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# Fighting for Her Honor: Girls' Violence in Distressed Communities

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## Abstract

Since the 1980s, delinquency researchers and urban ethnographers have increasingly placed girls' violence in the center of their inquiries. Within recent scholarship, there are several looming questions such as how much of girls' violence is shaped by the same forces motivating violent boys and how much is shaped by concerns unique to girls. This study draws on data from a 6-year qualitative study of violence among Pacific Islander high school students in Hawaii. We explore how girls' violence attends to gender as well as to the rampant economic, racial, ethnic, and political dislocations that threatened family survival in adolescents' communities.

## Keywords

female violence, community distress, gender, ethnographic research, multiple inequalities

## Introduction

Up until the 1980s, the community distress and violence literature focused explicitly or implicitly on young men and their violent quests to “be somebody” in communities in which conventional opportunities for success are few and far between. Indeed, a conceptual line can be traced from classic criminological statements about gangs and street corner boys (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1957; Miller, 1958; Shaw, 1930; Shaw & McKay, 1942) to contemporary analyses of marginalized boys' and young men's violent quests for respect and autonomy. For decades, marginalized males have been seen in similar ways: as emphasizing trouble, toughness, and autonomy (Miller, 1958); projecting a “tough guy” or “street” image (Oliver, 1984; Wilkinson,

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2001); cleaving to a “compulsive masculinity” (Oliver, 1984); striving to become “badasses” (Katz, 1988); and using violence to display their “nerve” or “juice,” and to seek retaliation against those who harm them (Anderson, 1999). In essence, violence has historically been seen as a resource for men to accomplish their masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993, 1997) in locations ravaged by poverty, race-based segregation and demoralization, and the rampant failure and underfunding of civic institutions meant to serve inner-city residents.

Despite a long-standing male bias, researchers examining violence and community distress in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s have increasingly focused on girls. Despite the effort to place girls’ experiences at the center of attention, the historic masculine bias presents lingering challenges. One challenge is that femininity has not been framed in terms that allow for an easy coupling between femininity and violence for girls. As Heimer and De Coster (1999) note, traditional femininity has been associated with traits such as “a high capacity for nurturance, a tendency toward passivity rather than aggressiveness, and physical and emotional weakness” (p. 282) as well as “sexual discretion, sociability (rather than competition) . . . and submissiveness” (De Coster & Heimer, 2006, p. 145). Within this traditional understanding of femininity, “violence is generally considered femininity’s polar opposite” (Jones, 2010, p. 76). The seeming contradiction between traditional femininity and violence means that contemporary researchers have had to grapple with some common challenges, including how violent girls contend with traditional femininity proscriptions at the same time that girls, like their male counterparts, struggle for survival at the axis of multiple inequalities.

Researchers of girls’ violence have addressed the applicability of femininity proscriptions and girls’ struggles against multiple inequalities in different ways. Looking at the contemporary girls’ violence and community distress literature, there are at least three traditions, including the emergence of a resilient femininity thesis (Jones, 2004, 2008, 2010; Leitz, 2003; Ness, 2004, 2010), an emphasis on patriarchy in violent girls’ lives (Artz, 1998, 2004; Artz, Nicholson, & Magnuson, 2008; Batchelor, Burman, & Brown, 2001; Burman, Brown, & Batchelor, 2003; Brown, 2003; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Morash & Chesney-Lind, 2009; Schaffner, 2006), and a gender convergence/divergence tradition (Miller, 2001; Miller & Mullins, 2006, 2009). While presented here as distinct, these contemporary perspectives in fact intersect in important ways. For example, most researchers agree that gender matters for violent girls growing up in communities in which racial, class, and political alienation present formidable challenges to all residents.

The importance of gender inequalities as well as intersections of racial, ethnic, class, and political alienation for violent girls came to the fore during a 6-year qualitative study of violence among Pacific Islander high school students, most of whom were Native Hawaiian and Samoan. By looking at violent Pacific Islander girls and their experiences in schools, peer groups, and families, we attempt to broaden the explanations of girls’ violence. More specifically, we take into account violent girls’ gender identity constructions, their attempts to gain respect, and the ways that girls’

lives are organized by gender in communities in which everyone was struggling to survive.

## Girls' Violence and Community Distress

As noted previously, there are at least three contemporary paradigms in the girls' violence and community distress literature, including the resilient femininity thesis, the patriarchal systems approach, and the gender convergence/divergence perspective. Although these perspectives intersect in fundamental ways, they also offer slightly different examinations of the connections between gender inequalities and racial, ethnic, class, and political alienation in distressed communities.

Resilient femininity scholars focus on the applicability of traditional femininity proscriptions for girls in distressed locations. Scholars in this tradition (Jones, 2004, 2008, 2010; Leitz, 2003; Ness, 2004, 2010) highlight the idea that girls growing up in communities confronting numerous interlocking oppressions can reject<sup>1</sup> or resist (Leitz, 2003) dominant gender discourses and craft race- and class-specific versions of femininity (Jones, 2004, 2008, 2010; Leitz, 2003; Ness, 2004, 2010). On this topic, Ness (2004) writes, "Femininity as constructed by mainstream culture . . . is selectively appropriated alongside values that more closely fit [girls'] lives" (p. 37). Jones (2010) argues that violent girls "make sense of their struggle to survive in today's inner city by becoming all about fighting" (p. 76). In fact, Jones' (2010) focal concern has been to articulate the idea that some inner-city African American girls, like their male counterparts, use violence as a street survival strategy. Jones (2010), however, notes that because of the association between masculinity and street violence, which she calls the masculinity/violence dialectic, violent girls cannot rely on violence to achieve their sense of womanhood.

Scholars advancing the resilient femininity thesis place girls' struggle for survival in dislocated communities in the palpable foreground of their work. Despite this strength, violent and resilient girls and their mothers (Ness, 2010) are seen as particularly street involved. In addition, gender inequalities within girls' family and school lives remain outside of the main focus of this literature (see Pasko, 2011).<sup>2</sup> These limitations are addressed in the patriarchal systems approach.

The patriarchy and girls' violence tradition pivots around two focal concerns: addressing gender hierarchies in girls' lives and girls' particular vulnerability to victimization. Regarding gender hierarchies, researchers forefront the idea that girls' violence stems from girls' legitimate anger at their disadvantaged position compared with males. For example, Brown (2003) argues that many female fights stem from girls' anger at "the range of injustices and indignities girls experience in their everyday lives" (p. 17). The injustices she notes include a pervasive exposure to ideologies that support the subservience and dependence of girls and the dominance and autonomy of boys (see also Artz, 1998, 2004, 2005; Artz et al., 2008; Campbell, 1984). Morash and Chesney-Lind (2009) argue that girls' fighting is usually over gender-specific labels such as "slut," "bitch," or "dyke" (see also Campbell, 1984; Batchelor

et al., 2001; Burman et al., 2003). Here, violent girls are said to enact a type of horizontal violence (Freire, 1970/1993) by taking out their anger on other girls, rather than targeting the gender inequalities that place them at a disadvantage compared with males.

Another focal concern in the patriarchy and girls' violence perspective is the idea that violent girls have been disproportionately exposed (as victims and witnesses) to violence, especially sexual violence, compared with their male counterparts. Artz (1998, 2004; Artz et al., 2008), for example, notes the high rates of violent girls' exposure to male-on-female physical and sexual violence at home (see also Schaffner, 2006). Also, Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) argue that girls join gangs as a way of coping with family abuse. Furthermore, the girls' and gangs' literature highlights the idea that the high rates of family abuse and oppressive patriarchal conditions at home mark girls' entry into gangs, while sexual victimization by gang members and romantic partners is a hallmark of girls' experiences in the gang (Campbell, 1984; Joe-Laidler & Hunt, 1997; Miller, 2001; Moore, 1991; Portillos, 1999).

In addition to tracing the gender-specific motivations for girls' violence, patriarchal perspectives also highlight the outcomes of girls' violence. The historic connection between masculinity and violence means that violent girls are often punished harshly for their gender norm violations (Alder, 1998; Batchelor et al., 2001; Burman et al., 2003; Chesney-Lind & Jones, 2010). Also, as Artz et al. (2008) note, girls' aggression (or violence) is performed in such a way as to keep "male dominance and dominant males in place" (p. 281; see also Artz, 2005).

By addressing patriarchy, several facets of girls' violence come to light, including the consequences of violence for girls. Despite this, many scholars offering a patriarchal approach have had difficulty paying equal attention to gender inequalities as well as to racial, ethnic, political, and class alienation in the lives of girls growing up in distressed communities.

Convergence/divergence researchers are perched to fill several explanatory gaps. For example, in her work on girls in gangs, Miller (2001, p. 10) offers a thesis in which racial, class, and political alienation as well as gender can be seen as framing girls' violence. Miller notes that gender's "significance is variable" and that "in some instances, gender is not the salient, motivating factor" in girls' crime. She suggests that some female violence is influenced by gender and some "likely results from the same factors that motivate men," including considerable race and class oppression (see also Miller & Mullins, 2006, 2009; Simpson, 1989, 1991).

The convergence/divergence theme has become dominant in contemporary treatments of girls' delinquency (and violence), as highlighted in Zahn's (2009) edited volume, *The Delinquent Girl*. The gender convergence/divergence stance suggests that paying attention to gender allows for a "re-conceptualizing" (see Heimer & De Coster, 1999) of mainstream criminological theories about girls' delinquency (including their violence). In the convergence/divergence perspective, the core and well-established etiological domains (i.e., family, school, peer group, and neighborhood) influence both boys' and girls' delinquency (and violence). Feminist analyses,

however, alter traditional crime causation perspectives by examining how gender inequalities shape girls' "life experiences and life chances" (Miller & Mullins, 2009, p. 34). Therefore, gender, as researchers argue, needs to be "at the center of our inquiries" (Miller & Mullins, 2009, p. 34). More specifically, the gender organization within family, peers, schools, and communities suggests that the pathways to delinquency for girls and boys will vary.

Despite the advantages, the convergence/divergence perspective remains, in some ways, a theoretical imperative that has yet to be fully fleshed out with empirical research. Miller and Mullins (2009, p. 45) point to this gap when they argue that the literature has mostly addressed how gender contributes to the etiological pathways to delinquency, but that "less work has had the scope required to address gendered lives." By gendered lives, Miller and Mullins mean the "significant differences in the ways that women [and girls] experience society compared with men [and boys]" (Daly, 1998, quoted in Miller & Mullins, 2009, p. 45).

It is not so much that each of these three perspectives cannot pay attention to multiple concerns, including addressing the relevance of traditional femininity for lower-class girls of color, girls' struggle for survival in dislocated communities, the historic masculinity/violence dialectic, or the topic of gendered lives. The concern is that, to date, much of the research has not had a wide enough scope to highlight several facets of girls' violence at once.

This study attempts to fill some gaps in the literature by offering a somewhat wide view of violent girls' experiences. Our main focus is to explain Native Hawaiian and Samoan girls' gendered experiences in this study; but we also pay close attention to how gender inequalities combine with racial, ethnic, class, and political alienation in the everyday lives of girls growing up in dislocated communities.

## **Study Background and Setting**

In 2005, the authors embarked on what would become a 6-year ethnographic study of youth violence in two communities on Oahu, Hawaii. The project began when researchers at the Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center (the API Center) at the University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine and key stakeholders from two communities collaborated on a grant application to the Centers for Disease Control (the CDC). The grant was designed to fund a university–community collaboration and to conduct research and build community-based violence prevention initiatives. Noting that Samoan and Native Hawaiian teens in Hawaii are disproportionately arrested for violence and are, along with Filipinos, disproportionately in the juvenile justice system because of violence (Kassebaum et al., 1995a, 1995b), a primary focus of this grant application was to build violence prevention programs for Samoan, Native Hawaiian, and Filipino adolescents.

Understanding that social scientists have defined violence in different ways (see also Brown, 2005; author citation; Stanko, 2003), the first author designed a qualitative study as a small part of the overall university–community partnership. The focus

of the qualitative study was to give adolescents and adults a chance to define and describe youth violence in their own terms and to identify what they felt were the primary problems facing adolescent girls and boys in their ethnic and geographic communities. There was considerable agreement across teen focus groups and interviews that violence included physical fights and occasions when individuals physically hurt someone else on purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Community adults expressed several concerns that the research stemming from the project might present the two neighborhoods in the study as more violent than other dislocated neighborhoods on Oahu. Indeed, these two communities were not selected because they were particularly crime prone or blighted; instead, these communities were selected because of long-standing working relationships between community leaders and API Center researchers. Despite this, it is important to understand the demographic profiles of the two communities and schools in the study as a general background.

Stevens Heights,<sup>4</sup> one of the two neighborhoods included in this study, fits Shaw and McKay's (1942) classic image of a disadvantaged community. Stevens Heights is a high-density, diverse, low-income, and high-crime neighborhood resting on the edge of downtown Honolulu. In fact, Stevens Heights is one of the poorest and most heterogeneous neighborhoods on Oahu and, Stevens Heights' crime rate was three times higher than Honolulu's in 2007 (Fuatagavi & Perrone, 2008). The second neighborhood, Northward, is a rural, working-class, and predominantly Native Hawaiian community. Although it is a higher income neighborhood than Stevens Heights, there are many pockets of extreme poverty in Northward. Also, despite its bucolic character, Northward's violent crime rate was twice as high as Honolulu's in 2007 (Fuatagavi & Perrone, 2008).

The public high schools serving Stevens Heights and Northward reflected these two communities in terms of ethnic diversity, poverty, and crime. Cleveland High School in Stevens Heights was a relatively large public high school and had a mix of Filipino (approximately 50%) and Pacific Islander (24%) students (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2008). Seaside High School in Northward was a little more than half the size of Cleveland during the 2006-2007 school year, and approximately half the Seaside student body was full- or part-Native Hawaiian (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2008). Filipino and Samoan students (combined) made up approximately 10% of Seaside's enrollment<sup>5</sup> (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2008). Approximately half of Cleveland's and Seaside's students received free or reduced cost lunch in 2006-2007 (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2008), and there were, on average, eight student suspensions per week at each school in the 2006-2007 school year (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2008).

## **Data Collection**

We collected three types of data during this study, including 16 focus group interviews, participant observations with 10 students, and in-depth interviews with 11

**Table 1.** Data Sources and Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Data type	Number of participants	Gender	Ethnicities
6 adult focus groups <sup>a</sup>	41	18 women, 23 men	20 Native Hawaiian; 21 Samoan
10 student focus groups <sup>a</sup>	45	21 girls, 24 boys	18 Native Hawaiian; 16 Samoan; 11 Filipino
Student interviews	25	10 girls, 15 boys	15 Native Hawaiian; 3 Samoan; 3 mixed Asian; 2 White; 1 Latino; 1 mixed Pacific Islander
High school staff interviews	11	5 women, 6 men	5 Native Hawaiian; 1 Portuguese; 1 mixed Asian; 4 White
Observations of students	10	6 girls, 4 boys	7 Native Hawaiian; 2 Samoan; 1 other Pacific Islander
Total students	80	37 girls, 43 boys	40 Native Hawaiian; 21 Samoan; 11 Filipino; 3 mixed Asian; 2 White; 1 Latino; 1 mixed Pacific Islander; 1 other Pacific Islander
Total participants	132	60 female, 72 male	65 Native Hawaiian; 42 Samoan; 11 Filipino; 4 Mixed Asian; 6 White; 1 Latino; 1 Portuguese; 1 mixed Pacific Islander; 1 other Pacific Islander

<sup>a</sup>Focus groups participants were split equally between Northward and Stevens Heights.

high school staff members and 25 high school students. Using all three of these methods, we collected data with 132 participants, 80 of whom were high school students (see Table 1).

During the initial phase of the study (2005-2007), we conducted 16 focus groups with community parents and high school students.<sup>6</sup> The close working relationships between API Center researchers and community leaders helped all aspects of our study, especially during focus group recruitment. In one school, the principal allowed us to approach students directly to ask if students wanted to be included in the study. Community residents were equally helpful and introduced us to adults and teens in their neighborhoods who they felt would be interested in participating in focus groups. After conducting a few focus groups with students and adults, we used snowball-sampling techniques (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) to recruit other adults and high school students. Although we did not target violent students for focus group participation, during group discussions at least 90% of students noted being friends with another

student who had been in a fight, and nearly 50% of students self-reported having been in at least one fight during high school.

Regarding participant observation, the authors were allowed extensive access to everyday school and community activities. In fact, as API Center employees, our work entailed working side by side with high school staff, students, and community adults on dozens of violence prevention initiatives. Our work allowed us to become active members in the schools and communities (Adler & Adler, 1987). As active members, we spent hundreds of hours attending monthly meetings (school committee meetings, teacher coffee hours, community consortium meetings, and neighborhood and education board meetings), as well as semiregular events (high school rally days, training sessions for school staff and students, women's empowerment group meetings, and dinner and movie nights at one high school).

Institutional review board guidelines restricted us from writing field notes about individuals without their written consent. Gaining written consent from members attending events would have disrupted the work flow of each project. Thus, our observations contributed to our tacit knowledge of violence in these communities, and this tacit knowledge was later deepened during focus groups and interviews. We were allowed to take field notes about public employees during public meetings (e.g., neighborhood, educational, and legislative board meetings), and we wrote these notes during and after such meetings.

Starting in 2007, the first author and other API Center staff<sup>7</sup> were invited to join weekly group counseling meetings for at-risk high school students.<sup>8</sup> Forty-two students participated in these groups, with a new group of seven girls and seven boys participating each year. Approximately 90% of the counseling group students had been in fights on campus and/or reported struggling with "acting out" and other anger management problems at school. The first author also helped organize and attended dozens of field trips, camping excursions, and other counseling group activities. The first author was allowed to take field notes after receiving written consent from counseling group students and their parents. These field notes were written as soon as possible after spending time with students.

Regarding interviews, the first author (with other API Center researchers) conducted in-depth interviews with 11 high school staff members and 25 students from the counselor-led groups. We used theoretical sampling techniques (Charmaz, 2006) to identify the key staff members to include in the study, meaning that we identified all the different school staff members who encountered and interacted with violent students (per students' definitions of violence being physical fights and intentional physical acts meant to hurt others). The 11 high school staff members were fairly easy to recruit, given that by the time the interviews were initiated (2008), the authors and many other API Center staff were known in both communities and schools; thus, we simply asked these staff members to conduct interviews and all agreed.

Regarding recruiting interviews with students from the counselor-led groups, the first author and other API Center staff members approached the students in the groups to ask if they would be interested in being interviewed. The first author (and other API

Center staff members) interacted with these students once a week and developed considerable rapport over time, making recruitment relatively easy. There were 10 students whom the first author received permission to observe, but who did not participate in interviews.<sup>9</sup>

We used identical interview guides for the focus groups and the one-on-one interviews, relying primarily on open-ended questions about the meanings, definitions, and nature of youth violence for boys and girls in their communities and schools. We also prefaced each interview and focus group with the idea that we wanted to discover their views and definitions of violence. Although a guide was used, interviews and focus groups evolved in a conversational format, allowing participants to bring up facets of gender and violence that were not included in the guide. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews lasted between 45 and 90 min and were conducted in an empty classroom or community meeting room. All of the focus groups and in-depth interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

## Data Analysis

We had three objectives in our data analysis. First, we wanted to be systematic; second, we wanted to generate thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the everyday lives or “life worlds” (see Artz, 2004) of violent girls; third, given several recent developments in urban (Anderson, 1999; Burawoy, 1991; Jones, 2010; Wacquant, 2004), feminist (Kuschner & Morrow, 2003; Wuest, 1995), critical (Fine, 1991, 1994; **JAQ: 21**; Fine & Weis, 2005; Foley & Valenzuela, 2005), and indigenous ethnography (Smith, 1999, 2005; Tengan, 2008), we wanted to be attuned to the ways in which relations of power (see Kuschner & Morrow, 2003) impinged on the everyday experiences of study members.

Our desire to be systematic and to deeply investigate the everyday realities of girls’ lives led us to borrow from the data analysis techniques articulated by grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We input all written data (e.g., transcripts and field notes) into NVivo 8. While using NVivo 8, the two authors conducted open or initial coding to identify emerging conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2006). During the initial coding phase, we offered a “gender and violence” code, and soon enormous amounts of data were being coded as “gender and violence.” This required both authors to use constant comparative techniques (see Charmaz, 2006) to compare and contrast girls’, boys’, and adults’ narratives.

At this point, the first author developed focused codes (Charmaz, 2006) to tease out the specific dynamics in girls’ violence. For example, girls’ and boys’ narratives especially demonstrated that respect meant something different for girls than it did for boys. Girls noted that they engaged in fights after being called a “slut,” a “whore,” or a “hoochie” (fighting for sexual virtue). Others said that they fought when someone “flirted” or “got with” their boyfriend (fighting for romance), and many girls said that they fought with girls who “irked them out” and with girls who were sexually

promiscuous, too loud, too passive and quiet, too gossipy, or too focused on boys, earning serious disrespect and sometimes beatings from other girls (denigrating girls).

After identifying these initial core themes, the first author wrote analytic memos (Charmaz, 2006) to connect study themes to larger structural inequalities that framed girls' family, community, peer, and school contexts. Consistent with the goals of feminist grounded theorists (Kuschner & Morrow, 2003; Wuest, 1995), we wanted to remain sensitive to multiple "indicators of marginalization" (Rickards & Wuest, 2006, p. 532). At school and in peer groups, girls' anger and violence seemed to be connected to prevailing sexual double standards, a boy-centered peer culture, and pervasive condemnation of girls and femininity among adolescents. Also during memo writing, girls' families emerged as the core category in which gender proscriptions, gender inequalities, as well as racial, ethnic, and class alienation especially impinged on girls' lives. The themes associated with girls' family (female work, family survival, and female resilience), therefore, were important factors to consider before investigating the peer and school contexts in which girls' violence occurred.<sup>10</sup>

## **Fighting for Female Honor**

Violent girls in Northward and Stevens Heights simultaneously conformed to and dissented from traditional models of femininity. The girls were often loud and assertive and wanted to establish themselves as people who would not "take shit" from others. While the girls rejected some aspects of traditional femininity, such as being demure and passive, they aspired to achieve other aspects, such as being sexually restrained and romantically attached to boys. For the girls, "not taking shit" meant not backing down if their sexual restraint or romantic attachment to boys was threatened. In addition, some girls physically punished others who deviated from feminine codes governing girls' virtue and honor. In many ways, the girls' models for toughness and resilience began at home. Looking at girls' family lives especially reveals the ways that girls struggled with their mothers for survival against difficult odds and the complex ways in which family socialization played a role in girls' violence.

## ***Women, Girls, and Family Survival***

In 1901, W. E. B. Du Bois reflected on the persisting injustices confronting African Americans after slavery and wrote that among African Americans, there was "a stress of life greater than a large part of the community can bear" (Du Bois, 1901/2002, p. 88). There was certainly "a stress of life more than most community members can bear" in Northward and Stevens Heights, but there were also resilient women and girls capable of holding communities and families together.

One might aptly say that study participants' family lives revealed the struggle for survival at the axis of ethnic, racial, class, political, and gender inequalities. Participants, however, never used terms such as "interlocking and multiple inequalities" (see Burgess-Proctor, 2006, p. 35). Instead, individuals vividly described everyday struggles, or what

might be called the stresses and strains (Broidy & Agnew, 1997; Katz, 2004; Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996) associated with managing the many challenges to family unity, including (but not limited to) drug and alcohol addiction, meager wages coupled with a high cost of living in Hawaii, family violence, illnesses in the family, the overincarceration of Pacific Islanders, teen parenting, and a glaring lack of community-based services.

Women's and girls' narratives revealed the fact that it was mothers, aunts, and grandmothers in Northward and Stevens Heights who kept families united, cared for, and functioning through a variety of upheavals. In fact, the high rate of incarceration among male Hawaiians and Samoans (Hawaii Department of Public Safety, 2008) also meant that sons, brothers, uncles, and fathers were separated from many families.<sup>11</sup> Women usually stepped in to fill the voids left by absent men. This meant that mothers commonly assumed multiple roles by acting as breadwinners, rule setters, disciplinarians, loving caretakers, and managers of domestic labor; they also delegated babysitting, cooking, and cleaning duties to daughters (see also Mayeda, Pasko, & Chesney-Lind, 2006). In addition, community norms favored treating neighbors as family, thus women's and girls' work extended well beyond the boundaries of their households.

*"It keeps going and going": Women's work and resilience.* To overcome the many upheavals and challenges to family unity, Stevens Heights and Northward women forged a type of femininity that was noteworthy for its outspoken, competent, and, above all else, resourceful characteristics. Commenting on the importance and centrality of women and especially women's work in the community, Nana, a Samoan mother, noted how much harder women worked than men. She said, "There's one Samoan word, it's an old Samoan word. The lady's working, it keeps on going and going. But if [a] man's doing some work, it's maybe two or three weeks and then they cannot even finish that. But the lady is still going and going." Mia, a Samoan teen,<sup>12</sup> discussed girls' work and status in the community. She said,

I think that some girls, they feel like ok, you [adults] always going for the boys. You pay more attention to the boys. Us girls, we get the second half. But, when they [i.e., the boys] are not there, it's we [the girls] the ones that move the tables away or we take the rubbish for them. Here, the boys don't do.

Considering the many family struggles mentioned in this study, women and girls were the ones who "moved tables," "took out rubbish," and managed any number of other domestic tasks necessary to keep families functioning as smoothly as possible (see also Mayeda & Pasko, 2011). Also, as Mia noted, boys have a special status in families. Boys "don't do" in that they are not required to manage the same domestic tasks as girls, and boys' troublemaking, carousing, and cruising (see Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995) often put them at the center of concern in families.

The counseling group students' experiences detailed the typical family challenges in these two communities. More importantly, their experiences revealed how female labor and female resilience were key resources. For example, many of the counseling group students described their parents' and their own struggles with drug and alcohol

addiction; three teens had been homeless (two living with a parent under a bridge and one living with his family in a tent on the beach); five students had been placed in multiple foster homes; two teens (one male and one female) described extensive family violence; four teens had a close family member who had recently passed away; two study members were teen parents; two girls discussed experiencing dating violence; and over half of the counseling group students had a family member who had been incarcerated.

Adult women, with daughters as their helpers, were at the forefront of managing these challenges. For example, when the state deemed a student's parents to be unfit due to drug addiction, homelessness, and/or family violence, it was the grandmothers or aunts who took custody of the children. The teen parents relied on sisters, mothers, and aunts to share child care duties. When a teen confronted arrest, incarceration of a parent, death in the family, drug addiction, or victimization, older sisters, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers consoled these youths and reached out to community resources for assistance, although most admitted that community-based services to help them were hard to come by. When a teen's father was incarcerated or suffered from substance abuse, families usually remained intact. In the two cases in which adolescents' mothers had been incarcerated and in the two cases in which teens' mothers were drug addicted, the state intervened and placed these children in foster care.

As Mia's comments illustrate, girls were expected to be their mothers' helpers in women's community and domestic work; therefore, girls were socialized early to take on their future role as the family cornerstone. Despite the fact that many adult women were well-respected matriarchs in both communities, Mia's comments that "us girls get the second half," and "here, boys don't do" highlighted a common sentiment among adolescent girls who were not pleased with their status in the family. Cassey, a Samoan girl, for example, told the first author that she was "tired of the boys always taking things from me." Cassey described much of her general frustration stemming from her home life, in which her father's incarceration, her grandmother's poor health, and the constant trouble that her brothers were in severely taxing her mother's resolve. In fact, Cassey was reluctant to talk with her mother about her feelings. She said, "She [her mother] worries too much and I don't like when she worries a lot. Yeah, I don't like to tell her everything." Cassey, therefore, managed her emotions on her own.

*Adolescent femininity, resilience, and violence.* Aspects of girls' violence can be partially understood as girls' reactions to their second-class status at home, as many girls in this study were angry at and upset by family upheavals, unequal division of labor, and the considerable attention given to boys in their families. As feminist scholars have consistently noted, violent girls are often angry at the injustices that they face and their violence can be seen as an outcrop of their legitimate anger about the many challenges in their lives.

Girls' violence, however, can also be seen as an adolescent interpretation (or misinterpretation) of the resourceful femininity modeled by adult women. During adult focus groups and interviews with school staff who were also parents, we learned that parents in this study, especially mothers, had conflicting views about girls' violence. Most (about

80%) of the mothers in the study consistently noted that they wanted their daughters to be strong, forceful, and to learn to stand up for themselves. Moreover, Miki, a Hawaiian mother of three girls, told us that she did not want her daughters to be “doormats.” The vision of resourceful femininity encouraged by mothers held mixed messages about girls and fighting. Parents did not want their daughters to fight frequently or become known as fighters, but they also did not want their daughters to be taken advantage of, put down, or disrespected. In the following excerpt, Miki, Gayle, and Stacey, three Native Hawaiian women, discuss the advice they gave to their daughters:

Miki: If someone puts you down, you gotta come back at them. Always expect the unexpected. That’s what I tell my kids.

Gayle: There has to be a reason. Not just for anything.

Miki: You don’t make the first hit, but when you walking away, you make sure your eyes behind your back, ‘cause anything could happen.

Stacey: My best friend’s mom would take her to fights. My mom would be yelling, “What the hell you doing over there?” I mean, she would take her to fights. And it was unbelievable.

Stacey’s account of her best friend’s mother served as a negative example and suggested that it was not acceptable to encourage and facilitate girls’ violence “just for anything.” Girls’ violence was, however, acceptable in some circumstances, namely, for girls to protect themselves (i.e., watch their backs) and “to come back at” insults, although women later suggested that they preferred girls to verbally, rather than physically, confront put-downs (see also Leitz, 2003). In other words, girls received mixed messages at home about female violence.

Most girls in this study who fought said that they initially tried to resolve disputes and “come back at” insults verbally, rather than physically. Also, all teens and school staff in this study noted that girls’ fights started with yelling matches. None of the teens in this study praised girls for verbally rather than physically attempting to resolve conflicts. Instead, in all of the cases when teens discussed girls’ fights, girls were denounced for their loudness and their failure to be as physical as boys. For example, almost all teens described violent girls as “screaming drama queens” who caused “scenes” around campus. Giles, a Filipino student, said that he was “more scared of girls’ fights than boys’ fights” because “girls are more vicious,” meaning that girls were loud and mean. JoJo, a Samoan student, said, “Girls, they just talk or yell. But boys, when they say they are going to fight, it’s actually action.” Tui, another Samoan student, enthusiastically added, “Girls, they just yell! They just yell!” In Northward and Stevens Heights, the stigma of “fighting like a girl” was applied to individuals who screamed and yelled. In contrast, fighting like a boy by kicking and punching was viewed as “real action.”

The story about girls’ violence does not end by uncovering how girls “got the second half in families” or how girls were simultaneously encouraged and discouraged to physically “come back at” anyone who put them down. Several aspects of these girls’ peer contexts provided the venues for girls’ anger, aggression, and their efforts to

manage impressions of themselves as worthy of respect by not “taking shit.” Girls confronted rigid sexual double standards, a boy-centered school culture in which girls came second to boys, and frequent condemnation and denigration of girls among peers. Each of these dimensions of girls’ peer groups and everyday lives in and out of school provided the immediate contexts for and the situational triggers leading up to much of girls’ violence.

### *Fighting for Sexual Virtue*

Almost all of the students, parents, and school staff stated that girls were as likely as boys to fight. When discussing why girls fight, most participants said that girls fight to protect their reputations. In fact, according to every teen in this study, high school fights were always about respect, with both boys and girls desiring peer respect so much that they fought anyone who significantly disrespected them. When asked why students fight, Julian, a Native Hawaiian student, said, “respect and pride issues, mostly respect.”

Although respect was a common theme underlying students’ fights, when discussing the contexts of violence among girls and boys, the majority of study participants, especially members of the counseling groups, argued that the boys and girls in this study fought for different types of respect. Boys told us that they were especially likely to fight if someone challenged their physical strength or heterosexual masculinity. Almost all of the boys said that being cast as someone who could not fight or being called “pansy,” “panty,” and “queer” were the worst insults they confronted. In other words, boys in this study, like boys in many disadvantaged contexts, fought to protect a sense of their hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Mayeda & Pasko, 2011), meaning that boys projected a type of masculinity noteworthy for its disdain for traits associated with femininity as well as male homosexuality.

Girls, however, told us that they were most likely to fight over gossip, rumors, or insults in which their sexual purity was questioned. The reason that girls fought to protect their sexual honor (i.e., their sexual virtue) was because the girls placed a premium on being perceived as being virgins or sexually monogamous and restrained.

Angel and Cassey discussed some of their favorite traits about themselves. Angel, a mixed-ethnic Pacific Islander adolescent, said that she was most proud of being a virgin. On this same topic, Cassey said, “Girls will give anything to their man. But not me, I will not give anything up. I’m still a virgin. I tell boys that I am not going to give that up to you.” Like many girls in this study, Angel and Cassey highlighted the fact that a girl’s virginity was something to be cherished and protected. In addition, Angel and Cassey were also known to have short tempers at school, and many of their fights were against girls who spread rumors that they had “gotten with” (had sex with) boys on campus.

Not all girls were like Angel and Cassey, whose pride was based on abstaining from sex. Approximately a third of girls in the study admitted to being sexually active within a monogamous relationship. Being a sexually honorable girl in this Hawaiian context, therefore, needs some explanation. Taking all of the girls’ comments about

sexual honor together, being a virtuous girl meant being a virgin or sexually monogamous, making one's romantic relationship a priority, warding off flirtation and sexual advances from other boys, and not wearing sexually provocative or "hoochie" clothing.<sup>13</sup> Given this feminine honor code, the term *slut* was one of the most serious and demeaning monikers among girls. In fact, when asked what the number one reason was for girls' fights, most students said "rumors," with rumors about girls' sexuality being the most common. Malia, Niki, and Jasmine, three Native Hawaiian students, discussed the tenor of inflammatory gossip about girls' sexuality:

Malia: Just like, "Oh look at that girl, she talking with him." "Oh look, I heard she did stuff with something."

Niki: "Oh, I heard she slept with the kine [person]." "Look who she stay with!"

Malia: I hate that! People don't mind their own business.

Jasmine: I think that makes school fun.

Malia: Drama. It's something to laugh at, 'cause it's like, that's so dumb. Why are you even, you know?

Adolescents' discussions of rumors revealed a sexual double standard in codes governing boys' and girls' behavior. As Lees (1997) argues, a girl's good name is often ruined if she experiments sexually; however, a "boy's sexual reputation is enhanced by experience" (p. 18; see also Orenstein, 1994). The same was true in this study.

While calling a girl a "slut" was considered a serious personal attack among all of the girls in the study, when several boys in the counseling groups were asked if they would consider it an insult to be called a slut, the boys giggled. Koa, a Native Hawaiian adolescent, commented proudly, "I AM a slut." In fact, throughout all the adolescent focus groups, interviews, and observations, it was clear that boys were never the target of rumors, gossip, or insults questioning their sexual purity if they were "talking with" a girl or "did stuff with" a girl.

Further illustrating the sexual double standards in these communities, adolescent boys in this study sometimes cheated on their girlfriends, and a few boys admitted to enjoying being cast as playboys and as "playing" girls (see also Miller, 2008). In this context, "playing a girl" was when boys aggressively romanced girls and promised, but ultimately did not deliver, monogamy. Julian described his romantic experiences:

I feel bad about it, but I know what girls want to hear. I've got older sisters, aunties, and my grandma, and I'm around girls all the time. I know what they want and what to tell 'em to get them to open their hearts. But after a while, I don't like 'em anymore. I get bored. It's bad, it's real bad. I want to find the right girl, but I get bored too easy.

Playing girls in this context was complex. Some boys in the study who were known as *players* said that they manipulated girls into giving what girls were reluctant to give (e.g., sex without a committed relationship). In other cases, like Julian's, short-lived

romances stemmed from a combination of initial romantic interest, some manipulation, and fickle emotions.

Girls from Northward and Stevens Heights who were deeply insulted when their sexual purity was questioned were not unique. Studies with girls and women from a variety of backgrounds point to a general female vulnerability, as Kelly (1993) writes, to being labeled “‘sluts,’ ‘hoes,’ (whores), [or] ‘prick teases’” (p. 137). As the literature suggests (Daniluk, 1993; Lees, 1986; Orenstein, 1994; Phillips, 2000; Stewart, 1999; Tolman, 2002), regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, girls and women generally try to avoid being labeled promiscuous, wanton, or otherwise sexually unrestrained.

What made violent girls in this study different from most nonviolent girls in these and other contexts was that, to protect their virtuous reputations, female fighters physically attacked other girls who questioned their sexual honor. The double standard denouncing girls if they had sex without long-term romantic commitment and praising or tolerating boys' sexual conquests set girls up to be angry. The direct target of girls' anger and sometimes violence, however, was not these prevailing sexual double standards. Girls who started or spread rumors disparaging girls' sexual honor were the immediate recipients of other girls' anger and, consequently, their violence (see also Artz, 1998, 2004; Artz et al., 2008; Batchelor et al., 2001; Brown, 2003; Burman et al., 2003; Morash & Chesney-Lind, 2009; Schaffner, 2006).

### *Fighting for Romance*

In addition to standing up to girls who cast doubts on other girls' sexual virtue, some girls also fought girls who threatened the first girl's place in romantic relationships (see also Adams, 1999; Batchelor et al., 2001; Burman et al., 2003; Miller & Mullins, 2006). For example, if a boyfriend “messed around” or flirted with another girl, a girlfriend usually blamed the other girl instead of her cheating boyfriend. Mara, Destiny, and Chevonne, three Native Hawaiian teens, described girls' fights motivated by cheating boyfriends:

Mara: So if there's a guy that cheated on the girl, the girl's gonna fight with the girl—the girl he cheated with—instead of, you know, just yelling at him.

Question: So, what is that for? What does that prove, do you think, for the girls?

Mara: Just stupid.

Destiny: I think it makes them feel better, that they beat up the girl.

Mara: And just to prove who's the better one.

Chevonne: And to tell them not to mess around with my boyfriend.

Destiny: But it's the boyfriend's fault.

Chevonne: So I don't know why they're taking it out on the girl.

Most adolescents were like Mara, Destiny, and Chevonne and thought it was “stupid” when girls confronted other girls instead of the cheating boyfriends. This seeming

irrationality contributed to a common sentiment expressed by most teens that violent girls were acting “stupid” or “dumb.”

Understanding why girls targeted other girls if their boyfriends cheated makes sense, however, when looking at how girls participate in and are disadvantaged by a culture of romance (Thorne, 1994). In our study, making boys and romance a priority was problematic, because most boys in this study did not return girls’ care and commitment, leaving girls feeling isolated and angry. Arlene, a Native Hawaiian student, for example, noted that she had a serious falling out with her best friend. The cause of the conflict was that her best friend “dumped her” for a boyfriend, meaning that her best friend was no longer spending much time with Arlene. Arlene described being heartbroken and was visibly distraught for weeks about this lost friendship. Mara also commented on the experience of being neglected by a close female friend and described why girls get angry at their friends, stating that “Friends get mad when like ‘oh let’s go out tonight’ and then she goes out with the boyfriend.”

Instead of valuing romantic attachments to girls, many boys in this study participated in what Anderson (1999) describes as alternative masculinities and a code of behavior in which masculine prowess was highly valued and femininity was considered threatening (see also Mayeda & Pasko, 2011). As a result, many boys in this study did not generally emphasize their connection to girls. In fact, about a third of the boys in this study downplayed the fact that they had girlfriends. As a few boys explained, girlfriends came and went and sometimes acted “dumb.” Instead of being identified by romantic relationships, all of the boys in this study were committed to their male friends. In the following excerpt, Aaron, Junior, and Shawn, three Native Hawaiian teens, described their views of girlfriends and friends:

Aaron: Some people keep it on the low, low, like they don’t want anyone to know [that they have a girlfriend]. I have a girlfriend, and no one needs to know. It’s between me and her ‘cause your friends always come before a girlfriend or a boyfriend. Your friends come first ‘cause they’ve always been there and stuff. If my girlfriend was acting dumb, I’d tell my friends like that.

And they’d be like, “What? She’s doing that?”

Question: Do you guys think the same thing? Do friends come before a girlfriend?

Junior: Dicks before chicks.

Shawn: Joes before hoes.

Most of the girls with boyfriends in this study devised several strategies to accommodate coming second to their boyfriends’ male friends, whom boys often called *their boys* or *the boys*. Girls sometimes adjusted to their marginal place by ingratiating themselves with their boyfriends’ friends by doting, to some degree, on these boys and maintaining an interest in their lives. Some girls even claimed that “the boys” were also “her boys.” The first author often overheard the counseling group girls talking about recent developments in the life of one of “her” boys, including confirming that a girlfriend of one of her boyfriends friends was “acting dumb.”

Boyfriends and their male networks could quickly become the center of girls' lives. In this context, a girl who flirted or cheated with another girl's boyfriend did not just challenge a girl's romantic relationship. The girl also threatened a girl's tenuous standing within male networks and a core aspect of a girl's identity (Adler, 2007). As Jones (2010) also notes, girls' fights for romance are not "all about the boy" (p. 97), but are about protecting one's reputation. But, it is important to place the notion of a girl's identity and reputation as someone's girlfriend in context.

In contexts in which boys garner more attention than girls, especially for their special status as males in their families (i.e., their freedom from domestic work) and as tough guys in their communities and schools, there are few opportunities for girls to become the center of attention in positive ways. In girls' worlds in Northward and Stevens Heights, being someone's girlfriend is a chance to "be somebody." Therefore, some girls will fight a girl who threatens a rare opportunity for female status.

### *Denigrating Girls*

In addition to upholding sexual double standards and being particularly boy-centered, peer groups in Northward and Stevens Heights also proffered norms and values in which girls were commonly condemned, denounced, and mocked. As a consequence, girls' violence can be partly understood as girls' participation in peer cultures in which girls are harshly judged and punished for their perceived shortcomings. In Northward and Stevens Heights, the denigration of girls was palpable in many ways. In at least 80% of the interviews and focus groups with boys, boys spoke about and described girls in condescending terms. For example, boys' references to girls as "chicks" or "hoes" corroborate the idea that girls did not rank high in some boys' esteem. The general devaluation of girls was also evident in the ways in which most girls in this study regularly spoke about girls. An examination of previous quotes in this article demonstrates that girls were often described as being "vicious," "loud," "drama queens," and "sluts," who "act dumb" and are "just stupid."

While boys' condemnation of girls came from the boys' attempts to cleave to a hypermasculine ethic in which femininity is threatening, girls' condemnation of girls is not explained as easily. Looking closely at contexts in which girls and femininity were devalued, it makes sense that, when frustrated and angry, girls targeted and blamed other girls for their negative feelings (see also Brown, 2003). Examining the many cases of girl-on-girl fighting in this study, we find two patterns. First, all the violent girls in this study admitted to speaking and striking out against other girls who were seen as breaking traditional femininity norms. As noted previously, girls who were viewed as "sluts" or "gossips" were often put down and even violently targeted by other girls. Second, there was also a tendency for girls to "call out" (i.e., challenge to a fight) other girls who broke community-specific norms governing respectable feminine behavior. Here, a girl who was "too meek," "too needy," "too boy centered," or "too disrespectful" of women was also seen as deserving a beating.

Regarding targeting girls who broke traditional femininity norms, Angel's story helps explain how this can unfold. When the first author asked what Angel felt was the biggest problem on campus, Angel forcefully argued, "Girls have no self-respect on this campus, for real. They wear hoochie clothing and show all their stuff to everyone. Someone has got to teach them how to respect themselves and not to go around looking like sluts." Months later, after Angel had been suspended several times for fighting, the first author asked her to describe how one of the fights started. Angel said, "These girls just irk me. I just don't like them. They get on my nerves. They dress like hoes, to begin with. So one day I told one of them 'you look like a hoe.'" After Angel called another girl a whore in the school hallway, a fight ensued.

Joanna, a Samoan student and frequent "scrapper" (fighter), described why she picked a fight with one girl who annoyed her:

When I came to school one time, and there's this boy that I'm close with, and I didn't like his girlfriend 'cause she made him, I don't know, she made him so different. And then, like, ever since they started going out, he changed, and he went and he called out one of his own friends. I told him that if he was to do that, then I'd go after his girlfriend, and I did. Yeah, and I got suspended.

Joanna admitted that she was disappointed with her male friend for challenging his friend to a fight. What is interesting is that Joanna blamed another girl for making this boy "so different." In other words, according to Joanna, this girl was being manipulative and controlling, rather than passive and supportive, two traits that are valued within the traditional femininity norms that Heimer and De Coster (1999) and De Coster and Heimer (2006) describe. Joanna's narrative also demonstrates that girls, and not boys, were held responsible for a range of disappointments that girls experienced.

Girls were not just expected to conform to traditional feminine prescriptions; girls were also expected to follow local femininity norms that encouraged girls and women to be strong and resilient. Women were often the center of community networks and family life. Therefore, respect for female strength was central in the two communities in this study, and feminine weakness and frailty were often viewed as serious problems. Given the emphasis on female strength, girls lost respect for and even targeted other girls who fell short in fulfilling idealized notions of feminine resilience circulating in the local communities.

Cassey's story emerges as an example of how girls negotiate the difficult terrain of gender expectations. In addition to being proud of her virginity, Cassey was also proud that she did not have a boyfriend. She argued that because she is single, she does not have to live her life for a guy. She said "I can do anything that I want and go anywhere I want to go. I don't have to answer to anyone." Kanoe, a Native Hawaiian student, specifically said that she wanted to wait until after high school to have a boyfriend. Boyfriends, according to Kanoe, limited who you could be friends with and generally brought "troubles to you." For example, Kanoe said, "If you have a boyfriend, but

have other boys who are just your friends, then you get into problems.” Kanoë, who was a known fighter, often mentioned that she did not need more trouble in her life and thus, would steer clear of romantic ties to boys.

In fact, some, but not all, of the girls in the study who described themselves as tough and resilient looked down on “girly girls” who made boys the center of their lives. Many of these tough girls were frequently irritated or “irked out by” girls who were not equally resilient and independent. Angel, for example, laughed at girls who fell for the boys’ many ploys to get girls to have sex with them. These girls, she said, were “stone cold stupid.” Marla, a Samoan student, stated that boys are often “two faced.” She said, “If you keep telling a person ‘I love you. I going respect you. For real, I love you.’ They’re going believe it . . . but then [when boys are] with their friends, and it’s ‘Oh F. you.’” While Marla did not laugh at girls who believed boys when they said “I love you,” she did say that she lost respect for girls who were too gullible.

Losing respect for other girls was a common theme among girls in this study. Moreover, losing respect for a girl could end in girl-on-girl violence. Erica, a Native Hawaiian student, described the history of her conflict with two girls:

There was these two girls that I never got along with because, like, it went back to last year, ‘cause they messed up our whole volleyball team. And it was kind of retarded ‘cause they were talking smack about the coach and stuff. And, so, like, ever since then, I never really had any kind of respect for them. And this past year, one of the [girls] just all of a sudden like bumped into me in the hallway, and she looked at me like I was stupid. So I turned around and was like, “What the hell is your problem?” and she was, like, swearing at me, and I was swearing at her and stuff. And she started drilling [hitting] me, and then all the security guards came and they held me.

Erica’s narrative outlines how girls’ violation of both traditional and local femininity norms can set girls up to be physically punished. By arguing that her teammates were “talking smack” about the volleyball coach, Erica repeated a common refrain among adolescents in the study. In the majority of focus groups, interviews, and observations, girls were accused of “talking too much” and being too gossipy. These girls failed to earn Erica’s respect because they were being catty and mean, instead of being kind and quiet (i.e., two traits valued in traditional femininity norms).

These “gossipy” girls in Erica’s narrative were also threatening rules governing female respectability in the community. According to Erica, these girls were “talking smack about the coach.” In this school, the coach was Auntie Maile, a woman who was born and raised in the nearby community and who was a lifelong friend to many of the high school students’ parents. In Erica’s mind, these girls deserved a beating because they disrespected a notable female leader in the community.

The data from our study indicate that girls in this Hawaiian context took out their anger on other girls in two ways: first, by targeting girls who broke traditional femininity norms by being “slutty” rather than sexually restrained, manipulative rather

than supportive, catty and mean rather than kind and considerate, and talking too much rather than being demure and quiet. In addition, girl fighters lost respect for and took out their anger on girls who failed to be appropriately resilient, who were too dependent on boys, and who were disrespectful to female leaders in the community.

## Discussion and Conclusion

By examining participants' narratives not only about girls' violence but also about dynamics in girls' families, peer groups, and schools, we are granted a somewhat wide view of the situational dynamics and structural conditions leading up to girls' violence. This view allows us to combine key insights from multiple theoretical traditions regarding girls' violence in distressed contexts (i.e., resilient femininity, patriarchy and girls' violence, and the gender convergence/divergence paradigms) to see how multiple dynamics play out for girls in these two communities and schools.

Regarding Pacific Islander girls and resilient femininity, we found that the resilient femininity enacted by girls was a survival strategy that responds to multiple challenging circumstances (see also Jones, 2004, 2008, 2010; Leitz, 2003; Ness, 2004, 2010). Unlike what Jones (2004, 2008, 2010) and Ness (2004, 2010) found, however, violent girls' quests for honor were a type of resilience that correlated with family survival, rather than street survival, in these two communities.

The historic context in Hawaii and other Pacific Island nations is part of the reason that family and not street survival emerged as a core theme in this study. The family is a central unit in indigenous Pacific Island cultures, and cultural survival is often measured in terms of family resilience and well-being (Stern, Yuen, & Hartsock, 2004). Unlike in the West, where ideologies and institutions supporting individualism are dominant, in Pacific Island nations interdependent models of community life mean that kinship networks extend well beyond the nuclear and even the extended family. Therefore, family and community concerns frequently merge.

The mass incarceration of Pacific Islander men (Keahiolalo-Karasuda, 2010) and the alienation of indigenous men from political leadership in post- or neocolonial Hawaii (Tengan, 2008) place women in central positions. Poverty, the legacy of colonial control, over-incarceration of Pacific Islanders, and political alienation of Pacific Islanders created multiple hardships. At the frontlines of these hardships, as Nana argues, women's work "goes on and on." Also, at the end of the day, it was girls, as Mia notes, who were "the ones that moved the tables away" or took out "the rubbish for them [i.e., boys and men]." In addition, girls were socialized to take on their future role as "fighters" for the family and community, and were encouraged to be outspoken, resourceful, and to campaign against multiple injustices, mostly with words. In these data, we specifically found that there was an ambivalence about girls' violence in the gender scripts proffered in families. Girls were socialized to "come back" at anyone who put them down, but girls were not encouraged to physically fight about "just anything."

In addition to adding to the resilient femininity thesis by highlighting the idea that girls enacted an age-specific version of resilient femininity thought necessary for

family survival, this study also offers insights regarding how gender shapes the lived experiences of violent girls. As convergence/divergence scholars note, understanding the etiology of violence requires researchers to highlight the gender specific dynamics in girls' community, family, school, and peer contexts. In this study, there were at least three ways in which gender pervaded these key etiological contexts for girls.

The first way in which gender structured girls' experiences is through the codes governing femininity in this study. Here, Bottcher's (1995, 2001) analysis of gender practices or "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) is salient. Girls in this study were simultaneously held to local norms requiring them to be resilient and resourceful, as well as to rigid traditional notions of femininity (see De Coster & Heimer, 2006). Moreover, violent girls in this study were unable to fully satisfy traditional or community specific femininity norms, suggesting strongly that femininity proscriptions can be complex and contradictory in ways that seriously disadvantage girls.

Adams (1999) argued that femininity among the violent girls she studied was multifaceted and that, ". . . the complexity of such stable categories as male/female–masculine/feminine is revealed, for in the lived experiences of these [violent] girls, these binaries often become blurred, reversed, or obliterated" (p. 135). In our study, it was not the binaries of male/female or masculinity/femininity that were blurred. We argue that the assumed distinctions between resilient versus traditional femininity, middle-versus lower-class femininity, or femininity of White girls versus femininity of girls of color emerged as much more blurry and complex than researchers, to date, have assumed. The violent girls in our study did not always aspire to fulfill traditional femininity norms per De Coster and Heimer's (2006) understanding of traditional femininity (i.e., being sexually reserved, dependent on males, kind, and considerate). Nor were girls always interested in taking on the traits thought to be necessary for family survival in distressed communities, including being resilient, resourceful, and outspoken. Girls' everyday gender constructions existed between the assumed binaries of traditional and resilient femininity. More importantly, the conflicting messages about appropriate femininity, we argue, uniquely disadvantages girls who are struggling to survive in dislocated communities because girls, in this study, were never able to fully satisfy any of the messages proffered about appropriate femininity.

The second way in which gender organized girls' lives was through the gender hierarchies in girls' families, peer groups, and schools. In this case, Bottcher's (1995, 2001) focus on gender structures comes to the fore. Girls in this study faced many of the same gender inequalities as girls growing up in other contexts, and these disadvantages included, but were not limited to, a rigid sexual double standard that rewarded boys for sexual experimentation and denounced girls for sexual experience (Daniluk, 1993; Lees, 1986, 1997; Orenstein, 1994; Phillips, 2000; Stewart, 1999), a culture of romance in which romantic relationships with boys were a central concern among, and one of the few avenues for social status for girls (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992; Eder & Parker, 1987; Thorne, 1994), and a pervasive denigration of girls in peer contexts (Brown, 2003; Morash & Chesney-Lind, 2009; Eder, 1985 **IAQ: 3**; Merten, 1997; Miller, 2001). Here, the poor and working-class Pacific

Islander girls in this study were, in some ways, similar to girls in other contexts. It seems that there are key gender inequalities that cut across racial, class, and ethnic lines, and the consistency of these gender inequalities for all girls deserves on-going research attention.

The third way in which girls' violence is structured by gender is related to the masculinity and street violence dialectic (see Jones, 2010). Men who attempt to assert their authority in locations ravaged by poverty, race-based demoralization, political alienation, and the failure of civic institutions, are also said promulgate ideologies that open the door for the victimization of girls and women (Jones, 2010; Miller, 2008; Miller & White, 2003).<sup>14</sup> In this study, we also see a connection between alternative and violent versions of masculinity and the victimization of girls, although in subtle forms in girls' peer and school contexts.

Boys' violent quests for respect and to "be somebody" placed them at the center of attention in schools and families. Moreover, the boys' efforts to achieve status led them to proffer a disdain for adolescent femininity. Boys in this study frequently fought anyone who cast them as being girlish (i.e., being a "panty") or effeminate (i.e., being a "pansy" or "queer"). Also boys' version of tough masculinity led them to construct girls in a particular way, as being simultaneously objects of sexual disdain (i.e., as "hoes"), as well as objects of sexual conquest (i.e., as "chicks"). At the end of the day, boys gave their allegiance to "their boys" rather than to their girlfriends, forcing girls to the sidelines of boys' social worlds.

Their place at the center of attention gave boys the power to define girls in particular ways (see also Artz, 2004; Artz et al., 2008). In school and peer groups, girls and boys paid attention to boys' definitions of situations, therefore encouraging both boys and girls to denigrate, denounce, and demean girls. As other scholars have noted (Artz, 1998, 2004; Artz et al., 2008; Batchelor et al., 2001; Brown, 2003; Burman et al., 2003; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Morash & Chesney-Lind, 2009), the constant denigration of girls in adolescent social worlds leads some girls to be angry. Also consistent with findings from these studies, violent girls in Stevens Heights and Northward enacted horizontal violence (Freire, 1970/1993) by taking out their righteous anger (Schaffner, 2006) on other girls.

In summary, this study reveals the many ways in which girls' position at the axis of gender, racial, ethnic, class, and political alienation made girls' experiences different from that of men and boys in their communities. Like women in their communities, girls took on the considerable work and stress associated with family survival. Unlike women, however, girls also faced age-specific challenges. Girls were betwixt and between worlds. Not yet adults, they could not achieve the revered status of the upstanding, resilient woman and pillar of family/community life. Despite the importance of girls' work at home, boys remained in the limelight, with trouble-making boys causing considerable family concern. When at school, girls were on the sidelines of peer hierarchies, with both boys and girls conferring more respect to "the boys" than to girls. Whether in their families, at school, or among peers, girls, it seems, continued to "get the second half."

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## Notes

1. Campbell (1987) argues that gang girls adopt several traditional gender ideologies, but that much of their gang involvement and everyday lives revolve around “rejecting” the stigma associated with their racial, ethnic, and class positions.
2. Gender inequalities are a recurring subtheme in Jones’ (2010) work. She notes that girls in her study are vulnerable to sexual assault and dating violence at the hands of neighborhood males.
3. In a survey administered to students in the high schools in the study, the vast majority of students surveyed noted that violence includes hitting someone, fighting someone, and physically hurting someone on purpose.
4. Pseudonyms are used for the names of neighborhoods, schools, and people throughout the article to protect study members’ anonymity.
5. The remaining portion of students at Cleveland and Seaside are Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and White.
6. The focus groups included fewer than seven individuals because adults often did not have the time to attend groups, and students were often absent from school on the day that focus groups were scheduled. All of the focus groups had facilitators matching the gender makeup of the groups, but the facilitators matched the focus group participants’ ethnicity only 30% of the time.
7. Dozens of API Center staff and community members assisted this research project. In addition, the authors assisted many other research, planning, and community initiatives related to community–university partnership. Therefore, the research presented in this article resulted from extensive collaboration.
8. *At-risk* was a generic term to refer to students who were struggling with multiple challenges inhibiting these students’ ability to graduate. The challenges that students faced ranged from frequent fighting, to anger management problems, to being preoccupied with family conflicts and upheavals.

9. We developed two parent consent forms, one for observation of students and one for interviewing students. These 10 students had their parents sign only the observation consent form thinking that it covered interviews as well.
10. In addition to data analysis decisions, we carefully considered how to write up the data. The first author turned to Adler and Adler's (2008) articulation of the "four faces of ethnography," in which the Adlers consider ethnographic writing styles and not ethnographic data analysis techniques. The authors decided to write this article within what Adler and Adler call the "mainstream" ethnographic style. Ethnographers who write in the mainstream tradition speak to broad audiences (such as quantitative sociologists and criminologists) and not just to qualitative researchers. Ethnographic researchers usually conduct an extensive literature review after collecting and analyzing data or sometimes while developing their analysis (see also Burawoy, 1991; Tan, 2010). Despite the timing of the literature review, researchers writing within the mainstream tradition place the major ideas in their literature review in the introduction of their article (Adler & Adler, 2008).
11. Native Hawaiians and Samoans made up approximately 19% and 1.3% (respectively) of Hawaii's population in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a, 2000b), but represented 3% and 5% of Hawaii's prison population throughout the early 2000s (State of Hawaii, Department of Public Safety, 2008). Native Hawaiian activists and scholars, however, argue that the State of Hawaii vastly underreports the number of incarcerated Native Hawaiians (Keahiolalo-Karasuda, 2010).
12. We do not identify when data come from a particular high school per principals' requests. Principals did not want our research to imply that their schools were unusually violent. Moreover, principals emphasized that their schools faced just as much violence as many other public schools. Hawaii State Department of Education statistics regarding disciplinary infractions within Oahu high schools confirmed principals' arguments.
13. Research on adolescent girls and sexuality consistently suggests that girls are socialized, especially at school (Fine, 1988), to adhere to hegemonic and traditional feminine prescriptions that encourage girls to suppress their sexuality (Daniluk, 1993; Lees, 1986; Orenstein, 1994; Phillips, 2000; Stewart, 1999; Tolman, 2002).
14. Our institutional review board restrictions meant that we were not allowed to ask about highly sensitive topics such as girls' sexual victimization or dating violence. Despite this, there was evidence that some boyfriends were controlling and violent and that sexual violence at home occurred; but we do not have enough narratives from interviewees and focus group members to allow us to systematically investigate the victimization theme.

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## Bios

**[AQ: 6]**