Adult Focus Groups.....	16
Data Analysis.....	20
Notes on Cultural Competence.....	21
Study Findings.....	22
Girl Fighting: The Masculinization of Girls.....	24
Fighting, Self-Reliance and Being the “Bigger Man”.....	25
Self-Reliance as Parental Expectations for Girls: “Always Expect the Unexpected”.....	27
Backing up Friends and Family: “If You’re Not Going to Do it, They’re Going to Do It”.....	30
Feminization of the Code of The Street.....	32
Representing your Culture: Fighting for Pride.....	33
Ethnic Mobilization Through Fighting: “You’re Hawaiian, So You’re Proud”...34	
Dating and Fighting: “Being the Deadliest Chick on Campus”.....	37
The Game of Love: “Those guys are hard to find”.....	40
Intimate Partner Violence: “Our boys get jealous faster”.....	43
Study Limitations.....	46
Conclusion.....	48
Appendices.....	54
Appendix 1: Focus Group Interview Guide Naturalistic Study of Youth Violence Prevention.....	54
Appendix 2: Tulai‘i: Stand Up Potential Focus Group Questions.....	58
References.....	59

PREFACE

Recently, I was in a 7-11 buying a coffee, and was stopped by a young woman with a brown bob and a wary smile. She remembered me from the youth shelter I worked at right after college. After thinking a minute, I remembered this young woman as a 17 year old, standing in the living room of the house with the locked cabinets and scant phone privileges, screaming in fury, ripping up the binder that the staff wrote notes for the next shift. I remembered standing at the top of the stairs, holding the other girls in their room, watching my co-worker sitting on the floor, patiently waiting out her anger. This young woman, whose mother wouldn't allow her to return home, is now a mother herself, works keeping books at an automotive shop, and has her own apartment. She was happy, she said, and thankful that she made it through that time of her life.

We said our goodbyes and I left sipping my coffee, thinking of other young women I'd met in my various jobs. I remembered the beautiful, aloof senior I met while working at an alternative high school who carried a Fendi purse, smoked cigarettes during the lunch period and intimidated the other girls with her sophistication. Many of the other girls targeted her as someone they'd like to fight with. She later shared that as a young girl, she had been molested by a neighbor. I remembered the high school sophomore I met while working at a rape crisis center who had been pushed in to a bathroom at school and forced to perform oral sex on a male student she didn't know. She was quiet and timid seeming, but adamant that she did not want to press charges, transfer to another school, or be treated any differently in the wake of her assault. I thought of one of the high school seniors I had recently interviewed doing research as a

graduate student who said that she had been suspended at least once a year for fighting. She later cried while sharing that several of the men in her family were abusive, and that she wants to leave her community to escape the cycle of violence. I reflected on each of these girls, all different ethnic backgrounds of Asian / Pacific Islander (A/PI) heritage, and realized that they all experienced violence in a context different from what is written and said about girls' experiences of violence. This thesis is an examination of one type of violence, peer fighting, amongst Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls.

INTRODUCTION

Youth violence has been a long-standing social problem in the United States. The news media report stories involving youth and violence almost daily, and the stories seem to escalate in their severity. Statistics support the perception of youth violence as a problem. A nationwide study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2004 found that 33% of the surveyed teenagers reported being in a physical fight at least once in the past year (CDC, 2007). In 2006, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported that 27% of youth under the age of 17 had assaulted someone with the intent to seriously hurt that person (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). More and more frequently, girls are involved in this violence.

From 1980 to 2003, the overall arrest rate for girls under the age 18 increased from 10% to 29%. The female proportion of arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses increased from 10% to 18%, and Property Crime Index offenses rose from 19% to 32% (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). In 2002, juvenile court cases involving girls accounted for approximately one quarter of all delinquency cases. Girls accounted for 33% of disorderly conduct cases and 32% of simple assault cases (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

The 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) reported that 20% of females aged 12 to 17 reported participating in one or more serious fights at school or work in 2003, an increase from 16.2% in 2002 (NSDUH, 2004). According to the survey, 16.8% of girls participated in a group-on-group fight, up from 13.5% in 2002. When examined by race, the NSDUH reported that Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PI) female youth were significantly less likely to have participated in a group-on-group attack

(9.8%) or attack someone with the intent to hurt them (3.8%) than White (16.1%, 4.9%), African American (18.8 percent, 11.3%), or Hispanic (18.1%, 6.8%) female youths aged 12-17 (NSDUH, 2004). The generally low rates of A/PI youth involved in violence belie the increasing involvement of Pacific Islander girls in the juvenile justice system (UCR, 2005).

Since 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau has separated the “Asian/Pacific Islander” category in to two distinct categories. “Asian” refers to “people having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.” This includes those who indicated their race as Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Burmese, Hmong, Pakistani, Thai, or “other” Asian. The category “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” refers to “people having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.” It includes those who indicated their race as Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Tahitian, Mariana Islander, Chuukese or “other” Pacific Islander (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001). The 2005 census estimates suggest that there are approximately 875,000 full or part Pacific Islanders living in the U.S. (USCB, 2005). Despite the disaggregation of the race category on the census, most crime and delinquency reports such as the OJJDP still use four race categories: Black, White, Asian and Native American, with Hispanic juveniles being considered an ethnicity under race categories. As a whole, A/PI involvement in violence and crime is vastly understudied. Criminological studies tend not to report on A/PIs because of their disproportionately low crime and deviance rate (Le, 2002; Jang, 2002). Recent studies, however, have shown that crime and delinquency must be examined in disaggregated A/PI ethnic communities for better understanding

(Hishinuma, Chang, Goebert, Else, Nishimura, Choi-Misailidis, Andrade, Mayeda, & Jones, 2005; Le, 2002; Mayeda, Hishinuma, Nishimura, Garcia-Santiago, & Mark, 2006). Statistics from Hawai'i's juvenile justice system support this.

In Hawai'i, while juvenile arrests decreased 35.6% from 1993-2003 and serious offenses decreased 47.5% from 1992-2002, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth are shown to be disproportionately involved with the juvenile justice system (Pasko, 2006). Another two-year study in Hawai'i found that Native Hawaiian juveniles comprised 50.5% of incarcerated youth despite Native Hawaiians comprising only 19% of the state population, and non-Hawaiian Pacific Islanders comprised 5.9% of incarcerated youth despite making up only 2.4% of the state's population. In this same study, non-Hawaiian Pacific Islanders were three times more likely to be involved in gangs than other incarcerated youth (61.7% vs. 20.5%) (Bradford & Perrone, 2001). When taking gender in to account, Native Hawaiian girls accounted for 45% of circuit court cases, followed by Filipinas (17%), Caucasians (15%) and Samoans (4%) (Pasko, 2006). This study contributes to the small but growing literature on girls' violence in disaggregated Asian / Pacific Islander ethnic groups by examining Hawaiian and Samoan girls' experiences and perceptions of peer fighting.

In the following section, I will review the key theoretical issues framing Native Hawaiian and Samoan girl peer fighting.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Girl Peer Fighting in Communities of Color

Theories of girls' fighting in communities of color largely paint a picture of a gendered experience of racial inequality. Distinguished by unequal distributions of power and access to resources, the U.S. capitalist economy has given rise to institutionalized racism that keeps communities of color from achieving economic success. Thus, communities of color are overrepresented in lower socio-economic classes; often live in segregated racial and ethnic urban communities; and generally have a lower quality of life than white Americans (Hughes & Thomas, 1998; Lynch & Stretesky, 2001; Massey & Denton, 1993). This disparity between the American dream and the lack of legal and economic opportunities by which communities of color can achieve may lead to deviance and crime in order to achieve success (Agnew, 2001; Blau & Blau, 1982; Merton, 1938).

In his examination of urban, African American street culture in Philadelphia, Anderson (1999) describes how a sense of alienation from mainstream, white society has led to the design and enforcement of alternate rules for violence and aggression. The propensity to violence and the resulting "code of the street," or rules governing violence is derived from unequal access to socially sanctioned resources for success:

The inclination to violence springs from the circumstances of life among the ghetto poor—the lack of jobs that pay a living wage, limited basic public services (police response in emergencies, building maintenance, trash pickup, lighting, and other services that middle-class neighborhoods take for granted), the stigma of

race, the fallout from rampant drug use and drug trafficking, and the resulting alienation and absence of hope for the future...the despair is pervasive enough to have spawned an oppositional culture, that of 'the street,' whose norms are often consciously opposed to those of mainstream society. (p.33)

Anderson argues that "success" in these neighborhoods is defined as a tough masculinity displayed through fighting and being able to negotiate the violent context of the street. He writes that girls enact a type of masculinity as well, and fight for similar reasons. Several other studies of girls' violence in communities of color concur that the same economic constraints that drive boys to violence operate identically on girls.

Hemmings (2002), Ness (2004), and Jones (2004) found that with similar feelings of alienation from middle class, white America, girls of color fight to affirm control over their own bodies and those of others; to achieve a sense of self-reliance; and to gain status in an environment that respects physicality over emotionality—motivations similar to those of boys who fight. Working class girls of color have, in fact, created a "violent femininity" that mirrors the violent masculinity of the street; being a proficient fighter is simply one aspect of carrying out girlhood in working class communities of color (Ness, 2004). This idea runs parallel to the masculinization literature of girls' violence, the theory that girls are engaging in activities traditionally carried out by boys in order to cull the respect and status that boys achieve from these behaviors.

Masculinization

One of the first writers to describe girls' violence as a result of girls behaving like boys, Adler writes that the women's liberation movement has caused women to disregard traditionally female gender roles and to embrace a "convergence of the sexes" (Adler,

1985).[†] Teen girls raised in this atmosphere of gender equality are increasingly engaging in masculine social and anti-social behaviors including physical aggression:

“Among some groups in our society, masculinity is reinforced by certain modes of physical aggression. The importance attached to these learned behaviors may be usefully extended to the current activities of many females. The trend in the last two decades has been toward female adoption of male attitudes, traits, vocations, prerogatives, etc. as a means of raising their status.

Messerschmidt (2004) continues this line of thought, and writes that girls have learned that taking on masculine behaviors earn power and respect. He suggests that girls who engage in violence adopt a masculine practice that is an effective means of achieving an end (p.120) such as respect, authority and control. That is, girls have learned that “doing like the boys” has yields positive results. Girls, therefore, are more apt to engage in masculine behaviors: violence, delinquency and crime. These behaviors are encouraged and reinforced by the media and the proliferation of physically aggressive female characters such as Wonder Woman, the Power Puff Girls, Charlie’s Angels, Lara Croft, Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Xena the Warrior Princess. These characters embody the glamorization and sexualization of violence (Prothow-Stith & Spivak, 2005). Each of these characters uses violence to achieve their goals, be they saving the world, solving a crime, or keeping themselves safe from danger, and often enjoy doing so (Brown, 2004, Gauntlett, 2002, Herbst, 2004, Prothow-Stith & Spivak, 2005). These characters serve as a model of attitudes and behaviors for girls, encouraging physical aggression and violence.

In their critiques to the “violent femininity” of girls of color and masculinization theories, critical criminologists suggest that the statistics of girl violence are alarmist and

do not tell the whole story of girls' involvement in violence. Criminologists Chesney-Lind, Morash & Irwin (2007) argue that national records fail to emphasize that while girls' perpetration of violent acts are statistically rising, girls' violent perpetration rates have not surpassed that of boys in any case (Chesney-Lind, Morash & Irwin, 2007). It is also important to note that recent U.S. policy shifts have lowered the tolerance for low-level crimes and misdemeanors, resulting in more arrests of girls for less serious crimes. Crimes are being relabeled such that what were once status offenses are now considered assaults or felony charges (Steffenmeister, Schwartz, Zhong, & Ackerman, 2005). There has also been noted preference on the part of the juvenile justice system to arrest and prosecute girls. Whereas police may have been less likely to arrest and judges less likely to convict girls in the past, they are increasingly recognizing and handling girls' cases (Steffenmeister, Schwartz, Zhong, & Ackerman, 2005). This would indicate that girls are not, in fact, committing more crimes and delinquent behavior, but rather that the juvenile justice system is imposing harsher penalties on girls than in the past.

It is also important to note that girls continue to be physically and sexually abused by families and intimates at higher rates than boys with severe consequences. Abused and neglected girls are twice as likely to be arrested as juveniles than boys (Chesney-Lind, 1983; Widom, 2000). Violent girls are significantly more likely to have been physically and sexually abused than non-violent girls and violent / non-violent boys (Artz, 1998). Girls sometimes engage in violence in retaliation for having been sexually harassed (Hemmings, 2003).

There are other obvious flaws with the masculinization theory. As Artz (1998) writes, girls can never be boys. In fact, girls who imitate boys too much are often pushed

to the margins themselves: “too much emulation puts a girl or woman in danger of losing any kind of group membership, and with it, any chance of belonging. Too much emulation leads to marginalization, the inability to belong either to one’s group of origin (because one has assimilated so many characteristics of the dominant group) or to the dominant group (because of one’s origins)” (p.180). Some researchers have emphasized that violent females often have the same criminal motivations as males such as gaining material items or being defined as “tough,” stemming from the same set of structural and cultural constraints as males. This research, however, often shows that females must still achieve this in gender-defined ways and are not as integrated in to male groups as they believe (Miller, 2001; Miller, 1998; Miller & Brunson, 2000). This suggests that the masculinization theory does not paint a complete picture of girl violence. The masculinization theory also assumes the desirability of a specific type of masculinity (and femininity) and fails to take in to account the varying levels of access that communities of color have to these gender role definitions, particularly culture-bound ways of defining gender intersecting with ethnicity, class, nationality, and other variables. It is also important to acknowledge that different racial and ethnic minority groups have varying histories and experiences within the context of U.S. history. It is therefore important to understand the unique history that Pacific Islanders have within the U.S. context, and to understand how this has implications for crime and the creation of gender role definitions.

Pacific Islanders: A Colonial History

The process of colonization, as described by Tatum (1994), begins with the forced entry of a racial group into the geographic territory, continues with the establishment of a colonial social system, which leads to a change in historical references (the colonized territory is assigned the history of the colonizing nation). This process finally ends with a caste system based on race in which the colonized people have much more limited access to resources than do the colonizers (309-311). Both Hawai'i and Samoa have early histories of Western colonization. In Hawai'i, following Captain Cook's 1778 arrival, Kamehameha the Great unified the islands and established working relationships with Westerners. Missionaries began arriving in the early to mid 1800s, converting Hawaiians to Christianity, suppressing culture and traditions, and introducing and enforcing Western laws. In 1893, a group of Americans living in Hawai'i staged the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom, a short time after which Hawai'i became a territory of the United States (Merry, 2000). In a similar colonial history, the U.S. gained control of the eastern Samoan islands, now known as American Samoa, in 1899. Samoa (formerly Western Samoa) has been an independent state since 1962 following years of governance by New Zealand and Germany.

Western colonization in Hawai'i and Samoa suppressed traditional social structure and interactions. The traditional family structure, once based on a kindred system, was deemed inappropriate and replaced with the Western patriarchal, nuclear family model. This upset the traditional conceptualizations of sexuality and gender. Whereas Native Hawaiian gender roles had traditionally been assigned based on inherited

class rank, and Samoan families had revered women as part of the sacred covenant between brother and sister, the Western patriarchal system removed economic and class power from women and enforced hegemonic Western masculinity and femininity (Gribb & Barnett, 1999; Merry, 2000; Tengan, 2002). Despite this enforcement of a Western, patriarchal family structure, indigenous men were kept from achieving “masculinity” due to the conceptualization of indigenous men as childlike and needing guidance (Tengan, 2002).

The Native Hawaiian community has long been seeking redress for the 1893 illegal overthrow of their monarchy and subsequent annexation to the U.S. (acknowledged by the “Apology Resolution (Public Law 103-150)” passed by the U.S. Congress in 1993) and the ensuing wrongs of colonialism. Native Hawaiians continue to fight legal battles to protect their access to culturally important places, to stop development over burial sites, and to preserve their heritage. Since 2000, Hawai‘i U.S. Senator Daniel Akaka has introduced a Hawaiian Recognition bill which would give Native Hawaiians federally recognized status and indigenous rights. It has consistently been denied by Congress.

Though this attempt to seek federal recognition has been contested by those Native Hawaiians seeking complete sovereignty from the U.S., the bill has re-ignited the Native Hawaiian political and cultural movement (Kauanui, 2005; Tengan, 2004). One result is a focus on shifting Native Hawaiian cultural practices from the margins to the center in ways that do not commodify culture as a product for the largely tourism-based economy of Hawai‘i (Kaomea, 2000; Trask, 1993). The creation of Hawaiian language-immersion schools, enhanced support and acknowledgment of the University of

Hawai'i's Hawaiian Studies program, and the push for national recognition of Native Hawaiians and a Hawaiian government are key initiatives of this movement.

While Native Hawaiians living in Hawai'i struggle for self-determination, Samoans in Hawai'i dually experience the history of colonization of their homelands and struggle with the immigration experience. Groups of Samoans began emigrating to the U.S. west coast and Hawai'i in the 1950's seeking better educational and economic opportunities. The large number of immigrants living in familial and cultural enclaves has allowed cultural practices, many of which are connected to the Christian church, to be reproduced outside of Samoa (Janes, 1990). However, the traditional Samoan cultural values sometimes conflict with the U.S. values, especially in terms of youth obedience, familial obligations and role of the female (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo, 2001; Mayeda & Okamoto, 2002; McGrath, 2002).

The colonization process has left the Pacific Islanders struggling for access to resources and power, and has negatively affected Native Hawaiians and Samoans living in Hawai'i. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that full and part Native Hawaiians living in Hawai'i experience more poverty, have fewer and lower paying jobs, have less education than the average state resident, and Hawaiian families are more likely than state residents in general to raise children in poverty (Donnelly, 2006). Nationally, Samoans have the highest level of poverty of all Pacific Islanders (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). Many Native Hawaiian and Samoan youth are engaged in substance abuse, violence and crime (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo, 2001; Mayeda et al., 2006) and are overly represented in the juvenile justice system (Bradford & Perrone, 2001; Pasko, 2006).

The current theories on girl peer fighting in communities of color and the colonization model offer a critical framework for examining violence in a racially stratified social structure. Critiques to this framework encourage the addition of gender analysis to the model of violence in girls of color to consider the experiences of girls at the point where patterns of racism and sexism overlap (Crenshaw, 1991). The most meaningful way to study girl peer violence in Native Hawaiian and Samoan communities is to talk with girls and other community members themselves. This thesis is an analysis of sixteen focus groups held with Hawaiian and Samoan high school students and adult community members. For the purpose of confidentiality, I use pseudonyms of all participants and place names.

METHODOLOGY

The Asian Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center (APIYVPC) is a research center funded by the CDC to investigate various forms of interpersonal youth violence in communities in Hawai'i with a focus on community mobilization. For this thesis, will analyze the data from two qualitative studies that the APIYVPC conducted simultaneously. In this analysis, all participant names, place names and other identifiers have been removed or replaced with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants and other community members.

Since September 2006, I have been a graduate assistant on the "Naturalistic Study," a study designed to better understand youth violence and youth violence prevention in Native Hawaiian, Samoan and Filipino communities. Comprised of a series of focus groups, this study was originally designed to 1) identify youths' and adult community members' perceptions of interpersonal youth violence (IYV); 2) gain more knowledge about IYV in A/PI ethnic communities; and 3) to foster community mobilization in solving IYV problems in an effective, gender and culturally-specific way. I will utilize the data from the nine Native Hawaiian and Samoan focus groups conducted largely at Seaquest High School and in the surrounding communities. I will also include data from three Native Hawaiian student focus groups and three Samoan student focus groups from the Core/Tula'i ("Stand up") study of interpersonal and relationship violence, a sister study designed and implemented by the APIYVPC at Seaquest and Alekona High Schools during the same time frame as the Naturalistic study.

Data Collection

Student Focus Groups: Seaquest and Alekona High Schools

Seaquest High School is a public high school with students from two very different communities. The first, Kolihana, is a middle to upper-middle class community largely populated by wealthy Caucasian and Asian families. The second, Makali'i, is a working-class community, almost half of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander descent. While each community has its own elementary and intermediate schools, students meet, learn and often fight with each other at the high school.

As with many other schools in Hawai'i, Seaquest High School is tucked in the back of a residential area with tall, green volcanic mountains visible in the distance. The school office opens up to five main two story buildings each laid out parallel to each other and connected on the ground and second floors by open walkways. The classrooms are bright and sunny, designed with no air conditioning, and often have too few fans to keep the students cool. Despite an abundance of grassy areas, there are few places for students to sit, except for benches that line the walkways. There are usually hand-painted banners above the courtyard greeting students, reminding them to buy prom tickets, congratulating athletic standouts and wishing the graduating seniors luck.

The student body reflects the communities that feed into them, though it is colloquial knowledge that many more students from Makali'i attend Seaquest High School, as many of their counterparts from Kolihana attend expensive private college-preparatory schools. The student population at Seaquest is approximately 80% Asian

American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, 13% Caucasian, and the remaining 7% of the students are African-American, Hispanic or other races.

The principal of Seaquest High School, Ms. Kano, is a Japanese-American woman committed to reducing violence at the school and promoting an environment of higher education. She has supported the many studies of the APIYVPC and provided staff resources to assist in implementation. Upon my hire on to the Naturalistic Study a year and a half ago, I joined in the collaboration between the APIYVPC and Seaquest High School. I met with the research team on a weekly basis at the high school, spoke at and attended various school functions, and worked with different student groups on anti-violence projects through the APIYVPC. This allowed me to develop personal relationships with the school faculty and staff, facilitating the recruitment of students for the Naturalistic Study.

The Naturalistic Study overlapped with several other quantitative and qualitative studies being conducted at Seaquest High School. To facilitate the process of getting parental consent for student involvement in the studies, the APIYVPC mailed approximately 1,000 letters to all Seaquest High School parents and guardians explaining the various projects including the Naturalistic Study. Parents were asked to sign parental consent forms for their children to participate in the studies, and either return the forms in self addressed stamped envelopes or send the forms back to school with their children. The 10% return rate was enough to yield four student focus groups for the Naturalistic study and three student focus groups for the Core/Tula'i. The remaining groups were recruited in person with the help of a well-liked teacher.

The focus groups for both the Naturalistic and Core/Tula'i studies were held during school hours in an empty classroom. At the start of every focus group, each student signed an assent form and was given a \$25.00 money order as compensation for their participation. Each student was informed of their right to decline to answer questions they were uncomfortable with, as well as their right to terminate their participation at any time and keep the money order. They were also informed of the confidentiality of the information they disclosed, but were informed of my and my co-facilitators' status as mandated reporters in the case of a disclosure of familial harm or imminent danger to the participants or others. The students in the Naturalistic study focus groups were asked to describe the interpersonal youth violence they confront; their opinion of existing methods of making youth violence prevention programs culturally and gender competent; and to generate ideas for creating an action plan for their participation in future IYV prevention implementation (see Appendix 1 for focus group questions). The students in the Core/Tula'i focus groups were asked to describe IYV they confront; to reflect on their gender and cultural heritage and describe how those affects their relationships; and to reflect on how their cultural heritage may conflict or agree with contemporary youth culture (see Appendix 2 for Core/Tula'i focus group questions). Each focus group was digitally audio recorded.

Adult Focus Groups

As a part of the Naturalistic Study, focus groups were also conducted with adults in the study communities. In order to recruit Hawaiian, Samoan and Filipino adult community members, we focused our initial recruitment in Makali'i, one of the

communities that feeds in to Seaquest High School. Makali'i is a rural community situated just outside of the urban sprawl of the capital city of Honolulu on the island of Oahu. With less than 5,000 residents, Makali'i is a small working-class town. Approximately half of the community is Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, and one-third of the population is of mixed racial heritage, such as mixed Asian-American, Caucasian, etc. Many of the men work in construction or labor jobs, and the women are often employed as city or state workers. Most working adults commute to work.

Many of the families have lived in the community for generations, often on Hawaiian Homesteads, or homesteads leased to Hawaiians with at least 50% Hawaiian blood on designated Hawaiian Homeland. The Homestead plots are often small and close to each other, and rarely located in highly desirable areas such as beachfront. They do, however, offer long-term homes for Hawaiian families. As in other working-class communities in Hawai'i, there is a problem with petty crime such as vandalism and theft, as well as violent crime, homelessness and drug use.

We began our community recruitment with a community liaison hired by the APIYVPC. Ruby, a lifelong resident of Makali'i assisted focus group #1, comprised of six Hawaiian women, each of whom were connected in some way to the Hawai'i Children's Center, a non-profit group offering a variety of services to Hawaiian families. This focus group was conducted in the evening at a community health center in Makali'i and was facilitated by the Principal Investigator of the Naturalistic Study and myself. Following this group, we had hoped to use snowball sampling methods to generate more participants (Goodman, 1961). We quickly found that the traditional Western academic technique was ineffective in this community. It was difficult to reach possible

participants, as many worked jobs late in to the night. Phone calls and emails were often unreturned. In-person and face to face meetings were better received and more effective in setting up the adult focus groups.

At the same time as we were recruiting, our local coordinator Ruby, a fixture in the community grew ill and, sadly, passed away. With no community coordinator, the research team sought to involve and inform as many people as possible of our project to keep our work transparent and to allow the community opportunities to provide feedback on our study. We attended Neighborhood Board meetings, visited the neighborhood parks, the senior center and the various housing projects and assistance programs. I met with an officer of Hawaiian Homelands in Makali'i whom I had met at a Neighborhood Board Meeting, and contacted the people he recommended. Through this effort and with the contacts of the APIYVPC Community Mobilization program, I was able to assemble focus group #2, an adult all-male Native Hawaiian focus group of eight participants. All of the participants were fathers, some were grandfathers, and each was involved with the community in some way or another. This focus group was held in the evening at a community youth center and was facilitated by myself and the male Director of Community Mobilization at the APIYVPC.

In recruiting for focus group #3, the adult mixed-gender Native Hawaiian focus group, I again found that being in the community was the most effective means of getting participation. At this time, I was a lifeguard for a summer youth program that often brought me to the City & County Parks and Recreation programs in Makali'i. This position allowed me access to a retired and still working adults who were employed with the Parks and other community associations. This focus group was held in the evening at

the community health center and was facilitated by myself and the Principal Investigator. This group was held in the evening at the community health center and was facilitated by myself and the Principal Investigator.

Recruiting for the Samoan groups proved to be more difficult than the Hawaiian groups, as the population of Samoans in Makali'i is quite small. I spent a day with an APIYVPOC research assistant originally from American Samoa seeking out possible Samoan focus group participants. My colleague's role and connections in her community were pivotal in our recruitment efforts. We were eventually able to assemble a group of two Seaquest teachers (one male and one female) and two security guards (two female) for a focus group after school in the APIYVPC room. The day of the focus group, however, there was a fight immediately after school, and in the confusion, the two teachers went home. The Principal Investigator and I completed a small group interview #4, adult Samoan women, with the two security guards.

After months of attempting to assemble Samoan focus groups from Makali'i we finally decided to assemble focus group #5, a mixed-gender group of seven Samoan university students. We then utilized previous APIYVPC working and personal contacts and conducted focus groups #6 and #7. Focus group #6 was a four-person all-male Samoan group, and focus group #7 was an eight-person all-female Samoan group from Honolulu Palms, a low-income housing development in the middle of urban Honolulu. These two groups were conducted simultaneously in the evening at a community building in the middle of the housing. I facilitated the women's group with another female Samoan research assistant, and the Principal Investigator conducted the male focus group with an Asian male research assistant.

Data Analysis

Each focus group was digitally audio recorded and transcribed by APIYVPC staff who removed all names and identifying information. The audio files, along with consent and assent forms are currently stored in locked cabinets at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and the APIYVPC office. All consent/assent forms and audio files will be destroyed upon completion of the project. All recruitment and research strategies were approved by the University of Hawaii's Committee on Human Subjects (CHS #14115 and CHS #14384).

As the focus groups were free flowing discussions, I draw my conclusions directly from the community being studied, as opposed to seeking data that fits in with preconceived theories. I used a grounded theory approach to allow the theory to emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pandit, 1996). I began by undertaking a microanalysis of the data to generate initial coding categories, continued to refine them, and finally, examined the relationships between and among these categories to theorize about action and interaction processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Additionally, I incorporated a feminist framework to analyze the data. I include Steffenmeier and Allan's (2004) gendered approach to violence which suggests 1) understanding that criminality, both male and female, is a product of the way gender is organized, that is, how the environment shapes delinquency for females and encourages it for males; 2) accounting for both male and female crime and the context in which the crimes occur; 3) considering the female path to violence in comparison to the male path; and 4) exploring the extent to which gender differences in crime are a product of social,

historical, cultural, biological and reproductive factors (Steffenmeier & Allan, 2004). Encompassed within stage four of Steffenmeier and Allan's gendered approach to violence is the examination of how specific ethnic cultures affect the definition of gender and gender roles, given that Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls experience at least a double and more likely multiple marginalization, and that gender, race and class interact to shape experiences (Crenshaw, 2003; Heimer & De Coster, 1999).

Notes on Cultural Competence

Throughout the Naturalistic and core/Tula'i studies, we tried to be as culturally competent as possible. We acknowledged that the Western research tradition may not be culturally appropriate for all (Palafox, Buencosejo-Lum, Riklon, and Waitzfelder, 2002), and tried to accommodate this by soliciting the advice and assistance of Pacific Islander APIYVPC staff and community members wherever and whenever possible. We attempted to establish networks in communities prior to recruiting in them, and used existing network systems in proper order where they existed. We also provided food for the focus groups with enough for everyone to take home leftovers, and learned through error, that we should always offer the opportunity for someone to say an opening and closing prayer. Finally, we did our best to be aware of our varying statuses (ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) and consider how they might affect the participants' levels of comfort and sharing. In the following chapter, I describe my analysis of Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls' experiences and perceptions of peer fighting.

STUDY FINDINGS

On a bright, sunny Wednesday morning, I sat with two other APIYVPC researchers, one male and one female, in our office at Seaquest High School. We had conducted a focus group earlier in the day, and were waiting for the morning recess to end so we could conduct a second focus group of Samoan girls. We were dressed casually, like most of the teachers on campus, and sat in front of fans to keep cool in the open-windowed classroom. The bell indicating the start of the new period rang, and five girls straggled in giggling a short time later. They introduced themselves, put down notebooks decorated with doodles and pictures of their friends, lifted long dark hair off the napes of their necks to cool down, and animatedly accepted some of the refreshments we provided. The girls laughingly apologized for being late and explained that there had been three different fights in the courtyard on the way to the focus group. The other researchers and I glanced at each other in surprise. We wondered aloud how we hadn't realized that these fights were occurring as the courtyard was less than twenty feet away from our classroom, nothing had seemed out of the ordinary, and no one had asked for help. We continued with the focus group, but noted that fighting seems a common occurrence and something to which the girls are accustomed. The girls in this focus group, and almost all of the students from both Seaquest and Alekona High School, confirmed that fighting is indeed a frequent event. Fights occur on the campuses at least weekly, and can occur daily during times of high conflict. Fighting is a part of the students' everyday experience. All of the students we spoke with know someone who has been in a fight, or have been in at least one fight themselves.

Many of the girls are nonchalant and matter-of-fact in describing their own fighting experiences. They usually approach or are approached by someone they “have a problem with” or that person’s designated representative and agree whether or not to physically fight. If the fight does not occur at the time of the challenge, they make plans to meet somewhere either during or after school. They prepare for fights by dropping their backpacks, removing their jewelry and pulling back their hair. During these fights, they often get “crazier than the boys,” pulling hair, hitting heads into sidewalks and punching faces.

As in the case of the fights that occurred prior to our focus group, many of the fights take place on campus during the school day in common areas such as the cafeteria or the courtyard. Sometimes, fights occur in the classrooms. Sophia, one of the Hawaiian girls, says, “sometimes they don’t wait. They [fight] right there and then. Sometimes, it could be in [the] class[room].” Her friend Joanna adds, “I’ve seen it that they wouldn’t even be in the same class. They just walk in and start fighting. Like in to class. Like, they walk past and they see [the other person], so they walk straight in and start fighting.” Teachers usually call security to break up fights in the classroom, but the students note that adults generally arrive too late to do anything about fights on other parts of campus.

The school staff notes that fights occur more frequently around school events such as dances, assemblies, sporting events or dances. Several of the focus groups from Seaquest mentioned the previous year’s homecoming week, when there were multiple fights every day. Lindsey, one of the Samoan girls in the aforementioned focus group, describes the worst day of that week: “When we had our homecoming, there were, like,

six fights in one day. There just needed [to be] one more fight and then we all had to go home.” To that, Ashlynn, a varsity volleyball player, laughs and adds that she “was hoping there would be one more!” To understand girl peer fighting, as well as to understand their seemingly blasé attitude towards fighting, this study uncovered what function fighting serves, what meaning fighting holds particularly for girls, and how the creation of these meanings have been influenced by gender and ethnic identity for Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls who live in Hawaii.

Girl Fighting: The Masculinization of Girls

Fighting, Self-Reliance and Being the “Bigger Man:” Fighting As Commonplace for Girls

Generally considered a boys’ problem, fighting is commonly regarded as a display of masculinity. Engaging in fights allows males to gain status and respect through the domination of another, or the refusal to be dominated (Anderson, 1999; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998; Messerschmidt, 1993). Though an on-going process, the push for gender equality has allowed girls and women increased access to education, jobs and political power. Some have suggested that this has encouraged girls to disregard traditionally feminine gender roles and to adopt male attitudes, behaviors and practices in order to earn respect and raise their status, including aggression and peer fighting (Adler, 1985; Messerschmidt, 2004). This has been particularly salient in research with girls from working class communities of color (Anderson, 1999; Hemmings, 2002; Jones, 2004; Ness, 2004).

Anderson (1999) describes how a sense of alienation from mainstream, white society has led to the development and enforcement of alternate rules for violence and aggression. The propensity to violence and the resulting “code of the street,” or rules governing violence come from unequal access to socially sanctioned resources for success. In this context, both boys and girls fight for respect based on an image of toughness, an indicator of self-reliance. Similarly, other researchers find that urban, working class girls of color fight to affirm control over their own bodies and those of others; to achieve a sense of self-reliance; and to gain status in an environment that respects physicality over emotionality—motivations similar to those of boys who fight. Whereas white, middle class girls fight as a form of resistance to traditional gender roles, fighting is a part of the femininity of working class girls of color, and simply one aspect of carrying out girlhood (Hemmings, 2002; Jones, 2004; Ness, 2004). As in these prior studies, the Hawaiian and Samoan girls we spoke with are quite clear in asserting that girls fight just as often as boys, and that they negotiate the same “code of the street” that boys do.

For the girls in this study, fighting is a part of their everyday landscape. Whether they challenge someone to fight, are challenged to a fight, see a fight, or hear about a future fight, fighting is a part of their daily lives. Just as Anderson describes the “code of the street,” or the informal rules for interpersonal interactions and fighting, the girls in this study say that there are appropriate actions and reactions when it comes to fighting. Some fights should be walked away from and some should be engaged in. Many of the girls agree that there is an order in which these actions should be undertaken: attempts should first be made to walk away from fights, or challenges to fight. These challenges

are sometimes direct (“you want to fight?”), and other times couched in taunts and “talking shit,” or gossiping. Walking away, as Mara, the daughter of a popular community organizer says, shows who “the bigger man” is. Being the bigger man, however, does not mean allowing continual abuse; the bigger man does not walk away from repeated taunts and “talking shit.” Destiny, a friendly senior with a quick smile and a raspy voice says: “if they’re in your face, you’re not going to just walk away. I mean, I wouldn’t.” To do so implies fear, vulnerability, and an inability to stand up for one’s self. In the face of repeated taunts and teasing, the bigger man fights.

Lehua, an open and engaging sophomore recalls being pushed to her limit by a boy’s teasing, and when ignoring the situation didn’t stop the taunting, she notes the satisfaction she received in “calling him out (challenging him)” to fight:

“I called out a guy before. It was fun. Because I didn’t want, I didn’t want to take it from him. I was like, ‘why...what is wrong with my name?’ I mean, this is back in intermediate....And then, like, my grandpa’s like ‘yeah, just ignore him, ignore him.’ Of course your parents and your teachers are gonna say just ignore the person. If you’re going on for five weeks straight ignoring a person, you can get really irritated. Finally I just went off. I was like, ‘you know what, do you have a problem with me?’ And he was like ‘whoa.’ I was like, ‘I don’t care how big you are, how fat you are! What? You got a problem with me?’ And I just was like, ‘you know, you should, like, put your money where your mouth is because, I would drop you right now.’ And then is was at [my old school], and like, I was like, I didn’t care if I got kicked out or not....I was like, I guess, like, a guy came out of me or whatever, ‘cause it’s like, I just couldn’t handle that.”

Though Lehua did not fight in this case, she was prepared to fight with the boy in her class in order to stop the teasing. In standing up for herself, she gained a sense of pride and self-reliance. She also demonstrated her knowledge of the rules governing fighting by first by ignoring the teasing, then challenging the boy to a fight when he

would not stop. It is important to note, however, that while Lehua followed the rules for fighting and most likely would have fought with this boy should he have accepted, the boy, in fact, did not fight with Lehua. Several of the girls report either challenging a boy or witnessing a girl challenge a boy to a fight. Rarely, however, do these challenges end in actual fighting, as boys find challenges by girls easily dismissed. As in Miller's (1998) study of gender and street crime, there is no status conferred on a boy who fights with a girl. Nonetheless, for girls, the attempts to walk away from unnecessary fights and the willingness to fight, including with boys, demonstrates the knowledge of the "code of the street", as well as an ability to take care of one's self.

As with the girls in Ness' (2004) study, the girls here do not view fighting as a strictly negative behavior. Chelsea, a petite, no-nonsense senior member of the student government says, "I think fighting is good. 'Cause, like, it helps you to know who you are, and stuff....it makes you grow up." This focus on being self-reliant and being able to stand up for one's self are lessons learned at home.

Self-Reliance as Parental Expectations for Girls: "Always Expect the Unexpected"

The parents we spoke with often have their own history of fighting. Many explain that they had previously been very prone to using fighting as a means of solving interpersonal problems, but that upon growing up, having children, and for some—entering recovery from drug and alcohol abuse, have learned alternative, non-violent ways of dealing with conflict. These tactics, however, are not always successful for working class families, especially when they involve asking for help from authorities.

One mother, Noelani, relates the story of her daughter's on-going conflict with a peer and how peaceful problem-solving mechanisms failed:

“[my daughter] was at Ali'i Kai Intermediate, and this girl picked on her for over a whole year, and she kept coming home and telling me, 'mom...' And, you know, because I'm in recovery now, I learned other ways to take care of problems and not fight. But I used to take care of my problems like that. And so I told her walk away, go to the counselor's office, go talk to the principal, and she did this for over a year. And the girl finally hit her. And my daughter beat her up. But the sad thing about it is she got suspended too.”

Anderson (1999) writes that this inability to depend on people in positions of power such as the school counselor and principal in Noelani's case, or the police, the courts and/or the state in other cases, for protection and equity has led to the use of violence to mete out “street justice.” Working class families have learned that they must take care of themselves, and teach their daughters to do the same. They encourage girls to stand up for themselves and to not be taken advantage of. The parents encourage their daughters to address problems. Miki, the mother of two teenage daughters says, “if you know [you're] right, you need to approach the situation.... Sometimes you don't need to use your fists; you can talk about it.” Miki later acknowledges, however, that talking through problems is not always effective, so tells her daughters to be on alert for a physical attack: “always expect the unexpected. That's what I tell my kids.... you don't make the first hit, but when you're walking away, you make sure your eyes behind your back, cause anything could happen.” For the parents, if a physical fight does ensue despite a girl's attempts to talk through a situation, then fighting is justified, especially if a girl does not throw the first punch. Malia, a thoughtful Hawaiian girl, says: “Basically,

my friend who got into [an] incident today, it's 'cause her mom is telling her to defend herself: 'Don't throw the first hit, you just wait for the first hit and then you defend yourself.'" Successfully defending one's self means usually means winning a fight.

Parents, in teaching their children to be self-reliant and able to take care of themselves, encourage their children to become proficient fighters. Whereas one study of African-American girl peer fighting found that mothers often engage in what is called the "double-generational dynamic," or mothers and daughters fighting side by side (Ness, 2004), the parents in this study rarely get involved in a physical manner. Instead of fighting along side of their children, some parents coach their daughters in fighting and encourage their children to fight for their reputation. Stacy, a 29-year old graduate of Seaquest who lives and works in Makali'i, recalls being surprised by the mother of her best friend encouraging fighting, but acknowledges that she encourages her own son to stand up for himself: "my best friend's mom would take her to fights. And if she was losing, that's it. [Her mom] would be yelling 'Susie, what the hell you doing over there?' I mean, she would take her to fights. And it was unbelievable. I teach my son to stand up for himself. He's actually a big kid, but he's so non-aggressive."

Stacey's comments demonstrate the tension that many parents feel when teaching their children how to stand up for themselves. On the one hand, they do not endorse physical fighting. On the other hand, they want their children to be able to take care of themselves. Several students say that for their parents, losing a fight is a worse offense than getting in to a fight because it shows that the child has not learned to defend him/herself. Some parents punish their children for losing fights, as Ashlynn describes:

“My parents they say that if I don’t...if I ever get into a fight and I don’t win, I might as well come home to get the lickings. [FACILITATOR COREY: So parents want their kids to...] Well, it’s defend themselves and um, be able to back yourself up when you have to...not like, you know. If someone comes up and punches you, I’m not gonna lie, I would automatically punch that person.”

While adult family members tend to stay uninvolved in the physical fighting, parents often assume that their children have first attempted to handle their problems in non-violent means, and so often “back their kids up” when they get word of a physical fight. Sometimes the parents will get involved by talking with the parents, especially the mothers, of the other child. This can lead to yelling matches, which often ends with one of the parents walking away in an attempt to demonstrate how to be “the bigger person.” This sometimes results in simmering family-wide feuds and encouragement from the parents for one student to fight the other. While parents of the youth do not generally get involved in the physical fights of their children, friends and younger family members (brothers, sisters or cousins) often do get involved to “back up” a student during a fight.

Backing up Friends and Family: “If You’re Not Going to Do It, They’re Going to Do It”

Friends “make” school for the Hawaiian and Samoan girls. Some of the friendships extend from the time they were in elementary school together and many of the students are related to each other by blood and marriage. Friends literally are family. As family, the students have a fierce loyalty to each other. Should one of their close friends or family members get in to a fight, the students are obligated to “back them up.” Samoan Alekona High student Sasha says that if a best friend or family member were fighting, she would jump in. She adds, “that is not even a question. I’m sorry but I would

have to.” Jones (2004) calls these ties “loyalty links,” or the close relationships that one is honor-bound to defend either verbally or physically. In some cases, students fight for friends who won’t. Stacey says, “you know, in Makali’i, your friends is like your family. And if you’re not going to do it, they’re going to do it.” As noted by Irwin (2004), friends who fight with or for friends are seen as desirable when fighting is a common occurrence. Conversely, students who do not fight for their friends often have their loyalty and value as a friend questioned. One student, Lindsey, an academically driven Samoan girl has had this experience.

Lindsey does her best to avoid fighting. She explains that she ignores most of the verbal taunting that might ordinarily lead to a fight because of her desire to succeed in school. While she chooses to not take part in physical fights herself, she often takes on the role of caretaker and intervenes in friends’ fights or lends a sympathetic ear. She has been able to help many of her friends work through squabbles that might have developed in to physical fighting. As she is not invested in physical fighting, she refuses to fight for her friends. This has caused others to judge her and other girls who don’t fight for their friends as disloyal, though Lindsey explains that her true friends understand her position:

“Talking about that, like, backing up your friends--like when we had that [fight] in the hallway, the week after that everyone was coming up to me, because she was one of my good friends, and coming up to me ‘why didn’t you step in? Why didn’t you do that?’ ‘Cause I was right there, I was watching the whole thing....And I was like, ‘you know what, I’m not going to deal with it it’s not my fight I came to school to do my education I’m not the fighting type.’ Everyone thought I was but I’m not....Yeah. So people drag in their friends too. They start bringing them [in], start trying to make it into a big problem so we can fight with them. And I’m like, ‘you know what that’s dumb.’ I talked to some of the girls who were all there and they were all talking about it ‘cause some of the boys asked them ‘oh why didn’t you

step up for your friend?' I told them you know, I was talking about it and they all came up with the same answer: it's not our fight why would we step in when it's not our fight? And we talked with the girl who fought and we told her 'you know what the only reason why we didn't step in 'cause it's not our fight. It's not our problem so we're not going to deal with it.' So she said 'its okay. It's my problem so I'm gonna deal with it myself.'"

As in previous studies of working class girls of color, the girls in this study are able to identify and negotiate the "code of the street". While it seems that working class girls of color are invested in an image of self-reliance and toughness similar to their male counterparts, an examination of the two main causes of girl peer fighting actually reveal gendered causes and experiences of fighting.

Feminization of the Code of the Street: The Context of Girl Fighting

The Hawaiian and Samoan students at both Seaquest and Alekona High School answered the question "what causes the most fights at school?" quickly and succinctly: "gossip and rumors." These gossip and rumors, they say, circulate almost daily and are almost always grounds for fighting. The students assert that someone talking about another student is "bad" and is grounds for fighting because, as Chevonne puts it, "it can change the way you look, like how people look at you." The students are always on the defensive, listening for the mere mention of their or their friends' names, at which point they will confront the person gossiping about them. Attempting to employ the "talk it out" strategy their parents suggest, the students say that they are invested in finding peaceful solutions to their conflicts by allowing others to admit or deny spreading rumors. However, the students admit that the inquiry about another's behavior itself is often couched in (and perceived as) a challenge. In impression management literature,

gossip is perceived to be a threat to the self, and the retaliatory accusations, challenges and fights are means of defending one's image.

While the students say that any type of gossip is grounds for fighting, they identify inter-ethnic fighting as the most common reason for fighting, and rumors about dating relationships as the second most common reason. It is important to note that the students call inter-ethnic fighting "racism," though most of the fighting they describe is conflict between Asian / Pacific Islander ethnic groups.

Representing your Culture: Fighting for Pride

The students in this study are proud of their Pacific Islander heritage and self-identify themselves as "Hawaiian," "Samoaan," or "Polynesian." Many of the students learn cultural practices such as traditional dancing, playing musical instruments, and, especially the Samoaan students, speak their language, all signifiers of strong ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990). Despite their pride in their ethno-cultural heritage, the students are aware of that they come from stigmatized communities. Stereotypes abound about Hawaiians and Samoaans, and the students are able to list them: Hawaiians and Samoaans are lazy and unintelligent; they don't care about their education; and they are violent: "like us Samoaans, a lot of other ethnics [sic] are afraid of us. They're intimidated. I'm serious. You walk down, and like...they'll just move when you walk through. I don't know. They're just afraid of us." Neighborhoods with high numbers of Samoaans and Hawaiians tend to be poor or working class. As with other working class communities of color, the Hawaiian and Samoaan communities are often associated with violence and crime.

The Hawaiian students are proud of their heritage and having learned about the suppression of the Hawaiian culture by the early missionaries and the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in their history classes, as well as seeing the on-going negative effects of colonization, are protective of their culture and their land. They feel an ownership of the islands, and likewise, of their schools. Though the students describe the aloha—the willingness to share and respect—that they have for others, especially those in their geographic communities regardless of race and ethnicity, they also feel that there is a certain esteem that the Hawaiian community is owed. When other ethnic groups arrive in their communities and schools in large numbers, it feels to the students like a challenge. The Hawaiian students bound together to meet this challenge in a process of ethnic mobilization, spurred on by their indigenous culture of “sustained collective action (Trask, 2001)”.

Ethnic Mobilization Through Fighting: “You’re Hawaiian, So You’re Proud”

Susan Olzak (1983) writes that ethnic mobilization is “the process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity (for example, skin color, language, customs) in pursuit of collective ends (p. 355),” and according to competitive theories, occurs when different ethnic groups compete for the same resources (Olzak, 1983). In the state of Hawai‘i, Hawaiians struggle for political power and recognition as a Native people. Political control of the state is largely Japanese American and Caucasian. At Seaquest and Alekona High Schools, the conflict between Hawaiians and Caucasians is limited by the low number of Caucasian students; these Caucasian students, haoles, are presumed to mind their own business for fear of “getting it from everybody.”

Rather, the Hawaiian students perceive the growing Samoan student population as “taking over.” The Hawaiian students claim that Samoans “act tough,” which they feel implies a hostile takeover of the Hawaiians’ economic and social status, as well as an implication that Samoans are stronger than Hawaiians:

CHELSEA: I guess the Hawaiians don’t like the Samoans taking over our land, I guess? ‘Cause they act tough, sometimes, the Samoans. I guess the Hawaiians don’t like that.

TIFFANY: ‘Cause there’s more Samoans.

FACILITATOR [COREY]: So, taking over land, like, at Kolihana; or in Hawai’i in general, or...?

CARA: I think Hawai’i in general.

JASMINE: Yeah.

FACILITATOR [COREY]: So, it feels like there’s, they’re moving in...

CHELSEA: Land. Just like haoles. We don’t like haoles.

The Samoan students are very proud of their ethnic heritage as well. Many are the first generation of Samoans born in Hawai’i, and remain close to their culture. The students are able to speak Samoan, and often feel that their Hawaiian counterparts are missing the same cultural connectivity that the Samoan communities have. Despite admitted similarities between the two cultures, the Hawaiian and Samoan students have clashed at both Seaquest and Alekona High Schools. At Seaquest, the conflict led to a large riot between the Hawaiian and Samoan students five years ago, and there have been underlying tensions ever since.

The students at both schools say that many of the fights on campus have an ethnic component to them. At Seaquest, the fights are most frequently between the Hawaiians and the Samoans. At Alekona, the fights are mainly between the Samoan and Filipino students, though there is a mutual disdain for white students from the mainland (continental U.S.). Fights over ethnicity generally start with an ethnically charged

comment made by one student such as “dumb Hawaiian” or “stupid sole [Samoan]”.

Word of the disparaging comments travels quickly. As the gossip spreads, the severity of the original comment often increases, and the original context is dropped, such as if a comment is made in a joking manner between two friends.

The students tend to polarize around their ethnic groups, even if there were pre-existing friendships across ethnic lines. Many of the students feel that fighting for your ethnic group is an admirable action. Chelsea, and Jasmine, a graduating senior say:

FACILITATOR [BO]: does that feel like you fight—if you fight a Samoan person, does that feel like you’re backing your race more or standing up for your race?

CHELSEA: yeah.

JASMINE: then you’re like representing you’re Hawaiian, so you’re proud to be it.

CHELSEA: yeah.

While the girls endorse fighting to stand up for their ethnicity and portraying an image of Hawaiian or Samoan strength and pride, it is important to note, however, that none of the girls had ever been in a fight based on ethnicity or ethnic pride, and most did not know of any girls who had. One group of Samoan girls identified a fight between a Hawaiian girl and a Samoan girl, but the group seemed to be unable to confirm whether or not the fight was initiated by an ethnic slur. Generally speaking, interethnic fighting, standing up for their cultural heritage and the treatment of their people, is a task saved for the boys. Unable to be valued for physically fighting for their culture, girls are often left without a clear connection to their culture, especially as the postcolonial experience continues to both devalue Pacific Islanders and commodify their cultures.

Dating and Fighting: "Being the Deadliest Chick on Campus"

Being on the school campuses so frequently, I had the opportunity to observe and interact with girls during the school day. The girls on campus tend to dress casually. Some wear typically sexualized clothes such as form-fitting tank tops or strapless tube tops. Others wear oversized t-shirts and shorts. Most of the girls wear sneakers or slippers (sandals). While some of the clothing choices may seem more revealing than others, many of the girls appear to have comfort as their main priority: the classrooms are hot, the air is dusty and students walk through open-air corridors. Clothing choices and styles seem to reflect the fact that many of the girls spend time at the beach after school and on the weekend, and are quite comfortable being casually dressed; rarely do girls wear high heels, extremely short dresses or skirts, or other clothes associated with promiscuity. In spite of their casual dress, the girls often wear beautiful gold Hawaiian heirloom jewelry, black Tahitian pearl pendants and rings with their names engraved on them. Many girls wear flowers tucked behind their ears. Despite some concern on the part of teachers and administrators, I find the girls' style of dress quite appropriate for Hawai'i's tropical climate, and refreshingly un-self-conscious. While their dress is casual, as with most other teenage girls, these girls are concerned with their desirability as sexual beings. The ultimate testament to this is being selected as a girlfriend.

In her study of working and middle class white girls in Canada, Artz' (1998) found that girls who engage in fighting often internalize the lower social status of girls, found their greatest worth when recognized as being sexually desirable, and regulated the sexuality of other girls. Similarly, the girls in this study are concerned with being

attractive to boys, and are quick to monitor when another girl is being “slutty.” The girls say that there is a major focus on finding a boyfriend, and that having a boyfriend confers status on a girl. Says Chelsea, “you’re cool if you have a boyfriend.” The status of having a boyfriend comes from being a girlfriend. Being a girlfriend is a signal that a girl is sexually desirable, as the boys on campus seek girlfriends that are physically attractive. Whereas girls’ status lies in being the most desirable girl, boys’ status lies in being able to “get” the most desirable girl. The need for girls to be desirable causes them to engage in competition for the affection of boys, and to monitor the worthiness of other girls most often through assessments of their female peers’ their sexuality. If a girl seeks male attention by dressing in revealing clothes, by flirting or by having sex, she is often seen as sexually desirable by the boys and a “slut” by the girls. Word that one girl has called another a “slut” calls for immediate confrontation, and often leads directly to a fight.

Girls’ judgments of each other often leave very blurred boundaries between what are acceptable and non-acceptable demonstrations of attractiveness and sexuality. Though they often deny that there is competition and jealousy, girls in this study had a difficult time expressing why they are concerned with other girls’ dress styles. During one of the mixed gender focus groups, the four girls became visibly flustered when asked to describe “slutty” and “non-slutty,” and seemed uncomfortable acknowledging that other girls’ dress bothered them--a testament to the lines girls must walk between being attractive and being sexually promiscuous, as well as between being regulated by and regulating other girls:

TISHA: cause some people, you might as well walk around naked I mean like...!

FACILITATOR (COREY): okay, so what kind of clothes is considered slutty?

DESTINY: short shorts.

MARA: just, like, cleavage,
TISHA: but sometimes that's all you have!
MARA: no, sometimes it looks nice, presentable and stuff, but then when you go too far with it, like if you had a halter top and then with pants, its not that hoochie, you know? But then you have...
DESTINY: short shorts,
JUNIOR: but then I think like girls try to impress the guys too, right? Like they dress a certain way to get the guys' attention.
MARA: yeah. That's another thing.
FACILITATOR (COREY): Girls don't like it when another girl tries to get a guys' attention?
TISHA: I don't think we get jealous.
CHEVONNE: yeah, I don't think its jealousy...
TISHA: its not jealousy, its just...
DESTINY:...gross...
MARA: its just like, gosh, why are you trying to impress this guy?
TISHA: but then like on the other hand, like girls shouldn't even be worrying about how other people dress.

When Aaron, a handsome senior football player interjects that he sees how harmful boys' focus on outward appearances can be, there is relief on the part of the girls. They seem both surprised and grateful that a boy is able to understand their perspective, and would risk ridicule by the other boys in the group to say so:

AARON: I think it's the guys' fault.
[group laughs]
TISHA: awww, thank you!
AARON: no, no no! 'Cause like, listen what I'm saying. Like, too many guys are like 'ooh, that girl is wearing short shorts' and like 'ho, brah, that's mean.' You know what I mean?
MARA: and they could be by a girl that's all covered up and they could be saying that!
JUNIOR: and then all the guys could be checking her out and then all the girls would be like 'oh look how much attention she's getting'
AARON: yeah, like 'I better wear short shorts'

Aaron's insight and willingness to share allowed girls in the focus group to express their own frustrations about being judged by their outward appearances. As it continued in an interchange between Mara and Tisha:

MARA: that's another thing. Guys shouldn't just look at body type.

AARON: I know. Look at the [personalities]

TISHA: look at personalities!

MARA: personality you can look at!

These comments illustrate the difficulty of trying to remain a "good" girl, but also wanting to be validated as sexually desirable by boys, and worthy of being loved. Mara says, "people just want to go out with somebody because they just want to feel like someone likes them or loves them." Girls who receive validation that they are desirable and loved in their relationships are quite protective of their boyfriends, and will fight off challenges to their position of "girlfriend." These threats most often come from other girls.

The Game of Love: "Those guys are hard to find"

Finding and keeping relationships are part of the "drama" of high school. Many of the Samoan girls come from traditional families that discourage girls from dating. As one respondent says, "for Samoans, like our parents, we're strict on dating. Like, we have to date like after school. School comes first. Well, after God. God and then school. It's very strict". Despite this, most of the girls in this study have dated or thought about dating. While the ideal partner for boys is someone who is primarily good looking, the girls have very romantic notions of what their ideal partners should be, and often have long lists of what they find most desirable in a partner. Leah's list of qualities the perfect boyfriend would possess is fairly typical, though many of the girls can list off which sport their ultimate boyfriend would play, how big his muscles and what color his eyes would be:

“Okay. Oh yeah, my first one is, like, a personality. He has to be like, outgoing and fun. Fun to be around. And he has to be really family-oriented, because I like to do a lot of things with my family, and if my family can’t accept my boyfriend or whatever, I...I dunno like I, I think that would be like a really hard thing. And, like, he would have to be like, very...nice, and not into drugs and drinking. More in to other people’s thoughts and feelings than himself. And like, those are like hard guys to find, though.”

Many of the girls also subscribe to traditional gender stereotypes and seek a partner who can “take care of” them, in a physical and emotional sense. While the girls seek out romantic partners who will care for them, and essentially become a best friend, a protector and a member of the family, they often forgo many of these qualities they find desirable in a partner in order to simply have a boyfriend. Getting a boyfriend can be difficult, especially when there are other girls seeking the same boys to confer the same validation. This can lead to conflict between girls, even those who are good friends. Lehua describes what can happen when two girls want to date the same boy: “say you .. have a best friend, right? And then you tell your best friend, ‘I like this guy named Dan.’ [She says], ‘Oh yeah, okay, okay.’ Then [she] goes and flirts with Dan. And then next thing, [I’m] like, ‘You stupid bitch, what the hell? I told you that I liked him.’” Where Leah might feel spurned by both Dan and her friend, the friend may feel validated by Dan’s attentions.

The process of becoming a couple is fairly quick. Among the teens, there is no clear concept of “dating.” The terminology they use varies from “hooking up” to “going out” to simply “being boyfriend / girlfriend.” Generally speaking, the students say that “going out” with someone means an exclusive relationship. “Dating,” or spending time

with someone without commitment or exclusivity is something that adults do. Most teens tend to become exclusive after speaking or hanging out with someone once or twice. This makes sense when we recall the strict but ill-defined boundaries between “good” girl and “slutty” girl. A girl that spends time with a boy without commitment or exclusivity runs the risk of having her sexual behavior called in to question. A girl that spends time with a boy who is already in a committed relationship is assumed to be flirting and trying to “steal” the boy away from his girlfriend. In some cases, boyfriends do cheat on their relationships by having sex with other girls. While no one may have seen the boyfriend cheat, hearing rumors and gossip about another girl spending time with a boyfriend requires a girl to take action. That action is generally a challenge to the other girl to fight.

Fighting “makes [the girlfriend] feel better [to know] that they beat up the girl,” says Destiny. Mara says that the fights are “just to prove who the better one is,” and Chevonné adds that fighting the girl a boyfriend cheated with is a way of “telling them not to mess around with my boyfriend.” Many of the girls say that they are unsure why girls don’t deal with cheating boyfriend directly. If we recall that girls seek boyfriends as a means of gaining status and self-worth, then we can see that fighting the girl who threatens a relationship is a way of defending one’s social status as a “girlfriend” and all that the role implies, and serves as a signal to others not to threaten this role and status.

This is such a common occurrence that some girls have developed a mistrust of boys and dating relationships. They enter in to relationships with wariness, and revert to traditional roles to prevent themselves from being “played.” Lehua says that boys “play you for your heart.” Echoing this statement, a group of Samoan girls say:

EMME: [for] some girls it's wrong for a girl to ask out a guy. Because, you don't know. Umm, to girls, a guy asks out a girl because if a guy asks out a girl then she know that the guys likes her. But if she asks out a guy, it's kinda hard because, it's a guy....

LAURA: You don't even know if he'd reject you.

EMME: He can, he can, yeah, he can like somebody else.

SILA: you don't know his feelings.

This mistrust may carry over in to relationships, with girls engaging in monitoring behaviors that are typically associated with intimate partner violence. Several of the girls report that they, or their friends, employ monitoring strategies to keep tabs on their boyfriends. Many of the girls ask their boyfriends to call them every night and get upset if they don't. Some girls regularly visit their boyfriend's websites to see which girls leave messages. While these behaviors are typically associated with intimate partner violence, very few of the girls use violence or the threat of violence to control their partners. The time and effort girls put in to being considered desirable enough to be a girlfriend, in attaining a partner, in warding off competition and in protecting their relationship from threat actually leave many of them vulnerable to intimate partner violence.

Intimate Partner Violence: "Our boys get jealous faster"

Despite their endorsement of fighting to stand up for one's self, and the refusal to be gossiped about, the girls are vulnerable to IPV at the hands of their boyfriends. To girls, being a girlfriend means being considered desirable, being loveable, being protected and being cared for. The validation conferred through being a girlfriend is so great, that they often remain in relationships in which they are monitored beyond the ways that they monitor their boyfriends, and in which they are often emotionally and physically abused.

Just as they monitor which girls their boyfriends talk to, the girls' friendships with other boys are monitored by their boyfriends. Speaking all at once, the Samoan girls report that "their" boys get jealous very quickly: "Like, our boys get jealous faster." "The boy gets jealous if [his] girlfriend talks to a boy." Despite experiencing similar feelings of jealousy and concern about their partners interacting with members of the opposite sex, the girls are more apt to experience "rules" set by their boyfriends, especially regarding clothing:

TISHA: they'll ask you to like don't wear that because then other guys will check you out

DESTINY: yeah, they don't want other guys checking you out

MARA:..cover up

CHEVONNE: they don't want other guys looking at you.

Girls are, in fact, often blamed by their boyfriends for attracting the attention of other boys.

While all of the boys in the study said that hitting a girl is wrong, nearly every girl in the study knows of an abusive teen relationship. One group of girls reflected on the death of a friend following an asthma attack brought on by being hit by an abusive boyfriend at the bus stop. Eseta says:

"But I know that some girls, they still stick with their guy because, and even though he abuse her, but she still stick with that person. Like one girl died because her boyfriend hit her right? And she had a asthma attack and she, she died while she was in the ambulance....She was like one of our best friends."

While most of the abusive relationships described do not end in death, many of the girls involved in these relationships fear for their lives. Some of the girls stay in the

relationships because they are afraid to leave. Some of the girls have children by their abusers. Some of the girls believe that true love conquers all, and that boyfriends will change. Reflecting again on what relationships mean to these girls, it is easy to see that the girls do not want to lose a relationship, despite its negative and controlling aspects. The intimate partner violence that girls experience is a topic area that must be explored further, as it seems to be both a common and dangerous occurrence for the girls.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Despite the rich and candid data generated by respondents there are some limitations to this study. The participants in this study were not randomly selected but were asked to participate on recommendation by their counselors or teachers. Participants were also limited to those who returned parental consent forms and were in school the day of their assigned focus group appointment. Therefore study samples excluded students who avoided or never had contact with their school counselors, or did not return the study paperwork on time. We could estimate that those students who did not regularly attend school or were not interested in participating comprise a particular subset of students who are probably more at risk due to social, psychological or other factors, had fewer social or parental supports for attending classes, or had different norms and values with regard to the role of school in their lives.

The adults in this study were also not randomly selected. Most were recruited through snowball sampling methods which began through well-known access points in the neighborhoods. As with the students, this technique tends to exclude the experiences of those without connection to community resources and leadership centers and hence are more vulnerable to social and economic challenges.

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander researchers and community members involved with the research, focus groups were often facilitated by non-Pacific Islander researchers whose ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, and backgrounds did not match those of the participants. This may have affected study interactions and responses in

ways that the researchers and perhaps the participants were unaware. In the future, greater efforts should be made to have researchers reflect the demographic background of participant, including asking the informants themselves what type of environment would make them the most comfortable to participate (e.g., a researcher from within their community versus someone with no ties to the community who may be less likely to know the people spoken about, etc.).

CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations of this study, we have gained much insight in to girls' experiences of peer fighting in Pacific Islander communities. As in previous studies of working class girls of color, the girls in this study are able to identify and negotiate the "code of the street", which stem from the economic disadvantage of marginalized racial communities. The Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls in this study describe patterns of economic disadvantage resulting from histories of colonization. This economic disadvantage begets further marginalization and stigma. Aunty Momi, an elder from Makali'i reflects that residents of the neighboring town of Kolihana, many Caucasians who recently moved to Hawai'i, often look down upon the Hawaiians in Makali'i. She says,

"I think the clientele [from] Kolihana [are] different from Makali'i in the sense that a lot of them are transient. I mean, they're people from the mainland, [who] are coming to live [in Hawai'i], whereas, we're here. We're stationary. We're stuck here in Makali'i. We don't travel like they do there. So the way they were brought up is different from how we were brought up. And I think that they feel that sometimes, that we're not up to par with them because oh, we don't do things the way they do."

Several of the college aged Hawaiian adults agree that they feel looked down upon.

Kalama, a former Seaquest high school football player agrees with Aunty Momi that people from the wealthier Kolihana look down on them and others from Makali'i:

AUNTY MOMI: they always think they better than you.

FACILITATOR [KATY]: how so? And, like...

AUNT MOMI: well, because they're there, and we're on the homestead. You know, our community...

KALAMA: they got more things there.

AUNTY MOMI: they got more things there than we do there. I don't know, that's my feeling.

FACILITATOR [KATY]: things in terms of like...

KALAMA: its more...more things to offer. It doesn't even need to be that big, you know, like movies and stuff. They got all that. [A] shopping center, things we don't even think about. Makali'i, we don't have that much, you know. We got the beach.

Pua, a Seaquest graduate, who attends college on the mainland with her boyfriend Maka, relates that the stigma follows from Hawai'i to their university. She says that the students from Hawai'i are put in remedial classes because they often speak in the pidgin (creole) English that resulted from the convergence of different immigrant groups in the islands. She refers to the presumably white university students from the mainland as "American" and "English":

"When we go to college, the both of us are taking English 98, versus all the American people are like [in English] 100. We have to do remedial classes just to catch up with them. And, like, majority of our friends are Hawai'i people, and we all get along 'cause we can relate to each other. But we have a hard time relating with the English people, because they have different wants and needs, versus us. You know, they want to just hang out with themselves. And we want to just hang out with ourselves. And majority of our friends [from Hawai'i] are in English 98, Math 98, so we're all behind. We have different educational needs. And, like, they [tell us] that our private schools here are like their public schools on the mainland."

This focus on Hawaiians learning American ways has caused a loss of the knowledge of the cultural arts among the youth, which many in the community feel could serve as protective factors for violence. Maka says, "[we] don't grow up too much in [our] own culture. [We] grow up in more of a society where we learn the things that we have to learn to survive. Like the Hawaiians nowadays, we're forgetting how to build

canoes, how to make taro patches, how to make houses out of pili grass or whatever.” Several of the mothers agree, and explain that their daughters are not engaged in traditional Hawaiian ways by the commodification of Hawaiian practices, such as the high cost of actually learning Hawaiian art forms, e.g., high fees for hula lessons, costumes, field trips, and competitions. Leiana, a thirty year old mother says, “not too much girls do hula nowadays.... You can not go to one party today and pick one kid out of the audience and tell them [to] dance.... Most of us don’t know how, because [we] never had that [taught to us]!” The women also reflect that many are prevented from learning hula, joining canoe paddling clubs or learning to play the ‘ukulele by the high costs of enrolling in halau (schools), as well as the expense of transporting children to these activities:

MIKI: you know, a lot of kids are interested, but the expense. [Its] the expense of learning the ukulele outside [the family], the expense of learning the hula, you know. All those kumu hulas (hula teachers) [from] back then, they’re all gone.

JUSTINE: I got my seven year old, [and] because I’m a single parent and I’m raising two little ones, the budget is so tight.

LEIANA: it has to be free. [It] cannot even be ‘affordable,’ ‘cause nothing is affordable to us.

NOELANI: especially with the rent prices going up over here...

LEIANA: gas...

NOELANI: gas is killing us.

MIKI: its like, ‘you like me take you here? you know how much gas is just to take [you]?’

The Hawaiian girls, devalued as fighters by the boys and prevented from learning the cultural arts that might anchor them to their community by high costs, struggle to find ways to connect with their cultural community. While many of the Samoan girls actively practice cultural arts such as dancing, and speak their language, the Samoan girls also seem to struggle to be considered as important as boys.

Whereas the Hawaiian women feel that they and their daughters are losing their connectivity with the cultural arts, the Samoan women and girls often feel very close to their cultural practices. As a more recent immigrant group, many of the Samoan families are bilingual and attend church with other Samoans. Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way) is very important to them. While there are close ties with the Samoan community, this is sometimes stifling for the girls, as the communal Samoan culture, heavily influenced by Christianity, reveres boys.

In Mayeda, Pasko and Chesney-Lind's (2006) article, "You got to do so much to actually make it: gender, ethnicity and Samoan youth in Hawai'i," Samoan girls reported being encouraged to take traditional gender roles and being considered second to boys. Similarly, the Samoan girls in this study say that there are many expectations for girls to remain chaste, to remain close to the family and to help their families whenever possible; expectations that are not as expected of the boys. In the adult Samoan women's focus group at Honolulu Palms, Fia, a recent high school graduate explains that much of the attention in the Samoan community goes to the boys which can leave girls feeling left out: "I think that some girls, they feel like 'ok, you always going for the boys. It's always the boys. You pay more attention to the boys. What about me?' You know, it's always going to be, 'what about me? Where do I fit?'" Remembering that her mother is in the same focus group at the end of a long table, Fia looks over and laughingly accuses her mother of favoring the boys: "There's always the boys. Not in a bad way. Mom! You're [for] boys! The boys are everything. Us girls, we get the second half!" After the group laughs, Fia continues, "It's like because they possess strength or something. But

when they're not there, it's we the ones that move the tables away or we take the rubbish [out] for them!"

After a long laugh and agreement on the part of all the women in the room, a wonderful moment of solidarity occurs between the women. The mothers, speaking, laughing, and finishing each others' sentences say: "Moms don't have to worry so much about the girls. You raised them right and you go 'Okay, she's going know what to do.' Boys, they're just, like, hardheaded. They hardheaded; they do their own thing. Girls, they're just easy going, you know, you mature faster, and once you're told; what you're taught, you always [do it]." Finally, Teuila, an older Samoan woman with a wicked sense of humor (who, earlier in the evening, had asked for a whiskey and 7-up in response to my offers of soft drinks from the cooler) says, "There's one Samoan word, it's an old Samoan word, but we still [use] that word....that word [means] that the man is still not working, only [their] words still going and going and going. But the lady's working. If [a woman] does something, it keeps on going and going. But if a man is doing some work, it's maybe [for only] two or three weeks and then they cannot even finish that. But the lady is still going and going." The room erupts in laughter and everyone concurs that the women work hard to sustain the Fa'a Samoa, even when the men do not. While this moment was quite special to witness, the words of the older women seem to substantiate Fia's concern: more attention is paid to boys and men; the women do the core work. The re-creation of traditional gender roles is sometimes difficult for American-born Samoan girls to negotiate, especially when the culture perpetuates the subordination of women and girls, as noted by Mayeda, Chesney-Lind and Koo (2001).

Whereas Ness (2004) writes that girls of color selectively appropriate mainstream middle class gender norms, the Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls can not ignore and “selectively appropriate” which mainstream gender norms they enact. As shown above, they are constrained by the gender norms of both their own cultures and mainstream U.S. culture. The Hawaiian and Samoan girls struggle to find a space for themselves in the context of being females in colonized cultures. They seek a place of importance and a connection to their cultures, but also struggle to succeed in the western rules imposed upon them. The girls struggle to meet western-imposed definitions of femininity. With their brown hair and brown skin, the girls can never meet American white middle class standards of beauty (which American white middle class girls struggle to meet themselves), though they often try to emulate it (Mayeda, Chesney-Lind & Koo, 2001).

These patriarchal constraints have resulted in the same horizontal aggression and internalized feelings of female inadequacy described by girls in studies of white middle class communities. The Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls have internalized their self-worth as being tied to their sexual desirability, are consumed with relationships, and monitor and fight with other girls who threaten their self-worth. This gender analysis is further supported by the prolific amounts of intimate partner violence the girls experience and witness. These findings suggest that girls of color experience both racial and gender marginalization, and that current theories of girl fighting in communities of color must incorporate an analysis of gender as opposed to simply describing a gendered experience of a racial analysis.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Focus Group Interview Guide

Naturalistic Study of Youth Violence Prevention

PART 1: YOUTH VIOLENCE DESCRIBED

VIOLENCE PROBLEM DESCRIBED

- Describe the youth violence that you have seen or heard about.
- Tell me where it happens (probe for neighborhoods, hang outs, at school, in homes)
- Tell me who it exists among (probe for age, gender, ethnicity, types of youth)
- Tell me when it tends to happen (probe for times of day, times of year, etc).
- Please describe whether you think that the youth violence that you have described is a problem or not.
- Why do you think that it is or why do you think that it is not a problem?

ETHNIC COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

- Please describe your ethnic heritage and community.
- Please describe the youth violence that members of your ethnic community experience (if any).
- How does youth violence affect your ethnic community or ethnic group?
- Please describe whether you view youth violence as a problem among members of your ethnic group. Please explain why it is a problem or why it is not.
- What do you think is working well or not working well in your community to keep youth violence from being a problem?
- What changes would you like to see happen in relationship to youth violence.

GENDER (questions to be asked only of the single sexed focus groups. The mixed gender focus group will not include these questions):

- (For interviews with women only): Please describe the violence that girls experience. How is it different than the violence that boys experience?
- (For interviews with men only): Please describe the violence that boys experience. How is it different than the violence that girls experience?
- Please describe whether you view youth violence as a problem among girls/boys?
- Please explain why it is a problem or why it is not.
- What do you think is working well or not working well in to keep youth violence from being a problem for girls/for boys?
- What changes would you like to see happen to keep youth violence from being a problem for girls/for boys?

SOLUTIONS:

- What are the consequences of youth violence at school. What do you think about these consequences and what do you think the school should do about youth violence.
- In general what would you like to see happen to help prevent the types of youth violence that you have described?
- How can the following become involved to solve the problem:
 - o Schools
 - o Parents
 - o Community members
 - o Other youth
- Any programs that you would like to see implemented in school or the community?

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

- Anything that we have forgotten that you think we should know about the youth violence problem?

PART 2: ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

In this section of the focus group, we will hand out a brief and easy to understand synopses of the ways that violence prevention programs have attempted to make their programs gender and culturally competent and ask focus group members to comment on whether they think that these program innovations would work for members of their gender and ethnic group.

ETHNIC COMPETENCE:

- Based on these descriptions, please describe how you think that these programs have attempted to address the youth violence problem among members of different ethnic groups.
- Overall, what do you think about these strategies?
- Describe whether you think these strategies would work for your ethnic group.
- Describe anything that you think is missing from these programs that would help prevent youth violence among members of your ethnic group.
- Ideally, what would an effective violence prevention program for members of your ethnic group look like? What would it need to include, what would it need to avoid. What would be the main focus?

GENDER COMPETENCE: (these questions are only for focus groups among women).

Based on these descriptions, please describe how you think that these programs have attempted to address the youth violence problem among girls.

- Overall, what do you think about these strategies?
- Describe whether you think these strategies would work for girls.
- Describe anything that you think is missing from these programs that would help prevent the problems of youth violence that girls experience.
- Ideally, what would an effective violence prevention program for girls look like? What would it need to include, what would it need to avoid? What would be the main focus?

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

- Is there anything that we have forgotten that you think we should know about designing youth violence prevention programs?

Appendix B

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Tulai'i: Stand Up

Potential Focus Group Questions

1. What are the primary or main aspects and beliefs in your culture (Hawaiian, Samoan, or Filipino)? What are the most important parts of your culture?
2. Traditionally in your culture, how do boys become men? What types of things do boys have to do to earn a sense of manhood?
3. In today's youth culture, how do boys become men? How is this different or similar to the ways boys become men traditionally in your cultural group?
4. Traditionally in your culture, how do girls become women? What types of things do girls have to do to earn a sense of womanhood?
5. In today's youth culture, how do girls become women? How is this different or similar to the ways girls become women traditionally in your cultural group?
6. What qualities do you think your mom and dad (or guardians) value in your growing up to become a man or woman? How about your grandparents?
7. Are there certain expectations within your cultural group with regard to violence? For example, it is acceptable (or expected) for boys to act violently with certain people, and if so with who and in what situations? Or is it acceptable (or expected) for girls to act violently with certain people, and if so with who and in what situations?
8. How important is your family to you? How much does your family influence your behavior when you are away from them, like when you are at school or just with your friends?
9. For those of you who are of mixed ethnicity, how does that affect which ethnic groups you identify with?

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