Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social Work

The Need to Consider Ethnocultural Context in Prevention Programming: A Case Example from Hawai‘i

Susana Helm a & Charlene K. Baker b

a Department of Psychiatry, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, USA
b Department of Psychology, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, USA

Available online: 18 May 2011

To cite this article: Susana Helm & Charlene K. Baker (2011): The Need to Consider Ethnocultural Context in Prevention Programming: A Case Example from Hawai‘i, Journal of Ethnic And Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 20:2, 131-149

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2011.570125

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
The Need to Consider Ethnocultural Context in Prevention Programming: A Case Example from Hawai‘i

SUSANA HELM
Department of Psychiatry, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, USA

CHARLENE K. BAKER
Department of Psychology, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, USA

Objective: This article highlights the importance of incorporating ethnocultural contexts in prevention research and programming. We provide a case example from our research in youth violence prevention in Hawai‘i. Methods: Data were collected in multiethnic communities on O‘ahu. Focus groups were conducted with high school-aged youths of Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan ancestry. Results: In analyzing narrative data regarding the broad theme of ethnoculture, a deeper issue became apparent during the focus group discussions—negative ethnocultural stereotypes and discrimination. Conclusion: Understanding ethnocultural issues is critical in decision making regarding prevention programming, particularly the need for deep-structure, culturally grounded interventions.

KEYWORDS teen dating violence prevention, ethnocentrism, stereotypes, discrimination, qualitative methods

This study was supported by funding from the State of Hawai‘i Department of Health, Sexual Violence Prevention Program, Maternal & Child Health Branch, and from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (5U49CE000749-03). The authors wish to acknowledge the support of the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center, including Research Associates Mr. F. Petelo Sele and Ms. Tara Hiramatsu.

Address correspondence to Susana Helm, Department of Psychiatry, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 1441 Kapi‘olani Blvd., Honolulu, HI 96814, USA. E-mail: HelmS@dop.hawaii.edu
INTRODUCTION

Youth violence (YV) is a major unresolved social problem nationally and internationally (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2001b; World Health Organization, 2002). In the United States, recent findings have indicated that when disaggregated, substantial ethnic differences in YV rates exist (Mayeda, Hishinuma, Nishimura, Garcia-Santiago, & Mark, 2006). For example, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Asian-Americans (NHOPI/AA) suffer disproportionately from YV (both in terms of victimization and perpetration) when compared to national averages. The importance of these rates cannot be overstated, as the NHOPI/AA population is the fastest-growing in the United States, based on U.S. Census 1980 to 2000 (Barringer, Gardner, & Levin, 1993). The NHOPI/AA population in the United States is projected to be 41 million by 2050 (Day, 2010). Based on Census 2000, 4.4% of the U.S. population, or 12.5 million Americans, reported some NHOPI/AA ancestry (Reeves & Bennett, 2003). The highest NHOPI/AA proportion (>50%) is found in Hawai‘i (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

This article highlights the importance of incorporating ethnocultural contexts in prevention research and programming. We provide a case example from our research in YV prevention in Hawai‘i. Qualitative research conducted by Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center (APIYVPC) revealed negative ethnocultural stereotypes and discrimination, which is important to address when developing violence prevention initiatives in particular. Thus, neglecting the ethnocultural context would most likely mean risking programmatic failure (Kawakami, Anton, Cram, Lai, & Porima, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories to account for the high rates of YV among NHOPI/AAs include the effects stemming from low socioeconomic status, marginalization through colonialism, discrimination, mental illness stigma, historical trauma, and cultural conflict between Western and more collectivistic values (Le, 2002; Mark, Revilla, Tsutsumoto, & Mayeda, 2005; Mayeda, Pasko, & Chesney-Lind, 2006). As cross-cultural psychologist Marsella (2009) has noted, diversity in a global era means that “diversity encounters” will increase, and thus may elicit “arousal, alarm, and sometimes, aggression” more frequently (p. 121). Furthermore, the issue of violence is laced with concepts of power and control, and can be considered a manifestation of oppression. Feelings of oppression and powerlessness erode personal, relational, and collective well-being (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). The Surgeon General’s report on culture and race indicated these experiences are stress inducing, and “adversely affect health and mental health, and they place minorities at risk
Ethnocultural Context in Prevention Programming

Other aspects of oppression include the processes of ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism (Mio, Barker-Hackett, & Tumambing, 2006; Tatum, 1992). Ethnocentrism refers to viewing other ethnocultural groups from one’s own perspective, generally using one’s own values, beliefs, norms, etc., to evaluate others, thus resulting in a sense of superiority. This is considered a normal part of socialization and enculturation, in that members of society must learn what is expected of them; however, ethnocentrism can contribute to stereotypes. Stereotypes develop through normal cognitive processes, beginning with selective attention. Ethnocentric stereotypes form when individuals attend to characteristics or traits of another ethnocultural group, and use those characteristics to make attributions about that group. While some stereotypes may be accurate, overgeneralizations often occur, and may be used to justify ethnocentric beliefs and practices that lead to disparities in the treatment of groups or populations. These disparities are often a result of prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice refers to a preconceived evaluative aspect based on such limited information. Therefore, prejudice is an evaluative judgment, whereas stereotypes are thought to be cognitive generalizations. Discrimination is the behavioral manifestation of prejudice; in other words, the unfair treatment. Violence prevention programs and related research must take these processes into consideration (e.g., Matsumoto & Juang, 2004; Mio et al., 2006), particularly in ethnoculturally diverse settings such as contemporary Hawai‘i.

Background of the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center (APIYVPC)

Recognizing the high rates of YV reported for some groups of NHOPI/AA adolescents and lack of effective programs for these youths, the APIYVPC’s mission is to reduce and prevent YV among NHOPI/AAs by implementing, evaluating, and disseminating a more comprehensive approach to YV prevention. APIYVPC emphasizes a social-ecological framework to account for the multifaceted nature of YV prevention and positive youth development for NHOPI/AAs.

As part of APIYVPC, a research and dissemination project was conceived to address community concern about intimate partner violence among adolescents, as well as empirical evidence suggesting an increased prevalence (Choi-Misailidis, Mayeda, Hishinuma, Nishimura, & Chesney-Lind, 2008) of the phenomenon. The project also was born out of the limitations of existing prevention research for adolescent intimate partner violence (also referred to as teen dating violence, or TDV), in that most research has been conducted with European-American, African-American,
and Latino populations (e.g., Foshee et al., 1996; Howard & Wang, 2003; Sanderson, Coker, Roberts, Tortolero, & Reininger, 2004; Wingood, DiClemente, McCree, Harrington, & Davies, 2001; Wolfe et al., 2003). These oft-cited articles highlight that much of the TDV research and literature has been limited to populations other than Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, or Asian-Americans. Thus, we need to develop science-based prevention strategies that are consistent with the ethnocultural context in Hawai‘i.

Brief Ethnocultural History of Hawai‘i

As prevention programming is developed and implemented, it is important to understand how Hawai‘i became so diverse, as this history continues to affect Hawai‘i’s people today. The Kanaka Maoli, or indigenous people of Hawai‘i, are estimated to have begun settling the islands approximately 2,000 years ago (McGregor, 2007). For centuries, Native Hawaiians lived sustainably and in relative isolation, until the arrival of Captain Cooke in 1778. Western colonization of Hawai‘i began soon after Cooke’s arrival, as the Pacific trade route was developed through the efforts of European-American missionaries from New England starting in 1820. Colonization continued as sugar and pineapple plantations were developed, and through U.S. military occupation from the plantation period to the present (McGregor, 2007). To support this rapid economic exploitation, plantation laborers were recruited primarily from China (1852), Japan (1890), the Southern United States (African Americans, 1901), Korea (1902), and Philippines (1906) (Takaki, 1983). Adding to the diversity of Hawai‘i brought about by the plantation era, Samoans began to develop a significant presence in Hawai‘i in the early 1950s. Initial migrants were usually military affiliated, whereas recent migrants generally have moved for economic and educational opportunities, and more efficient medical care (American Samoa Historic Preservation Office, 2008; Chesney-Lind, Koo, & Mayeda, 1998).

Currently, no single ethnic group can claim majority status, though there continue to be four main ethnocultural groups: Hawaiians, Caucasians, Filipinos, and Japanese. Historical and ongoing immigration to Hawai‘i has resulted in various stressors and cultural conflicts for Samoan and Filipino communities (Guerrero, Hishinuma, Andrade, Nishimura, & Cunanan, 2006; Markoff & Bond, 1980; Mayeda, Chesney-Lind, & Koo, 2001). In addition, more than two centuries of colonialism have resulted in economic marginalization and poor health statistics among Native Hawaiians (Stannard, 2000). Furthermore, Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Samoan populations are consistently overrepresented within the criminal justice system, including the juvenile justice system (Bradford & Perrone, 2001; Gao & Perrone, 2004; Kassebaum et al., 1995). Although one Hawai‘i study found that Samoan youths reported significantly higher rates of violence than other cultural groups, including Hawaiian, Filipino, or Japanese youths (Mayeda,
The Present Study

Recent evidence suggests that YV is a problem nationally and in Hawai‘i. Yet solutions are primarily based on program development and evaluation research with European-American, African-American, and Latino youths in the continental United States. This study was designed to address YV in ethnoculturally diverse Hawai‘i. Through interviews with adolescents, we sought to clarify their perceptions of YV (specifically focusing on TDV), as well as ethnocultural aspects of violence and potential solutions.

METHOD

Sample

Data were collected at two public schools in multiethnic communities on the island of O‘ahu. One school was mainly comprised of Native Hawaiian students as well as local Japanese-American and European-American youths. Students of Native Hawaiian ancestry were recruited from this school. The other school served a more ethnically diverse community. Although approximately 60% of the second school’s student population was Filipino-American, the school also served other Pacific Islander youths, including Samoan, Marshallese, Tongan, and Native Hawai‘ian students. Students of Samoan and Filipino ancestry were recruited to participate from this second school. Only students with active parental consent and youth assent participated. Focus groups ($N = 9$) were organized to elicit possible ethnocultural or sex differences and similarities in youths’ perceptions and experiences. Fifty-one youths (26 girls and 25 boys) of Native Hawaiian ($N = 16$), Samoan ($N = 18$), and Filipino ($N = 17$) ancestry participated. Youths ranged in age from 14 to 19 years.

Data Collection and Analysis

Students were asked to describe their perceptions of YV, including dating violence, in a focus-group format. Participants were not asked to describe personal experiences with violence, only what they thought about it, including the reasons why it happens. This protocol was approved by the University of Hawai‘i Institutional Review Board.

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy. More than 10 hours of audio were transcribed, ranging from 47 to 85 minutes per interview. A data management system using NVivo software was developed for creating a systematic approach to data management and analysis, while also allowing for the emergent nature of
the analysis to occur (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Richards, 2002).

Data management is the foundation of high-quality analyses. The goals of analysis in qualitative research are to generate meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994), to represent multiple constructed realities of people in natural settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and to pursue discovery and insight into human experience (Kirk & Miller, 1986). A variety of criteria have been developed for qualitative research (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shenton, 2004), and the analyses presented here have employed some of them in order to produce quality interpretations of meaning, reality, and human experience. Specifically, the following two steps enhanced reliability and validity in our qualitative data management and analysis (QDMA) process. The concepts of reliability and validity are also referred to as credibility, trustworthiness, dependability, and related terms for judging qualitative research (Anastas, 2004; Shenton, 2004).

First, research staff were trained and experienced in qualitative methodology. For example, researchers involved in data management and analysis had participated in the data collection for the study, so they already were familiar with the data set. The majority of the research team had prior experience with focus-group data collection, management, and analysis. In addition, the research team also contributed to the initial conceptualization of the research questions using grounded and theory-driven concepts, which primed them for using the project-specific codebook. Furthermore, all research team members involved in coding the data were trained specifically for this project. Coder-researchers participated in a qualitative data management and analysis (QDMA) training that reviewed basic concepts, and specifically focused on using NVivo 7 software for this purpose.

Second, we used a team approach to coding. Teams of coders were set up so that two to four people worked together to code each transcript. While this procedure increased the amount of time required to complete the coding process, accuracy and consistency (i.e., intercoder reliability) were maximized. For each transcript, discrete segments or narrative units were identified and coded. Coder-researcher teams developed agreement about what constituted the discrete segment, and then agreement about the code(s) attached to it. The process of agreement served to clarify the definition of each code, as well as contributed to dependability and conformability. Furthermore, the QDMA trainer (first author) participated in the first set of coding activities with the coder-researcher teams, and provided supervision and guidance throughout the process.

Transcripts were coded using a priori categories, each of which included several subcategories: violence, dating violence, ethnoculture, gender, substance use, supports and services, and ecological levels. Specifically, we conducted a content analysis of these a priori categories. These categories were determined as a result of the project purpose; namely to learn more about youth violence in general, and dating violence in particular. The theme
of ethnoculture is inherent in the work conducted by the APIYVPC, and was emphasized by the communities with whom we work, as well as the funding agencies. The above categories were not emergent themes, though many subthemes within each of the categories were emergent, as was the case of ethnocultural stereotypes reported in the results below. Finally, as expected in qualitative analysis in which large volumes of data are handled by multiple researchers, a priori categories and definitions evolved and are informed by participants’ narratives. To capture this dynamic aspect of qualitative research, and to ensure the integrity of the data analysis, the original codes were updated and team members were kept apprised of these updates. Because the project for which these data were collected emphasized intimate partner violence among adolescents as a specific type of YV, the analysis focused on dating violence and ethnocultural themes, though these findings span YV as well.

RESULTS

Given that the research was designed to explore possible ethnoculture-specific, cross-cultural, and multicultural issues, it was expected that youths would share these types of views. Youths were informed that they had been asked to participate because they identified with a specified ethnicity; and researchers wanted to know what youths of their respective ethnocultural group thought about TDV as a way to ensure that prevention programming was relevant to them. In the current article, we present findings that speak to the need to consider the ethnocultural context in which prevention strategies will be implemented.

Ethnocentrism, Stereotypes, and Discrimination

Although there is great diversity in Hawai‘i, there was an undercurrent of ethnocentrism expressed across all nine interviews. Youths’ narratives indicated negative racial and cultural stereotypes. Youths interviewed in the focus groups expressed these stereotypes personally and reported that other youths in their school and community held similar stereotypes. The following is an example from one of the boys’ groups:

Boy 1: Like most people don’t like haoles [reference to Caucasians, sometimes meant derogatorily] yeah? That’s so easy to start scraps [fights]. It’s like “you f—ing haole” you know. Something like that. And then that person gets pissed off and then that’s what causes it. . . . I heard someone yelled out, “you f—ing Asian.” So it’s not just Asians. It’s not just haoles.

Facilitator: And that’s not the only thing you were saying that causes fights. It doesn’t have to be culture. It can be other things too.
Boy 4: It could be culture too ’cause . . . I really don’t think I’m a haole. And, then like the Tongans and stuff. I don’t know . . . like “you dumb Tongans,” “stupid soles” [reference to Samoans, sometimes meant derogatorily] and stuff like that. And it makes them want to scrap [physical fight].

Whereas the previous quote suggested ethnocentric stereotypes, it became evident in further narrative analyses that deeper and more targeted ethnocultural stereotypes existed about Samoans among all three ethnocultural groups interviewed (Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Filipino)—that Samoans were perceived to be violent aggressors.

Among non-Samoan focus groups we heard stereotypical remarks and negative attributions expressed about Samoans. This pattern of remarks and attributions was not directed at any of the other ethnocultural groups present in Hawai‘i. Of note, across all nine focus groups, facilitators asked specifically about the intersection of ethnoculture and violence. In some cases, although participants described violent incidents and made note of the ethnocultural background of the people involved in these incidents, we found no pattern indicating that ethnocultural conflict was the cause of the violence, including TDV. The only pattern where ethnoculture was noted as consistently related to violence was with negative stereotypes about Samoans.

The two most frequent stereotypes suggested that (1) Samoans are “fighters” and (2) Samoan youths and adults call their family members to help them fight. While these youths considered Samoan boys likely to initiate or engage in fighting, they also expressed that Samoan girls were known to fight. Excerpts from non-Samoan interviews illustrate these negative stereotypes:

Girl 1: Something ‘bout Samoans, like if you get into it with one of their family’s members then they’ll call their family to go to the school, and they’ll call some more people to mob you or whatever like that.

Girl 2: I think if your family is like that then you just have it in you, you know. Like not to be racist but Samoan families, like they’re like that.

Girl 3: Yeah, you have to live up to their family’s expectation ’cause even like the older, the older, like the parents they even fight.

This idea that Samoans fight, and that they call upon their immediate and extended family to back them up, was echoed by a boys’ focus group:

Boy 1: Oh yeah, they call their family, like, or their cousins.

Boy 2: You know, at the [location] they get one load of people.

Boy 3: People gonna jump in, guarantee.
Boy 1: When get Samoan fights, like they bring in their whole family. All the uncles and all the older cousins, li’dat.

Boy 2: The mom, dad.

Boy 3: Come in yeah, to get your back.

Facilitator: That’s common, that when a Samoan fights . . . ?

Boy 1: Yeah, small fights, and they call the whole family.

Boy 2: Just one little measly thing, they gonna get you.

Boy 1: Could be like one-on-one fight. . . after school when the fight ready to happen you see just one whole tribe.

Samoan youths who participated in the interviews clearly felt that their non-Samoan peers feared them because of the aforementioned negative stereotypes, and that people, including their teachers, thought they were stupid. They shared instances of discrimination that occurred at school and in the community:

Boy 1: Like that Samoan image thing, the main reason why people look at us like, I mean look at us and think that we’re troublemakers, that’s the main thing. I can tell by the way people look at us, when you see Samoans as a group, a group of Samoans walking around, like they’re just friends, huh. You can see people looking at us, [thinking] “oh these guys are troublemakers,” so they back the bell up.

Facilitator: Why do you think people think that though?

Boy 2: That’s the first thing that pop in their mind, if you’re Samoans, “they’re gonna kick our ass.” But we don’t even make trouble.

Facilitator: So you guys have all experienced that?

Several Boys agree: Yeah; every day. [laughs] Every day.

The Samoan girls expressed very similar sentiments, though in a slightly more lighthearted way:

Girl 1: Oh there’s a lot of differences. Like us Samoans, a lot of other ethnics they’re afraid of us. [others agree]

Girl 2: They’re intimidated.

Girl 1: I’m serious. You walk down, and there’s like, Filipinos and Hawaiians and they’ll just move when you walk through. I don’t know, they’re just afraid of us.

Girl 2: Because reputations of other Samoans.

Girl 1: Yeah, past Samoan people that been here. They’re like [a couple of participants say yeah, in agreement], “Aren’t you that person’s sister”? It’s like, oh hell no! [talking over each other, some laughing]
Girl 2: When we’re really, we’re so nice. [all girls express agreement] We’re like the nicest people.
Girl 1: We’re not even mean. [more agreement]

The Samoan youths offered suggestions about countering the negative stereotypes and discriminatory behavior of peers and teachers. However, the Samoan youths’ explanations suggested that they are burdened by the need to excel and disprove the stereotype:

Boy 1: Shame. . . . A lot of people they make us look bad. Like the Samoan kids, so irritating those guys, but that’s not what we’re all about yeah, that’s why. Samoan. Well I, I don’t know. I wasn’t raised like that, so.
Facilitator: Well how come you think people think that way?
Boy 1: It shows other people what we [emphasizes “we”] are. If they see us out there acting like animals, then they think we are animals too. And then when other kids, like good kids, you know they’re good kids, they just come out, and then the people that, like they know about this, like us, how we treat them like animals. They think, “oh, we should treat these guys like animals,” you know. And they never even get to know ‘em. They just judge right there and then.
Boy 2: Yeah, like they see Samoans fighting, so then whenever they see Samoans around campus, then they treat ‘em bad, they wanna do something, yeah. So they judge ‘em even before they get to know ‘em. [agreement expressed by group]
Facilitator: What other sort of reputation do you think the Samoans have to the people [think]. . . And then why do you think they have that?
Boy 1: A lot of people, they think Samoans are stupid.
Boy 2: That’s false, that’s totally false. [meaning Samoans are not stupid]
Boy 1: I don’t know why, but, how do you say that? I don’t know what I was thinking. I guess because of our actions and stuff [agreement expressed by group] I guess, the actions we do, I guess they think they’re stupid.
Facilitator: Can you give an example, so I can understand a little bit better?
Boy 1: Oh, like in class, a couple of people who like just fool, like mostly Samoan, or whatever, they just fool around in class. And that’s why like other people think of them now as stupid like, they don’t like take ‘em seriously and stuff, in school things. That’s why they call ‘em stupid.
DISCUSSION

The goal of the research was to understand the role of ethnoculture in YV (and specifically for this article, TDV) to ensure that prevention and intervention strategies meet the needs of Pacific youth in Hawai‘i. Results suggest that before specific YV content can be addressed, it is important to acknowledge the existence of underlying tensions and the extent to which violence stereotypes may exist across the ethnocultural groups participating in the intervention. Accordingly, focus group data related to culture were analyzed for emergent themes. It became evident that all three ethnocultural groups expressed a variety of negative stereotypes regarding ethnicity and race. In particular, Samoans were perceived as violent aggressors. Whereas Samoan youths acknowledged the presence of this negative stereotype, they also expressed a sense of duty to avoid reinforcing it.

This ethnocultural stereotype—Samoans as violent aggressors—was also found in a prior study conducted 10 years ago (Mayeda et al., 2001), thus demonstrating the insidious nature of prejudice and discrimination, and the need to incorporate this reality into prevention programming. The goal of prevention is to reduce risk factors and improve/increase protective factors. However, what are considered risk and protective factors may differ across ethnocultural groups. For example, Godinet and Vakalahi (2008) considered a variety of theories to explain delinquency among Samoan youths, and explored these through interviews with Samoan youths, as well as their parents. Structural factors, such as living in an impoverished community, were found to be risks, as is the case for many Samoan youths in Hawai‘i; whereas participation in community activities, particularly those linked with the church, were protective. On the other hand, they noted, “Because Samoan families are extremely close and live in close proximity to their extended families, and defending the family and respecting one’s friends are cultural expectations, a youth may more readily adhere to peer pressure because his or her peers are actually family members and friends” (p. 344). In this sense, Samoan youths may have difficulty in disengaging from contexts of peer-mediated violence at school or in the community.

This is but one example. Certainly other risk and protective factors with corresponding negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination may be more salient when considering Filipino, Native Hawaiian, and other ethnocultural groups. Therefore, YV prevention programs in multicultural populations that do not account for diverse risk and protective factors, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination may have differential impact, depending on the ethnic composition of the youths who attend. In the case of Samoan as violent aggressor stereotype, it may be that Samoan youths gain the least from the program because they may feel defensive about discussing violence-related topics, and therefore, do not
fully participate in program activities. Or, worse, youths could potentially suffer iatrogenic effects if they feel targeted for their “perceived” violent tendencies.

Given the level of diversity in Hawai‘i, and the adversity faced by certain groups, ethnoculturally specific and multicultural components must be considered in prevention programming. Unfortunately, no “name-brand” evidence-based program has been demonstrated to be effective with NHOPI/AA adolescents, let alone tailored for them, primarily because such programs have not been implemented with these groups specifically (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence’s Blueprints on Violence, 2010; Hahn et al, 2007; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2010; Rehuher, Hiramatsu, & Helm, 2008; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2010). While all communities are unique, some lessons can be learned from the APIYVPC research with Pacific youths, which can be applied when conducting YV prevention in other heterogeneous communities.

Culturally Adapted versus Culturally Grounded Prevention

Of contemporary concern in youth prevention and intervention is the use of evidence-based practices (Rehuher et al., 2008), and the degree to which these practices have been sufficiently developed and tested among diverse groups (Resnicow, Baranowski, Ahluwalia, & Braithwaite, 1999). One way to think about this concern is the extent to which evidence-based practices are culturally adapted or culturally grounded (defined below; Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004). However, the issue is not whether culturally adapted programs are effective with cultural populations for whom they were not originally designed, as previous research has shown success in achieving stated health outcomes with culturally adapted programs. Rather, by using culturally adapted programs, community-based and population-based knowledge, wisdom, and experience are not given prominence, and are often disregarded (Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Smith, 1999). Culturally adapted interventions are (implicitly or explicitly) designed around one culture’s core values and beliefs, and then modified to fit a new cultural group. The integrity of the original program is maintained (aka fidelity), but to make it feasible for the new culture, the surface structure is changed (e.g., changing words, such as “house” to “hale” [Hawaiian]), or cultural matching of the program facilitator and the target group is facilitated (Resnicow et al., 1999).

Conversely, to maintain the integrity of the cultural population for whom the program is designed, interventions must be culturally grounded (i.e., the program must be based on the deep structure of the culture). This deep structure requires macro-cultural adherences to “the cultural, social,
historical, environmental, and psychological forces that influence the target health behavior in the proposed target population” (Resnicow et al., 1999, p.12). In ethnically marginalized groups, deep structure includes experiences of race and class prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism, and stereotyping. Given the results of the current study, we argue for prevention programming that incorporates deep-structure, culturally grounded (versus surface-structure, culturally adapted) strategies.

Implications for Practice

Despite the fact that Samoan youths shared many insights about YV and TDV in confidential, small, ethnic-specific groups, it may be difficult for them to explore these issues among a diverse group of peers. Samoan youths expressed a need to resist the stereotype, and therefore may be disinclined to share actual stories of violence in multiethnic peer groups. At the community level, program design must consider the extent to which the implementation setting is depicted by multiculturalism (e.g., U.S. public schools), or a more ethnic-specific setting (e.g., community and faith-based programs). Therefore, prevention educators and social work professionals need to gauge the appropriateness of using culturally adapted evidence-based programs, or whether culturally grounded approaches would be better. The current study exemplifies that in the case of violence prevention in Hawai‘i, cultural adaptations of the surface structure would be insufficient to address negative stereotyping and discrimination.

In designing a culturally grounded program, developers emphasize a single culture’s epistemology. This would be appropriate for homogeneous implementation settings. However, in the case of school-based prevention, we need to implement multicultural deep-structure programs. Therefore, we suggest that “culture” explicitly structures the foundation of the program. That is to say, culture can be integrated as a core component of prevention activities by borrowing from the pedagogy used in multicultural training programs. These programs include not only a discussion of how cultures are similar and unique, but also emphasize the silencing effect that interethnic conflict, ethnocultural stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism have on cultural groups. The goal is to voice these issues in developmentally appropriate ways to promote safe school and community contexts in which adolescents can have healthy relationships and where violence is prevented.

For example, in addition to the current article’s findings, other qualitative research conducted locally has emphasized the importance of considering ethnoculture in school programming. In one local high school, an Ethnic Studies course has become standardized educational practice (Strong-Makaiau, 2010). What began as a pilot project after school in 2005 as a way for youths to explore personal self and ethnic identity has become
a required course for incoming ninth-grade students as part of the school’s commitment to multicultural education and violence prevention. In terms of adolescent identity exploration, an aim of the class, and a focus of the qualitative study, results regarding ethnic stigma indicated, “the various stigma associated with particular ethnic groups in Hawai‘i not only factor into the adolescent’s identity construction process, but also contribute to the perpetuation of social, political or economic inequality for many of the groups in this study” (p. 293). As a result of individualized identity formation in this school’s multicultural context, the Ethnic Studies course can help youths shift from inflexible to flexible ethnocentrism, which may result in improved perspective taking, and reductions in negative stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Matsumoto & Juang, 2004).

There are corresponding implications for research endeavors, not only methodologically but also philosophically (Schwandt, 2008; Trimble & Fisher, 2006; Smith, 1999). Voices and actions of youths and elder community leaders can prioritize essential historical experiences and cultural values that are salient for effective interventions (Fisher & Ragsdale, 2006; Kawakami et al., 2008; Trimble & Fisher, 2006; Smith, 1999). Therefore, prior to implementing such endeavors, preliminary research should be conducted to identify the ways the issue is conceptualized within the target population. In this way, deep structural issues can become embedded in the program design. To achieve deep structure, programming must utilize participatory approaches more often. This is especially important for working with discriminated, stereotyped, and marginalized groups, as is the case with much of social work practice (Freire, 1993; Horton & Freire, 1991; Israel, Eng, Schulz, & Parker, 2005; Schwandt, 2008). Authentic participatory models are not employed simply as a precursor, but iteratively within a research and action agenda, including through the dissemination phase.

An example of a participatory approach to YV prevention that we are using in our work is the development of a “train-the-trainer” TDV curriculum. The idea of “train-the-trainer” (ThT) is not new. Rather, many academic disciplines, community organizations, and private industry are pursuing this approach in their work. ThT benefits prevention science through an environment in which co-learning occurs between researchers-trainers and community stakeholders-trainees. This collaboration leads to better translation of science to practice, as well as practice to science. ThT benefits the community when community members are equal partners, and as such their input is integral to the process. Community knowledge and experience are incorporated into a curriculum that will be used to train others in their community. In this way, as more community members are trained to implement YV and TDV prevention programming, members become more invested, community capacity built, and
the integrity of the prevention program to the cultural population is maintained.

Study Limitations

The research presented here represents important pilot data regarding the contexts in which YV and TDV occurs. However, the extent to which the ethnocultural stereotypes that were expressed across each of the nine groups interviewed would be consistent in a larger sample of students from other schools is not known. Additional research is needed to determine whether these findings can be replicated and generalized.

The current study was exploratory, with results indicating that ethnocultural stereotypes exist. However, the link between these stereotypes and risk and protective factors for YV or TDV has yet to be determined. It is important to note that the goal of this research was not to link stereotyped attitudes with risk for YV or TDV, but rather to elucidate themes that could impact prevention programming. Future research is needed to understand this link, for example, by using in-depth individual interviews, survey techniques, and participatory approaches.

CONCLUSION

In the case of violence prevention in Hawai‘i, it is important to acknowledge that ethnic stereotyping continues to exist regarding perceptions of who commits violence. When selecting a prevention strategy, a dynamic balance must be reached between the integrity of the research and the integrity of the population. The current study speaks to a dilemma in which researchers must juxtapose these two types of integrity. The solution may be in the use of participatory approaches which necessitate the shared presence and responsibility of academic-community research and action teams in developing effective programs that mutually honor the science and the deep structure of targeted populations.

REFERENCES


