

Asian / Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention

Micronesian Risk and Protective Factors Study

Shortly after the Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center (APIYVPC) was first established in 2000, our staff was talking with various community leaders about ethnic-specific needs relevant to youth violence prevention. At the time, our focus was on working with Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino communities to help prevent youth violence, since youth from those ethnic groups were (and still are) most over-represented in Hawai'i's juvenile justice system. Community leaders kept informing us that Micronesian youth and families were now dealing with many of the risk factors that affect youth and that our research should also address this distinct and diverse population.

Fortunately, in 2005, the Office of Youth Services (OYS) secured a small amount of funding that enabled the APIYVPC to conduct a study with Micronesian youth. The study called for the APIYVPC to conduct focus groups with youth representing the four states within the Federated States of Micronesia, as well as Palau and the Marshall Islands.

Recurring themes were noted from the focus groups and key quotes included comments on issues such as culture, violence, substance use, and school.

Micronesian Study Results

Major themes :

- Migration and Housing Conditions
- Community Conditions
- School
- Fighting
- Substance Use
- Racism
- Culture

Migration and Housing Conditions

Reasons for migration:

- Education.
- Health-care.

Housing Conditions:

- Low-income housing.
- Over-crowding.

Student's comment on Chuuk's educational system:

"The private schools are kind of like good education but the public schools...they're not good. The students, they don't learn as well."

Community Conditions

Many youth noted that their neighborhoods were dirty, littered with trash, and smelled bad.

School

- Language Barrier
- Good vs. Bad Teachers
- Be with Friends

Students' comments on school:

"[I like] peers. Learning new things, and having more freedom"

"Marshallese who come over here, some of them are really smart but it's just because of the language that they don't understand. That's why in school they have trouble."

Fighting

- Among Micronesians and other ethnic groups
- Based on ethnic conflicts and immigration status
- Gang violence.

Student's comment on gangs:

"...the reason why they're in there is because they wanna be cool. But there's things that they wanna become, but they just need a mentor ... to guide them."

Substance Use

- Reasons for drug use (smoking, drinking, and some "ice") among Micronesian youth:
 - Gain acceptance by others ("being cool" and "fitting in").
 - Cope with stress from family and peer pressure.
- Part of gang culture

David Mayeda (DM, Researcher): What causes [them to use drugs, because], you said some of them start in sixth grade.

Student: They think that people would think that they're cool. They copy the adults.

DM: They copy the adults?

Racism

- Discrimination by other ethnic groups
 - Verbal and physical intimidation
 - Failure to acknowledge distinction between different Micronesian ethnic groups

On racism:

David Rehuher (DR, Researcher): And you said racist? Can

you expand on that? ...

Student (S): It's just the way that students react to us.

Culture

- Cultural activities during holidays and special events
- Social gatherings for celebrations
- Cultural gender roles conflicting with youth culture in Hawai'i

Based on the focus group data, we propose a Micronesian Risk and Protective Factors Model shown below.

Stress

Trauma

- Recent migration
- Language barriers
- Poverty
- Racism
- Exposure to violence & substance use

Cultural Buffers

- Traditional practices
- Culturally specific celebrations/events
- Intra-ethnic mentoring programs
- Cultural awareness programs



Health Outcomes

School Violence

- Fighting
- Gangs

Alcohol and Drug Use