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Research Article

"It's like we're just renting over here": The Pervasive Experiences of Discrimination of Filipino Immigrant Youth Gang Members in Hawai'i

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Abstract

Researchers, service providers, and policymakers must uncover and better understand the issues facing youths in Asian gangs in order to most effectively intervene with appropriate policies and programs. The present investigation sampled young male Filipino gang members in Hawai'i. Thematic analyses of the focus group data challenge the commonly held view of racial harmony in Hawai'i. It appears that racial and social discrimination from peers and authority figures propel Filipino boys to seek out gang membership as a way to protect themselves from being targets of oppression.

Introduction

In the United States, there exists a common stereotype of the Asian model minority: a group of individuals who excel academically and exhibit few behavioral difficulties (Lee, 1996). For this reason, at-risk Asian American youth remain relatively understudied. This group, however, is growing. Between 1980 and 2000, juvenile arrests of Asian youth increased by 11 percent in the U.S., while juvenile arrests during the same period decreased for African American and European American adolescents (Go and Le, 2005; Arifuku, 2005). Gang members comprise a prominent group of youth at risk for juvenile arrest.

According to Vigil (1988; 2002), ethnic minority youth gangs arise from multiple marginalities: these youth experience residen-

tial segregation into low income neighborhoods, combined with discrimination and a resulting distrust of social institutions. The current study sought to explore one particular aspect of the multiple marginalities experience: the pervasive nature of discrimination for a group of Filipino gang members in Hawai'i. In particular, the study used the gang members' own voices to delve into how they make meaning of their ethnic heritage, their gang membership, and their experiences of discrimination. A clearer understanding of these issues could inform the design of appropriate intervention programs and policies to improve the well-being of these at-risk youth.

Asian American Youth Gang Membership

The limited scholarship on Asian American youth gang membership has typically been conducted with gangs in the continental U.S. (Tsunokai and Kposowa, 2002). Given the prevalence of individuals with Asian ancestry in Hawai'i, a number of youth gangs have emerged that maintain primarily Asian youth membership. Filipino youth have shown particularly high levels of gang affiliation in the state: Filipinos represent only 14 percent of the population of Hawai'i, yet 42 percent of those in youth gangs are Filipino (Chesney-Lind et al., 2001). To better understand this overrepresentation of Filipino youth in gangs, it is important to recognize the historical background and context of reception for Filipinos in Hawai'i compared to those who immigrated to the mainland U.S.

Context of Reception for Hawai'i's Filipino Immigrant Youth Gang Members

The Filipino population in the U.S. has experienced explosive growth in the past thirty years. In 1970, the Filipino population in the U.S. numbered 340,000. The 2000 U.S. Census reports approximately 1.8 million Filipinos were residing in the U.S., and the Philippines was the second largest country-of-origin for new immigrants to the U.S. (Camarota, 2004). Hawai'i in particular has experienced a large influx of Filipino immigrants. Currently, Filipinos are the most prominent immigrant group in the state, comprising 50 percent of the state's immigrant population (Beavers and D'Amico, 2005).

Filipinos immigrating to Hawai'i differ in socioeconomic status, acculturation, and historical experiences of institutional and

structural discrimination from those immigrating to the U.S. mainland. For example, fewer Filipino immigrants settling in Hawai'i are professionals and are more likely to seek agricultural employment. These socioeconomic status differences are clearly visible when examining immigrant Filipinos' income levels: Filipinos in Hawai'i have a median income level of $26,465 compared to $35,299 for Filipinos in the continental U.S. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), and Filipinos have lower median income levels than other racial/ethnic groups in Hawai'i. For example, white households in Hawai'i have a median income of $33,648, while Japanese households have a median income of $30,093 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

The demographic differences may be influenced by Hawai'i's unique context of reception for Filipino immigrants. Most obviously, Hawai'i is the only state in the U.S. in which the majority of the population (58 percent) is of Asian ancestry (Barnes and Bennett, 2002). Despite multiple generations of Filipinos in Hawai'i, the ratio of first generation to Hawai'i-born Filipinos remains high, because of constant immigration. As a result, Filipinos in Hawai'i are often considered "foreign" and lack political power in the state (Okamura and Labrador, 1996). Given these views and their low socioeconomic status, Filipinos in Hawai'i have experienced a long and persistent history of institutional and structural discrimination resulting in multiple marginalities (Okamura and Labrador, 1996). Filipino immigrant youth live in these margins, and appear to result in continued membership in gangs.

Multiple Marginalities

Many of the prevailing theories for understanding youth gang membership have little explanatory power because such theories frequently ignore cultural perspectives (Tsunokai and Kposowa, 2002). One exception is the theory of multiple marginalities advanced by Vigil (1988; 2002) and Moore (1991). According to Vigil, youth gangs in the U.S. emerged in urban immigrant communities in the early 1900s, when large numbers of immigrants from southeastern Europe began settling in poor ethnic enclaves. Gang members had parents employed in low-skill, low-paying jobs, serving as cheap labor in the U.S. Beyond sharing similar socioeconomic backgrounds, gang members in these ethnic enclaves also had a shared cultural background, one that differed from that of the majority population. The pressures of urban poverty combined with

experiences of discrimination and the pressures of adjusting to life in a foreign land—or the experience of multiple marginalities—were contributing factors for youth gang membership.

More recent work with Chicano gangs suggests that their experiences echo those of early European immigrants. Chicano gang members experience the multiple marginalities of isolation into low-income, ethnically-segregated communities; parents who are over-represented in low status and low-paying jobs; and experiences of racism, cultural discrimination, and repression in multiple contexts, including schools. Essentially, according to Moore (1991), "Gangs as youth groups develop among the socially marginal adolescents for whom school and family do not work" (137-138).

Similar support for the multiple marginalities theory has emerged in research on Filipino youth gang membership in Honolulu (Enriquez, 1990). The Filipino youth in this study view the gang as an extended family and join as a way to socialize and interact with similar peers and also as a way to protect themselves when confronted with hassles from other neighborhood residents. Chesney-Lind and colleagues (1994) argue that gang membership in Hawai'i is more social than societally disruptive in nature, reporting that, during a twelve-month period, there was minimal gang activity in Hawai'i and that the high correlation between gang activity and criminal activity among gang members in Hawai'i is exaggerated.

The Current Study

The current study sought to explore one aspect of marginality—the pervasive nature of discrimination—for a sample of low-income Filipino gang members. Results from the current study, which were obtained using an iterative qualitative analysis protocol, illustrate how the boys made sense of and reacted to these experiences. As noted by Edles (2004), although Hawai'i is perceived as "paradise," this popular view contrasts with subtle forms of racial discrimination that persist there.

Methods

Sample

One of the challenging tasks of conducting research with at-risk youth is gaining access to the population. Through all facets of the study, we partnered with a social service agency on Oahu island and collaborated specifically with a social worker who spe-

cializes in working with Filipino youth gangs. Because the social worker had formed a trusting relationship with each member of the gang, she individually asked each member to participate in the project, and each member provided parental consent for participation. Of the nineteen male gang members targeted for the study, sixteen consented to participate. All participants were members of an all-Filipino gang in an urban center of Hawai'i. Participants ranged in age from fourteen to twenty. All self-identified as Filipino and had migrated from the Philippines to Hawai'i between the ages of one and fourteen. The primary home language was Ilocano (n = 11), followed by Tagalog (n = 3). On average, youth reported that their parents' highest level of education was some high school. All boys attended the same high school, where 84 percent of the student body was eligible for reduced priced or free lunch. Filipino (35 percent) and Samoan (31 percent) students represented the two largest ethnic groups at the school.

Focus Group Methodology

Asian youth gangs are a highly stigmatized group. As such, traditional research methods often need modification when applied to this group. Much of the research on gang members focuses on former gang members, i.e., those who have left the group. Given that gangs are formalized organizational units, conducting interviews with former gang members provides an incomplete picture of the gang's influence on members' day-to-day lives. Moreover, given that these individuals chose to leave the gang for a variety of reasons, their reflections on the gang and their experiences within the gang will be influenced by their decisions to sever those ties. Therefore, we chose to interview current gang members.

The focus group methodology used in the present study provides one method for eliciting experiences of youth gang members. Because a gang is an organized group, the focus group setting, ideally involving eight to twelve individuals, better reflects the actual organizational structure and group functioning among group members (Krueger and Casey, 2000). The focus group methodology may also be particularly suitable for use with Asian Americans, whose orientations are often described as more collectivistic than individualistic. The Filipino culture, for example, places great importance on "barkada," or the social cohesiveness among group members (Alsaybar, 2002). A collective interview approach, such as the focus

group, was used with this population as a culturally appropriate way of conducting interviews with at-risk Filipino youth.

Procedures

Two focus groups (eight boys in each group) were conducted during after-school hours at the social service agency site. Focus groups were conducted with a moderator and a note-taker who were members of the research team (and authors of this manuscript). Members of the social service agency were not present during the focus group interviews. To build rapport with study participants, focus group facilitators emphasized their shared immigrant experience, as most research team members had also came to the U.S. as immigrant children, much like the study participants. Participants were asked to discuss what it meant to be Filipino and to speak about their experiences at home, at school, and in the gang. Focus groups lasted approximately one hour and were audio-taped and later transcribed.[1] All participants received nominal monetary compensation for their time.

Analyses

Informed by Miles and Huberman (1984), the first and second authors developed a formal protocol for systematically analyzing the focus group data. The iterative analysis protocol involved three primary activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For data reduction, the first author developed a high-level codebook (identifying broad thematic areas) through an initial pass of the transcribed focus group data. Through an iterative process of reading the transcripts, the first author then developed a more detailed, standardized codebook for the final coding of all qualitative materials. After this, the first author reviewed and finalized coding for the focus groups transcripts using the standardized codebook, organizing the data using Atlas.ti v5.2. Throughout the data reduction process, the first author created data displays (e.g., networks, matrices) to better organize information from the transcripts; data displays were revised throughout the reduction process to better capture emerging themes. The analysis process also integrated strategies for conclusion drawing and verification.

Through coding, memos, and data displays, the first author noted patterns observed in the data, revising these patterns

throughout the iterative coding process, until grounded conclusions emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As part of the verification process, the second author reviewed all coded data. Finally, through a consensus process, the first and second authors finalized coded segments, data displays, and conclusions.

Results

Placing the Filipino Experience in Context

Understanding their cultural heritage. The focus group participants often spoke of the importance of their Filipino heritage. When asked what being Filipino meant to them, many described feelings of pride in their Filipino roots and the comfort and respect that originated from shared cultural values, norms, and language. One boy elaborated in this way:

> "We like being with Filipinos because we understand each other, like what everyone is coming from, because we are all the same thing, yeah Filipino everything. We are all the same. We feel comfortable with each other."

Another added, "We do things the same, yeah. So you stay with your Filipino friends."

And still another, echoing these sentiments, summed up his feelings this way: "We're all brothers."

These statements are reflective of the Filipino value of "kapwa," or shared identity (Enriquez, 1993; Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

Being Filipino and gang membership. The feelings of connection and kapwa also emerged when the boys described the benefits of gang membership. More specifically, boys described the brotherhood of membership ("We're all family, all brothers," "more [than] friends") and the common bond the boys shared as Filipinos ("We are all Filipinos," "We have pride," "We're raised in the same culture"). These sentiments echo Alsaybar's (2002) definition of a barkada, an "indigenous peer grouping suffused by an egalitarian orientation emphasizing mutual caring, loyalty, and friendship that often tends to run deeper than blood relationships" (132). In essence, the barkada is a culturally meaningful form of bringing people with the same interests together and providing fellowship for one another. According to Alsaybar, who studied Filipino gang members in Los Angeles, barkada is an indigenous construct that

provides a cultural explanation for the Filipino youth's motivation to join gangs.

Being Filipino and Discrimination

In describing what it meant to be Filipino, many boys highlighted the importance of their Filipino friends. The boys felt they could share problems with their fellow Filipinos, problems that often involved experiences of discrimination. As one boy stated, when asked how he felt about being Filipino in his environment, "I'm scared too, yeah. Because other cultures look down on Filipino too, yeah."

Another explained, "They put us down. . . . Like Samoans, yeah, they acting bad to Filipino 'cause they bigger than us. . . . They're bigger than us.. . .that's why we get into fights sometimes."

When asked about others' perceptions of Filipinos, one boy emphasized the inherent contradiction in others' views of Filipinos, stating:

> They think that they are way, way, way better than us. They look down on us. They are spoiled. Us, we've got to work for, to get the things we like. We've got to work for it. But them, they ask they parents, they get 'em.

Another boy, when asked about the accuracy of others' perceptions of Filipinos, indicated that the perceptions may at times be accurate, but he highlighted the unfairness inherent in judgments and treatment based on these perceptions and stereotypes. He stated, "Well sometimes I guess it goes around, that we act stupid too, but other people don't have the right to treat us like we're low class. Since we're all the same, yeah?" While some of the boys' descriptions of discrimination were general (not contextually specific), much of the discrimination they described occurred at school.

Discrimination and School

The boys in the current study found little refuge from discrimination at their schools. While some appreciated school as a place to learn new things, to improve their English reading and writing skills, to get "a better education" and "a better life," and to interact with friends, these positive descriptions were peppered with details of discrimination from school personnel and peers. As one boy explained, "I feel low, I feel low class. . .at school."

School personnel. Several boys described incidences of discrimination by school personnel, and these experiences left them feeling angry and contributed to negative perceptions of their schools. They stated that teachers "hate us" and "don't give you a second chance." The negative treatment was not just at the hands of Samoan and local teachers, as evidenced by this boy's statement: "Even the Filipino teachers. The ones who were born over here hate us." They also reported that other school personnel treated them unfairly. Many of their accounts focused on the school security guards. As one boy noted, "Like this security guard. . .push me around like that." Another boy related a story about a Filipino security guard at his school: "He is Filipino but he [would] rather team up with the other Samoans instead of us. He was the one who created a big rumble two years ago."

Peers and general experiences of discrimination. Most experiences of discrimination participants described centered on interactions with school peers, whom the boys described as "racists" who "think they can take our pride down." The boys noted that "other cultures look down on Filipinos," "treat you disrespectfully," "try to put us down," and "feel uncomfortable being with us."

One boy stated, "They think that we are a piece of rubbish that they can kick around."

Another explained, "Like when immigrants come, when us Filipinos come they think like we're low class, like we're not part of this society. . . . But we just want to be like we are. Who we are."

The boys identified Samoans and native Hawaiians as the main instigators of the discriminatory treatment, as seen in this boy's statement: "Like the Hawaiians and the Samoans, they think they own Hawai'i. And we are just like, like we are just like renting over here."

Another boy elaborated: "They even tell [you], 'why don't you move back to your own island?' They go like that. They say, 'Go back to Philippines, where you guys came from.'"

In addition to discrimination from Samoan and Hawaiian peers, the boys also reported discrimination from local-born Filipino peers. As one boy stated, "Even our own kind too, yeah, but local born. They think they are better than us."

Another asked, in reference to the discriminatory comments wielded by Hawaiian-born Filipinos, "Their parents are from the Philippines too—why don't they say that to their parents too?"

In describing their local-born Filipino peers, one boy stated, "They tend to forget their culture, their heritage like that. . . . But people who are born in the Philippines, they don't forget about where they came from." These observations support Revilla's (1996) assertion that local-born Filipinos may feel ashamed about their Filipino ancestry, whereas immigrant youth like those in this study express pride, respect, and appreciation for their language, culture, and heritage.

Peers and verbal and physical confrontations. Much of the discriminatory treatment participants described involved insults, with the boys reporting being called such names as "bukbuk" (termite), "flip," "stupid," and "fob" (fresh off the boat). In addition to name-calling, the boys also reported being insulted for their attire ("like we dress funny") and for the way they do things. Insults and teasing from peers also centered on language issues—the boys reported being insulted for "the way we speak. Like when we get accent." Another reported that peers would tell the Filipinos to "speak English" because they worried that the Filipinos were insulting them in their heritage language of either Tagalog or Ilocano.

Although much of the discrimination reported was non-violent in nature, the boys recounted that the verbal discrimination sometimes escalated into physical confrontations. At the least extreme, this involved jokingly pushing Filipinos around, but fights between Samoans and Filipinos would also occur. As one student explained:

> They think of us like what he said, that they look down on us, they treat us disrespectfully, yeah. At the same time, we feel that we are not wanted around here, yeah, so that's where fights and tension between people start.

Another boy believed that insults from the general peer population were a means of seeing how far the Filipinos could be pushed, explaining: "Like test us, yeah? If we're scared or not, if we're scared of them. We have to show them that we're not scared." Several boys agreed, noting that they had to fight back to show they were not scared of the aggressors.

Yet another boy, trying to make sense of his experiences, elaborated in this way: "They think they are better than us in some ways, yeah. Which I don't know. . .which is not true I think. Be-

cause all of us are unique in some ways. So then, yeah that's how I think the fights start."

The Filipino boys also reported that their peers "ask you for money, they jack you. . . . That's what I hate about them. They think that we are the bank. Like we are the banks where they can just take money from." Another boy added, "If you don't have money, then they are going to search you like. . .[and] if you lying, then they're going to like fight with you."

Discrimination and Gang Membership

The initial formation of the participants' gangs and their reasons for joining those gangs often centered on experiences of victimization and discrimination, which is consistent with prior research on motivations for Asian American youth gang membership (Alsaybar, 2002; Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf, 1997; Toy, 1992). As one boy explained, the gang "started when the Samoans went go after [sic] the Filipinos in intermediate." The boys then created the gang as "one group to help each other." The gang itself, however, became the focus of insults. Some of the insults were general, aimed at the gang's name. Others were more specific. "They say that we are like girls. That we cannot fight," reported one respondent. "They think that we are all funny. They think that gang is a joke to them," said another.

While some of the ill treatment the boys disclosed were from people generally, they also described discrimination specifically from members of rival gangs. As one boy stated, "Some gang, they try [to] put 'em down, but they couldn't put 'em down because. . .we don't give up. We show our pride. . . . We stand up for ourselves."

Many of the benefits of gang membership centered on support, as seen in these statements: "We help each other," "They watch our back," "You gonna like sacrifice yourself to your family." This support often revolved around physical disputes, often with other gang members. The sense of support the boys described may be reflective of Ponce's (1980) discussion of "utang na loob" or (debt of gratitude), a sense of gratitude or appreciation that one may feel towards one another. In the gang context, members share an "utang na loob." Those who do not return this debt of gratitude can be said to be "walang hiya" (shameless) and "walang utang na loob" (ungrateful) (Santos, 1983). While the boys appreciated that

their fellow gang members "back you up," one boy questioned any benefits beyond this, stating:

> All I can say is like only about fights like that, they can help us. Sometimes I think in life, I don't know sometimes, they cannot help you. Your future, you don't know what your future gonna be. You think they can help you like that, when they're the same as you. I guess when you're fighting like that, I guess, that [they] can. I don't know, no good.

Another boy expressed similar reservations about the gang, stating, "The only thing that brings us together is trouble."

Discussion

This study documents the pervasiveness of discrimination experienced by a group of adolescent Filipino gang members in Hawai'i: descriptions of discrimination emerged in the boys' descriptions of their lives as Filipinos, their schools, and their gangs. The findings are consistent with prior research on Asian American youth gangs suggesting that protection from discrimination and victimization are the essential reasons for gang membership (Hunt, Joe, and Waldorf, 1997; Alsaybar, 2002; Toy, 1992; Vigil, 1988, 2002). These experiences of discrimination are just one aspect of the multiple marginalities that these boys face as lower-income, Filipino immigrants in Hawai'i. These marginalities may contribute to gang membership, as participation in the gangs provides these boys with an extended family and "more friends," both of which may provide emotional support and help alleviate the multiple marginality stressors they face.

In light of Hawai'i's large minority population, the high rate of multiethnic residents, and the high number of interracial marriages, the state is commonly perceived as a model state for race relations (Edles, 2004). Focus group data from this study challenge this view of Hawai'i's racial harmony, at least for these Filipino immigrant gang members. The boys reported extreme racial and social discrimination from individuals in their neighborhood, from their peers, and from authority figures at their schools. These findings are consistent with other work that has documented that overt acts of discrimination directed at Filipino immigrants is a common experience, one which has a particularly deleterious impact on the well-being of children and adolescents (Okamura and Labrador,

1996). At the most extreme, as is seen with this sample, experiences of discrimination, may propel Filipino immigrant adolescents to seek out gang membership as a way to protect themselves from victimization and oppression. This is in contrast to findings by Alsaybar (2002), who found that gang members in his study placed importance instead on the "party culture" as a way to mobilize and bring the boys together.

Making Sense of Coethnics' Discriminatory Treatment

Explaining why Filipino immigrants in general, and these boys in particular, are the victims of discrimination, and why, in this case, the victimization was often at the hands of coethnics, is difficult, for a thorough explanation must take into account historical trends in immigration patterns, socioeconomic status, and social immobility. Recent theorizing has explored how Asian Americans think about their coethnics, formulate their own identities, and redirect stigma away from themselves to attain status (Pyke and Dang, 2003). Pyke and Dang suggest that the resulting intra-ethnic othering is subsequently manifested in disparaging remarks made towards members of one's group, which in turn creates resentment and isolation. This process leads to further division among those from the same ethnic cohort by creating internalized racial oppression. In the case of Filipino immigrant youth, non-Filipino Asian youth and non-immigrant, local-born Filipinos attain status by victimizing (through discriminatory words as well as actions) immigrant Filipinos, highlighting how different they are from the immigrant group. Such experiences are described in Revilla's work (1996), in which she documents that third and fourth generation Filipinos express shame in their Filipino heritage by "pick[ing] on" immigrant Filipinos. Experiences of discrimination from same-ethnicity peers can be particularly detrimental for immigrant Filipino youth because the othering experiences are perpetrated by members of their own ethnic group. This was seen in the current study as the boys struggled to make sense of their oppression at the hands of their local-born Filipino peers.

The Challenges of Discrimination in Schools

Although boys in the current sample provided some positive descriptions of their school experiences, their accounts more often centered on experiences of discrimination from both peers and

school personnel. That school personnel (both teachers and security guards) were complicit both in overlooking discriminatory acts by peers and by actually discriminating against these youth, at least in these boys' perceptions, is particularly problematic. Effects of discrimination in the school context can be especially deleterious to adolescents, contributing to challenges psychologically (more depressive symptoms, lower self-esteem, lower psychological resiliency), socially (greater anger and problem behaviors), and academically (lower grades in school, greater dropout expectations, lower value placed on school, less confidence in own academic abilities, lower achievement motivation) (Degarmo and Martinez Jr., 2006; Eccles, Wong, and Peck, 2006; Greene, Way, and Pahl, 2006; Wong, Eccles, and Sameroff, 2003). Although the boys in the current study were currently enrolled in high school at the time of the study, the fact that they experience multiple marginalities (e.g., socioeconomic status, discrimination, immigrant status, gang membership) only increases their risk for negative school outcomes.

Strengths, Caveats, and Limitations

The current study contributes to our understanding of a population of youth that has traditionally been ignored by the larger research community. Filipinos represent the second largest Asian ethnic group in the United States (Camarota, 2004), yet virtually nothing is known about them. This study contributes to filling in this lacuna. The present research expands the extant scholarship on Filipino youths in the U.S. to highlight variations in the Filipino American experience. The current literature on Filipinos and their children focuses on households in which parents are nursing professionals or military personnel (Choy, 2003; Espiritu, 2003, 1995). The present study offers a unique perspective on the variation in the experiences of children of less educated, lower income Filipino (mostly Ilocano) immigrant agricultural workers, and highlights the experiences of a group of Filipino youths who are at particular risk.

While we believe the current study makes an important contribution, we also acknowledge its limitations. First, while the boys discussed a variety of experiences of discriminatory treatment, it is unclear whether their marginalization resulted from their ethnicity, their status as poor immigrants, their gang affiliation, or a combination of factors. A related limitation is that the perpetrators of the discriminatory treatment were often only vaguely described. For

this reason, we were unable to determine the ethnicity of the offenders. Also, it would have been ideal to have more information about the history and characteristics of Filipino gangs in general, and in particular the gang to which these boys belonged. We were limited in our ability to provide this information because existing studies on gangs in Hawaiʻi typically aggregate all ethnic groups, and it is thus difficult to tease apart the history and characteristics of Filipino gangs specifically. Additionally, we gained access to our participants because of our study's focus on the adolescents' cultural background rather than upon gang specifics. This meant we were restricted from asking detailed questions about the gang and were thus unable to provide additional contextual information regarding the gang itself.

In addition, we must acknowledge that our sample included only sixteen participants, thus limiting the generalizability of our findings to the larger population of immigrant Filipino gang members. Our study does, however, illuminate the lives of these boys and the discrimination they face in multiple contexts. Future studies should investigate whether the findings documented here can be replicated with larger samples and samples with a more diverse representation of Filipino youth, including those from Hawaiʻi and also the U.S. mainland. Mainland Filipinos also face a great deal of discrimination, despite other indicators of well-being (Espiritu and Wolf, 2001), and future research should determine whether findings about the pervasiveness of discrimination in Hawaiʻi is unique to our population or whether discrimination also serves as a catalyst for Filipino youth gang formation in the mainland U.S.

Practical Implications

Findings from the current study have practical implications for intervention efforts, both for service providers and for policymakers. According to Dishion and Dodge (2005), the most effective interventions for deviant peer groups must take into account multiple developmental contexts. Given the overt acts of discrimination the Filipino youth gang members in this study experienced at school, certainly the educational context is an important target for intervention efforts. Policymakers must find ways to invest resources into alleviating hostile racial climates in schools. Creating programs that support students' interracial understanding is one mechanism for improving the racial climate. Research sug-

gests that social cognitive training, cooperative learning, and liberation psychological interventions hold some promise both for reducing prejudice and for coping with prejudice and oppression.[2] Additionally, stricter school policies for dealing with discriminatory treatment (both verbal and physical) should be put into place. However, given that the boys in the current study described discrimination not simply from their peers but also from school personnel, which has been documented in studies of racially/ethnically diverse adolescent samples (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004), educational programs targeting interracial understanding and the impacts of discrimination should also be directed toward teachers and other school staff.

Social service agencies provide another important arena for intervention efforts. The current study was conducted with the assistance of staff members at a local social service agency that works with youth gang members. At the agency, they use the Redirectional Method (Rosen, Hingano, and Spencer, 1994), a therapeutic change model that helps youth transform antisocial gang activities into prosocial behaviors. In particular, the intervention seeks to build individual competencies, thereby decreasing the reliance on the antisocial group (i.e., the gang). For example, the boys receive training in negotiating skills: if a youth feels threatened by a teacher's treatment in the classroom, a staff member at the social service agency will work with the boy to schedule a meeting with the teacher, and will often attend the meeting too. According to a staff member at the agency, formally meeting with teachers to address the boys' classroom experiences empowers these boys by providing them with a way to confront and deflect further acts of discrimination. The Redirectional Method appears to be a promising way to minimize gang activity among Asian American youth. This cutting-edge, replicable methodology has been used to address the problem of gangs in Hawai'i for the past sixteen years. Documentation of success includes increases in prosocial behaviors, including decreases in fights among gang members and college attendance (Rosen, Hingano, and Spencer, 1994).

In an alternate approach, Strobel (1997; 2001) has emphasized "decolonization" as a way to improve the mental health of Filipino Americans, a recommendation that involves a multi-step process of positive affirmations to re-frame the negative self-concept that may be derived from the colonial history of the Philippines.

Although the boys in the present study did not directly bring up issues of colonial history in our focus group, utilizing Strobel's decolonization concept may prove to be a useful intervention when combined with the prevention efforts described above. By implementing one of the prevention/intervention approaches described above, it may be possible to increase prosocial behaviors and achieve positive outcomes with Filipino boys in gangs.

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2. For review, see McKown (2005).

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