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REPORTS & PAPERS

*Arrest Trends, Gang Involvement, and Truancy
in Hawaii: An Interim Report to the Twenty-
Second Hawaii State Legislature*

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Hawaii's Youth Gang Response System (YGRS) was created by the Hawaii State Legislature in 1990. Since that time, the organization has supported many gang prevention/intervention activities. This report examines the YGRS activities for the period July 2003 to the present and is funded by The State of Hawaii Office of Youth Services (OYS). This report's conclusions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agency.

Part of the financial support for the YGRS was distributed to the Social Science Research Institute's (SSRI) Center for Youth Research. Included in SSRI, the University of Hawaii Youth Gang Project (YGP) performs research, completes evaluations, and serves as the technical consultants to the YGRS. YGP have showcased their research at numerous conferences both locally and nationally, and have also published twenty-two reports including a number of academic journal articles.

Although it would be impossible to identify all of the individuals who frequently support the University of Hawaii Youth Gang Project, a handful needs to be recognized. We would first like to acknowledge the continued and excellent support the Office of Youth Services staff, in particular Carl Imakyure, Keith Yamamoto, Todd Motoyama, Jessica Kim, and Sharon Agnew. Without their backing, ambition, and cooperation, YGP's research could not have been completed. Many thanks also to Office of the Attorney General for their assistance with the arrest trends data. Gratitude must also be given to John Gartrell and the University of Hawaii Center on the Family for their support with the 2000 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use survey data. Finally, YGP would like to thank Connie Fuji-Shaw, Russell Yamauchi, and Edralyn McElroy for their continuous assistance with YGP's truancy research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... | 1 |
| Trends in Juvenile Arrests..... | 1 |
| Understanding Gangs: A Review of National Findings..... | 1 |
| Understanding Gang Involvement in Hawaii's Communities..... | 2 |
| Truancy in Hawaii..... | 5 |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE: JUVENILE ARREST TRENDS IN HAWAII..... | 7 |
| Introduction..... | 7 |
| National Trends, 1993-2002..... | 7 |
| Trends in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 8 |
| Weapons and Drug Offenses..... | 11 |
| Arrests by Gender..... | 12 |
| Summary..... | 15 |
| References..... | 15 |
| | |
| CHAPTER TWO: UNDERSTANDING GANGS: A REVIEW OF NATIONAL FINDINGS..... | 16 |
| Introduction..... | 16 |
| National Gang Problem Research - Past and Present Findings..... | 16 |
| Risk Factors..... | 18 |
| Gangs and Ethnicity/Race..... | 19 |
| Girls and Gangs..... | 21 |
| Responding to Youth Gangs..... | 22 |
| References..... | 26 |
| | |
| CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING GANG INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITIES: RESULTS FROM THE 2000 HAWAII STUDENT ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE STUDY..... | 28 |
| Introduction..... | 28 |
| Methodology..... | 28 |
| Risk Factors Correlated with Gang Involvement..... | 32 |
| Understanding the Communities..... | 36 |
| Conclusion..... | 42 |
| References..... | 43 |

| | <u>Page</u> |
|---|--------------------|
| CHAPTER FOUR: TRUANCY IN HAWAII: RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM LEVEL II SURVEYS..... | 44 |
| Introduction..... | 44 |
| Literature Review..... | 44 |
| National Responses to Truancy..... | 45 |
| Student Attendance Program Level II Findings..... | 48 |
| Results..... | 50 |
| Ethnicity and Truancy..... | 53 |
| Open-Ended Student Survey Questions..... | 55 |
| Parent Surveys..... | 55 |
| Handling Truancy in Hawaii..... | 58 |
| Summary and Future Directions..... | 62 |
| References..... | 63 |

LIST OF CHARTS AND TABLES

| | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Chart 1: Juvenile Arrests for Index Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 8 |
| Chart 2: Juvenile Arrests for Part I Violent Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 9 |
| Chart 3: Juvenile Arrests for Part I Property Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 10 |
| Chart 4: Juvenile Arrests for Part I Property Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 10 |
| Chart 5: Juvenile Arrests for Weapons and Drugs in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 11 |
| Chart 6: Juvenile Arrests for Status Offense in Hawaii, 1993-2002..... | 12 |
| Chart 7: Juvenile Arrests in Hawaii by Gender, 1993-2002..... | 13 |
| Chart 8: Juvenile Arrests for Part I and II Offenses by Gender, 2002..... | 13 |
| Chart 9: Status Offenses in Hawaii by Gender, 2002..... | 14 |
| | |
| Table 1: School Complex Area, Grade Level Reporting Highest Gang Involvement..... | 3 |
| Table 2: Gang Involvement by School Complex, Elementary and Middle Schools, Grades 6 & 8..... | 30 |
| Table 3: Gang Involvement by School Complex, High Schools, Grades 10 & 12..... | 31 |
| Table 4: School Complex Area by Grade Level Reporting Highest Gang Involvement..... | 32 |
| Table 5: Selected Risk Factors for SCA's Reporting Highest Gang Involvement, Year 2000..... | 33 |
| Table 6: Selected Risk Factors for SCA's Reporting Highest Gang Involvement, Year 2000..... | 34 |
| Table 7: Company with when Truant, by Gender..... | 50 |
| Table 8: Activity Performed, when Truant, by Gender..... | 51 |
| Table 9: Reasons for Being Truant, by Gender..... | 52 |
| Table 10: Logistic Regression, Gender Difference in Explanation for Truancy... | 53 |
| Table 11: Reason for Truancy, by Ethnicity..... | 54 |
| Table 12: Parents' Explanations Strategies Tried..... | 56 |
| Table 13: Parents' Explanations for Truancy: What Has Worked..... | 57 |
| Table 14: Parents' Explanations for Truancy" Factors Affecting Child's Attendance..... | 57 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trends in Juvenile Arrests

Juvenile crime, as measured by arrests, declined markedly in the last decade in Hawaii—dropping 35.6% between 1993 and 2002. Nationally, juvenile arrests decreased 10.9% during the same period.¹

In Hawaii, juvenile arrests for all index crimes decreased 47.5% in the ten-year period, 1993-2002, fueled largely by a 51.9% drop in property index offenses. Juvenile arrests for violent offenses increased 20%, mostly due to increased numbers of youths arrested for robbery and aggravated assaults. Nationally, arrests of youth for violent crimes decreased by 29.3% during this same period.

Arrests for weapons offenses declined 50.5% in the decade. Drug arrests, however, increased 34%. This increase also paralleled the national picture, where arrests of youth for drug abuse violations jumped by 59.1%, while arrests of youth for weapons offenses dropped by 46.9%.

Over the decade, runaway arrests have declined 11% and curfew violation arrests have dropped 66%. A combination of these two status offenses shows a decline in arrests of 22% since 1993, though both offenses had a slight increase in the last year. Status offenses, though, account for 35.8% of Hawaii's juvenile arrests, compared to 12.3% of juvenile arrests nationally. Because girls are more likely to be arrested for these non-criminal offenses, girls comprise 42% of juveniles arrested in our state compared to 29% of juvenile arrests nationally.

Understanding Gangs: A Review of National Findings

In order to better understand Hawaii's gang activity, Youth Gang Project reviewed past and current literature on the national gang problem. Gang membership in the United States has grown steadily since the 1970s. Today over 26,000 gangs exist and encompass over 850,000 members. Youth at risk for joining gangs often come from communities characterized by social, economic, and educational disadvantages. Personal attributes of youth at risk for gang involvement include higher tolerance for deviance and

¹ See FBI Uniform Crime Reports at <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr>

higher commitment to delinquent peer groups. Attachment to delinquent peer groups is often coupled by low commitment to school, poor school attendance, and failing grades. Additionally, youth at risk for gang membership often come from abusive and/or neglectful family environments. The gang then becomes a source for familial feelings.

The still-marginalized minorities of the 1980s continue to comprise most of the modern youth gang problem—Hispanics, African Americans, and to some extent, Asian groups. While most gang members tend to be male, recent research findings show that girls make up nearly one third of gang membership.

In response to youth gangs, several national models suggest using multiple approaches: prevention, intervention, and suppression. Lessons that can be gleaned from such gang response models include: 1) Models must reflect the values and needs of the community and foster neighborhood involvement; 2) Collaboration among multiple agencies (such as law enforcement, schools, outreach agencies) is key to successful intervention models; and 3) Models should consider using detached workers (outreach workers who are mobile, can dispatch from their office, and work directly with gangs in the community) in their programs.

Understanding Gang Involvement in Hawaii's Communities

The University of Hawaii has conducted statewide school surveys—the Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Surveys—each spring in even-numbered years. The surveys are administered every two years to 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders. These surveys, which rely on adolescent self-reports, provide a variety of information on Hawaii's communities and youth. In addition to questions concerning alcohol and drug use, the surveys also question other risk factors and risk-taking behaviors, such as being involved in a gang, having friends who are in a gang, carrying weapons, stealing motor vehicles, getting arrested, failing academically, and being suspended from school. Throughout 2003, the University of Hawaii Youth Gang Project analyzed these data in order to understand more fully the extent of gang involvement in Hawaii's school complex areas.

Of particular interest to YGP is the variable “gang involvement,” which is a summated scale of three items on the 2000 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug

Use Survey. These items include 1) have you ever belonged to a gang; 2) did the gang have a name, and 3) are you currently in a gang? Using the distribution (0-37.5%) and mean (19.0%) responses from all the complexes, YGP developed a scale of low to high gang involvement. Below are listed the top ten School Complex Areas (SCA's) with the highest gang involvement overall (divided by grade levels):

| Area | Percentage Reporting Gang Involvement |
|--|--|
| Kau (10 th and 12 th graders) | 37.5% |
| Kau (6 th and 8 th graders) | 31.8% |
| Leilehua (10 th and 12 th graders) | 31.2% |
| Lanai (10 th and 12 th graders) | 31.0% |
| Hana (6 th and 8 th graders) | 30.8% |
| Kohala (6 th and 8 th graders) | 30.6% |
| Campbell (10 th and 12 th graders) | 30.2% |
| Waipahu (10 th and 12 th graders) | 29.0% |
| Farrington (10 th and 12 th graders) | 28.7% |
| Keaau (6 th and 8 th graders) | 28.5% |
| Mean percentage for all complexes | 19% |

Other risk variables that can help to explain gang involvement were reviewed within each of these neighborhoods. The data show that all of the complexes scored higher or the same as the overall SCA mean (45.2%) in depression. Additionally, all of these SCA's placed higher than the mean (15.6%) when reporting if they have a friend who is a gang member (range: Hana 6th and 8th at 16.0% to Kau 10th and 12th at 42.8%). With the exception of Hana and Farrington, the top ten SCA's for gang involvement had higher percentages in 'ever attacking someone'. With the exception of Lanai, these SCA's also more often reported having a friend who has carried a handgun.

In examining the key risk variables, for the particular neighborhoods further, several notable differences occur. Kau 10th and 12th reported 21.4% higher incidences of ever attacking someone, 20.1% higher in having a friend who sold illegal drugs, 10.9% higher in having a friend who dropped out of school, and 21.4% in having a friend who has been arrested. Kau 6th and 8th also had higher reports of "ever attacking someone" (6.8% above the mean). It also had a noticeably larger percentage of poor family

supervision (24.1% above the mean) and friends who have carried a handgun (11.4%). Leilehua scored high in poor family supervision and family conflict as well as in reported suspensions (4.3 % above mean).

Several variables stand out when examining Lanai. Variables relating to delinquent and violent activities (ever suspended, ever sold drugs, ever arrested, ever attacked someone, ever drunk or high at school) are well above average. Of all SCA's listed, Lanai reported the highest percentage (28.6%) of 'ever been drunk or high at school.' Additionally, Lanai also had higher reports of delinquent peer groups. Having a friend who has been suspended (32.3% above the mean), a friend who sold illegal drugs (22.5% above mean), friend arrested (11.6% above the mean), and friend who has dropped out of school (11.2% above the mean) were also remarkably higher in comparison.

Kohala 6th and 8th saw higher scores in family conflict (12.1% higher) and poor family supervision (13.4% higher than average). Academic failure and friend suspended were also higher than averages. Waipahu 10th and 12th, Campbell 10th and 12th, and Farrington 10th and 12th all had perceptibly higher scores in the areas of associations with delinquent friends and with personal risk factors, such as experiencing academic failure and/or being drunk or high at school. Farrington scored highest than the other SCA's listed in 'ever sold illegal drugs' (26.5% above the mean) and in 'ever stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle' (10.8% above the mean). Lastly, Keaau 6th and 8th reported higher levels of academic problems: low school commitment, academic failure, and suspensions. Additionally, having a friend who has been suspended was also somewhat above the mean (8.7% higher).

Reviewing other risk factors youth in these schools reported, the data show that in rural areas—Kau, Leilehua, Lanai, Hana, Kohala, and Keaau—family and academic risk factors (e.g. poor family supervision, suspensions, etc) are consistently higher. In more urban areas—Campbell, Waipahu, and Farrington—it appears that personal risk-taking behaviors (such as selling drugs) and delinquent peer groups yield comparatively higher reports. One exception is Lanai that reported myriad risk factors at higher levels.

Overall, these data suggest that the gang problem is clearly not simply an urban, Oahu problem. Indeed, many neighbor island communities report as high or higher levels of gang involvement than the stereotypical gang neighborhoods of Waipahu and Kalihi.

Truancy in Hawaii

Truancy has long bedeviled schools, in part because there is no consistent, national definition of the problem. The State of Hawaii, Department of Education, defines truancy as skipping school or remaining on school campus but not attending class. The national literature suggests a variety of reasons that youth may be truant. These include an absence of educational goals, lack of stimulation for students, neglect of diverse student needs, lack of consistency in attendance policies and procedures, peer relationships that foster truancy, and limited family support. Solutions to school truancy need to combine accountability as well as reconnection of the student to the classroom. Several different approaches can be combined to meet this goal. These different approaches include strict laws and enforcement, development of positive learning environments, tutoring programs, and community mentoring programs.

Through a survey distributed during Student Attendance Program Level II, Honolulu Police Department collected data on both parents' and students' explanations for truancy. During the 2002/2003 school year, there were a total of 210 student and 203 parent surveys collected. The data reveal that truancy is often a group activity, and that contrary to the stereotype that youth who are truant haunt the beaches or the malls, most truant youth are either at a friend's home or "cruising."

Reasons for being truant show some important gender differences. While both boys and girls are truant because they "don't fit in," girls are far more likely than boys to report that fear of bullying caused them to stay away from school (21% compared to 6%). Boys and girls equally report "fear of gangs" in their explanations for their truancy.

Ethnic differences were also seen in the data. Asians reported the highest percentage of being bullied as a cause for their truancy at 23%; bullying was also the most frequent explanation (16%) for truancy for Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian students. Asians also reported sexual harassment (15%) as an explanation for truancy more than any other ethnic group. Whereas "not fitting in" was not often reported by Asian students, it was the most frequent response for White students (30%), followed by fear of bullying

(20%). “Fear of gangs” was a more frequent response for Hawaiians (12%) and for Filipinos (8%) than for the other ethnic groups.

When asked, “What do you *dislike* about school?” the data reveal that disconnection from school and positive peer groups continue to be powerful explanations for truancy. In 73% (153 out of 210) of the responses, students stated some form of “disconnection” from school, which include being bored in class, disliking teachers and/or classes and subjects, feeling humiliated by teachers or other students, or not fitting in with peers. The statements provided in the surveys demonstrated that alienation from school is a strong link to truancy.

Most parents were at a loss when it came to ways to address their child’s truant behavior. Also, the majority of parents surveyed had already worked with the school on attendance issues previously and believed nothing seemed to work. Parents often reported that their children were not interested in school, something that dovetails with youth responses (e.g. “My child has no excitement to learn from the teacher”). Parents also listed family problems as a factor influencing their child’s attendance, something few youth reported.

It is also interesting to note that many parents did not respond to many questions, did not know what motivates their child, or were unaware of any other influential factors causing their children’s truancy. Furthermore, many parents appeared to have limited English ability as noted on their surveys. Due to lack of communication and cultural conflicts, the inability to understand English can impede parents’ involvement with the schools and their child’s academics.

In Fall 2003, a collaboration of members from the Office of Youth Services (OYS), Family Court, Honolulu Police Department (HPD), Department of Education (DOE), and University of Hawaii at Manoa (including two members of the YGP staff), started the Truancy Prevention Study Group. The group’s main objectives are to understand truancy, understand schools’ current truancy programs and policies, and devise other solutions for truancy in the future. The Truancy Prevention Study Group selected three schools on Oahu and summarized those schools’ efforts in addressing truancy; these include a “career development academy,” tutorial service for students, and a school attendance monitor. Overall, the trend (based on this small sample) appears to

be moving away from punishment and more toward keeping students motivated and interested in school.

CHAPTER I

JUVENILE ARREST TRENDS IN HAWAII

By Nancy Marker and Meda Chesney-Lind

Introduction

The Youth Gang Project has tracked juvenile arrests in Hawaii over the years and has compared these arrest trends to those of the nation as a whole. While arrest trends reflect only part of the picture of gangs and delinquency in our island state, they are, when used in combination with other sources of data, a good measure of the dimensions of the juvenile crime problem.

National Trends, 1993-2002

Nationally, juvenile crime, as measured by arrests of youth under 18 years of age, decreased 10.9% in the ten-year period of 1993-2002 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2003). Violent crime arrests were down 29.3% and property crimes decreased 34% for an overall index crime decrease of 33.3%. Arrests for drug abuse violations, however, increased 59.1%, slightly more than the increase for adults (34.5%). The status offense of running away decreased 37.4%. Arrests for carrying and possession of weapons by juveniles decreased 46.8%.

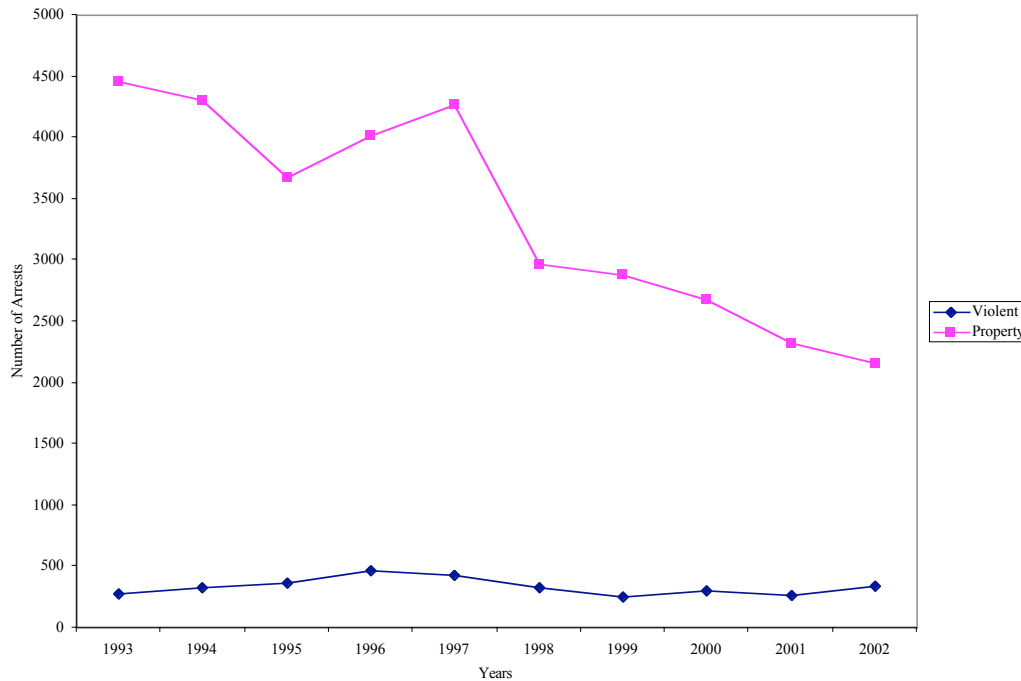
Some variations appear by gender in the juvenile arrests trends. While the total number of arrests declined, females under age 18 had an increase of 6.4% in the ten-year period while arrests of juvenile males declined 5.9%. With more serious index crimes, both males and females arrests were lower in 2002 than in 1993. The same is true for runaway offense arrests (-40.7% for boys and -34.9% for girls). However, the trend for drug abuse violations arrests was upward--120% for girls compared to 51.2% for boys. Girls had a greater increase in "other assaults" arrests in the ten years--40.9% for girls and only 4.3% for boys.

Juvenile arrests accounted for 18.2% of all arrests nationally in 2003. Juvenile males were 15.3% of all arrests of males and juvenile females were 20.8% of all female arrests (FBI, 2003).

Trends in Hawaii, 1993-2002

Overall, juvenile arrests in Hawaii are down 35.6% from 1993. For Index crimes—the more serious offenses—the 2002 figure declined 47.5% over the previous 10-year period (see Chart 1). This is an even more remarkable decline than the national findings (which saw a 10.9% decrease). As reported by the Department of the Attorney General (2003), this is the fifth consecutive year for serious juvenile crime to decline. In the past year, there was a very slight increase (3%) in the total number of youth arrests (Department of the Attorney General, 2003).

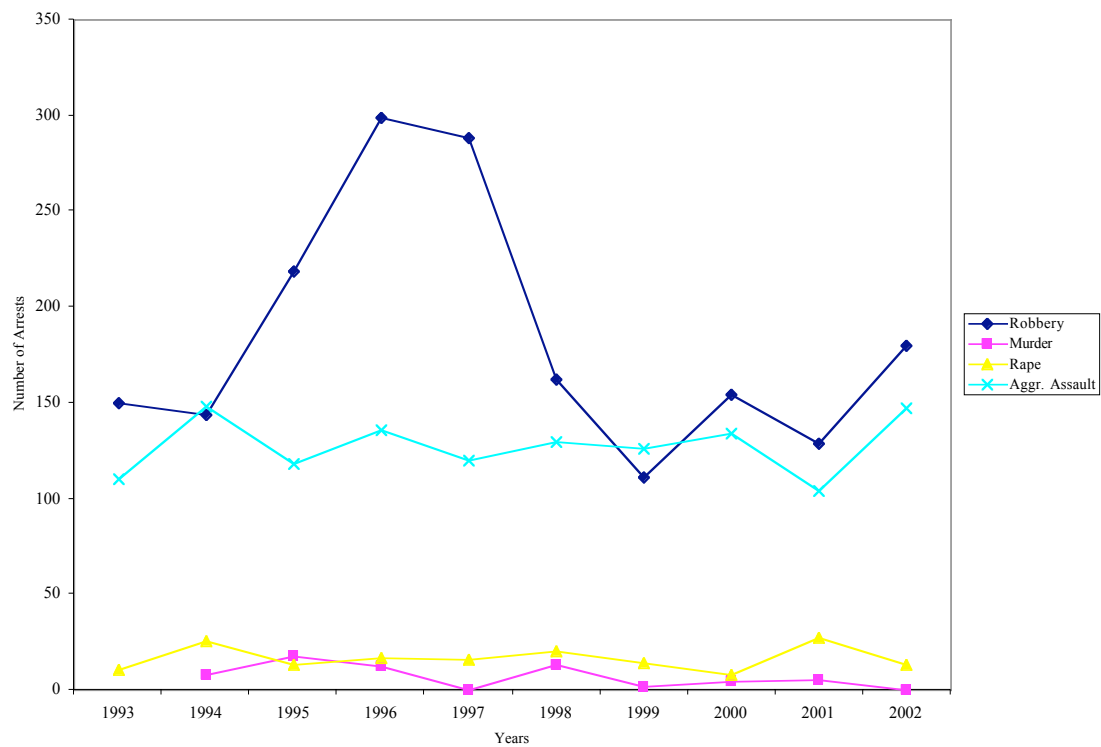
Youths arrested for Index violent offenses (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) accounted for 2.7% of all juvenile arrests in the state. Index property crimes—burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson—resulted in 17.4% of the arrests. Part II offenses (all others) such as “other assaults,” vandalism, drugs possession or sales, weapons violations, offenses against family members and the status offenses of runaway and curfew, were 79.8% of the arrests. Nearly half (49%) of the Part II offenses arrests were status offense arrests and they accounted for 35.8% of all juvenile arrests.

Chart 1: Juvenile Arrests for Index Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

From 1993 to 2002, Index property offenses declined by 51.9%, with the largest drop occurring between 1997 and 1998 (Chart 3). During this time, arrests for violent offenses increased 20%, largely due to increased juvenile arrests for robbery and aggravated assault (Chart 2). All serious property crimes declined over the ten-year period, with burglary and larceny theft causing fewer arrests in 2002 than in any year since 1993 (Charts 3 & 4). Motor vehicle arrests in 2002 increased slightly from the previous two years but were less than reported in the 90's. For violent offenses, robbery arrests increased 16.6% since 1993 but have declined significantly since a dramatic peak in 1996. As that chart shows, it did increase between 2001 and 2002 by 28.3%. Aggravated assault arrests increased in the past year, with the current arrest levels now equaling the previous high seen in 1994. Arrests for forcible rape and murder fluctuate over the ten-year period. As was the case in 1997, no juvenile murder arrests were made in 2002.

Chart 2: Juvenile Arrests for Part I Violent Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

Chart 3: Juvenile Arrests for Part I Property Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002

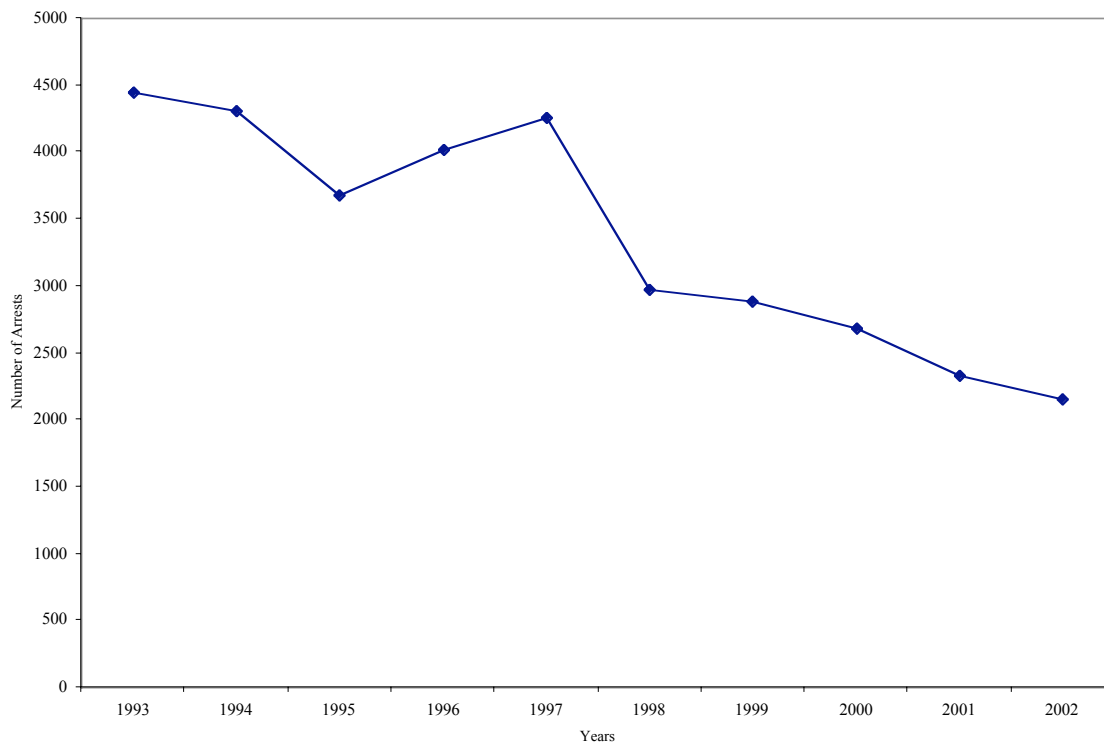
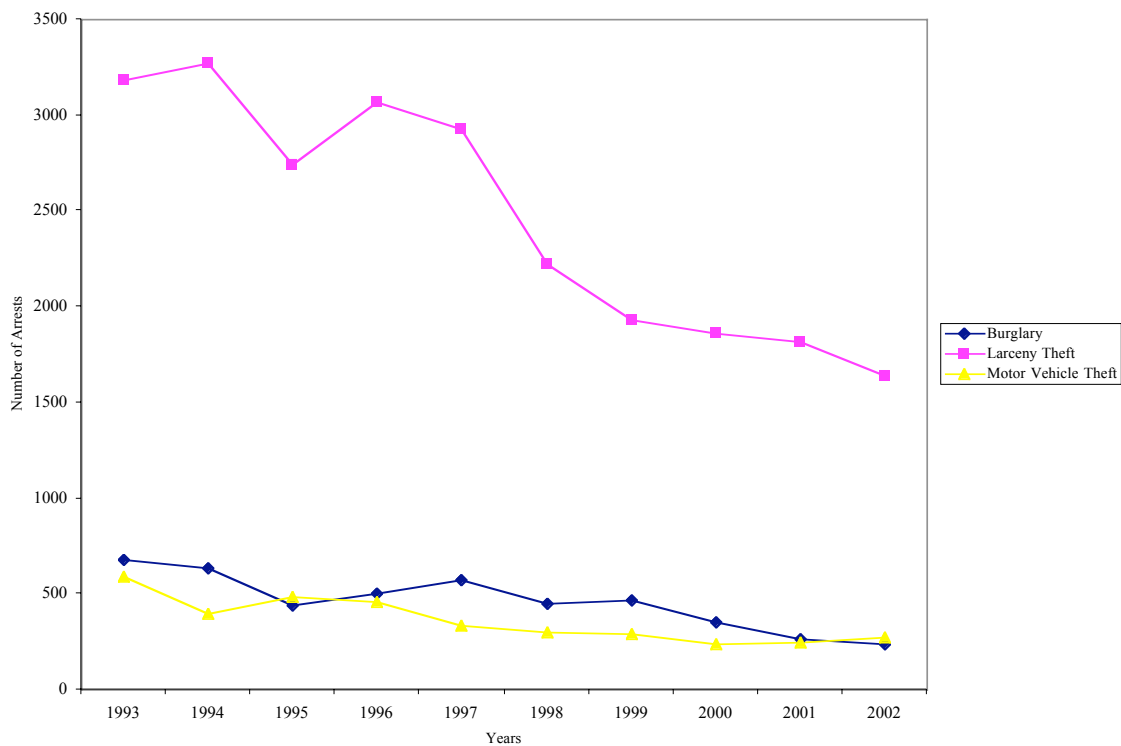
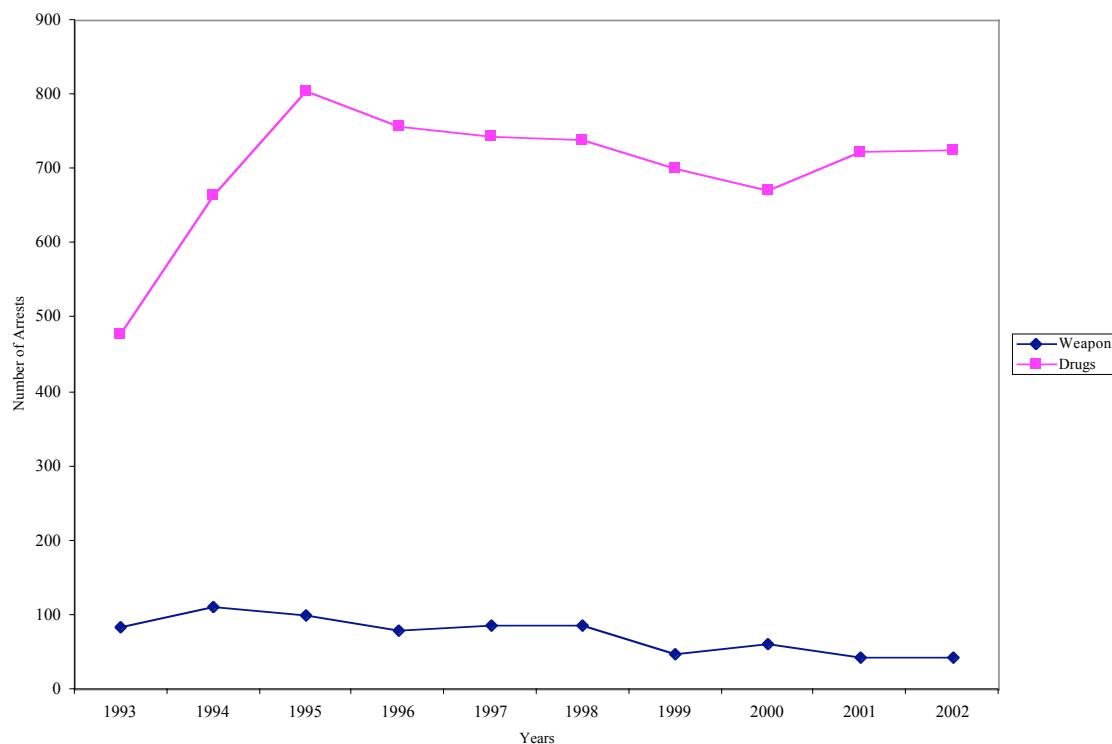


Chart 4: Juvenile Arrests for Burglary, Larceny, and Motor Vehicle Theft in Hawaii, 1993-2002



Source for both: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

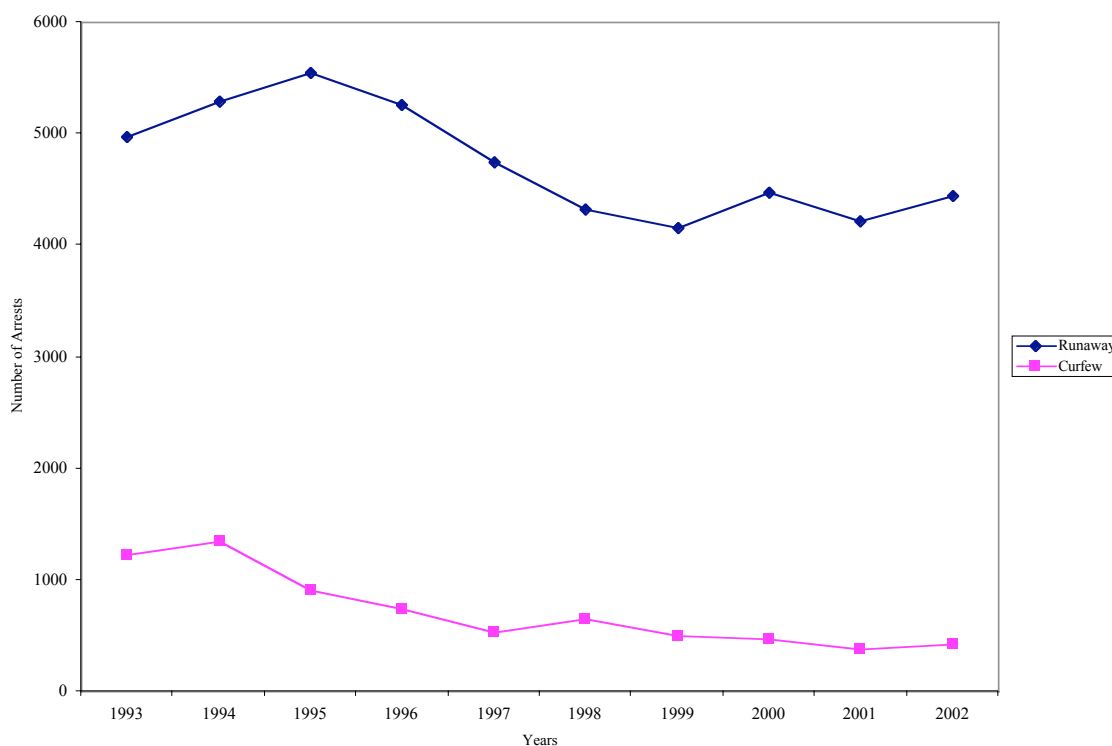
Chart 5: Juvenile Arrests for Weapons and Drugs in Hawaii, 1993-2002

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

Weapons and Drug Offenses

Arrests for weapons offenses declined 50.5% in the decade. Drugs arrests, however, increased 34%. After a drop in drug arrests since 1995, the trend edged upwards in 2001 and 2002 (Chart 5). Drugs and weapons alone accounted for 6% of all juvenile arrests. The offense called “other assault,” a Part II offense that includes fights, accounted for 8.6% of all arrests.

Drug offenses arrests were similar the past two years, down since 1995 but 34% higher than its low for the decade in 1993 (Chart 5). Nearly three quarters (72%) of drug offense arrests in 2003 were for marijuana possession.

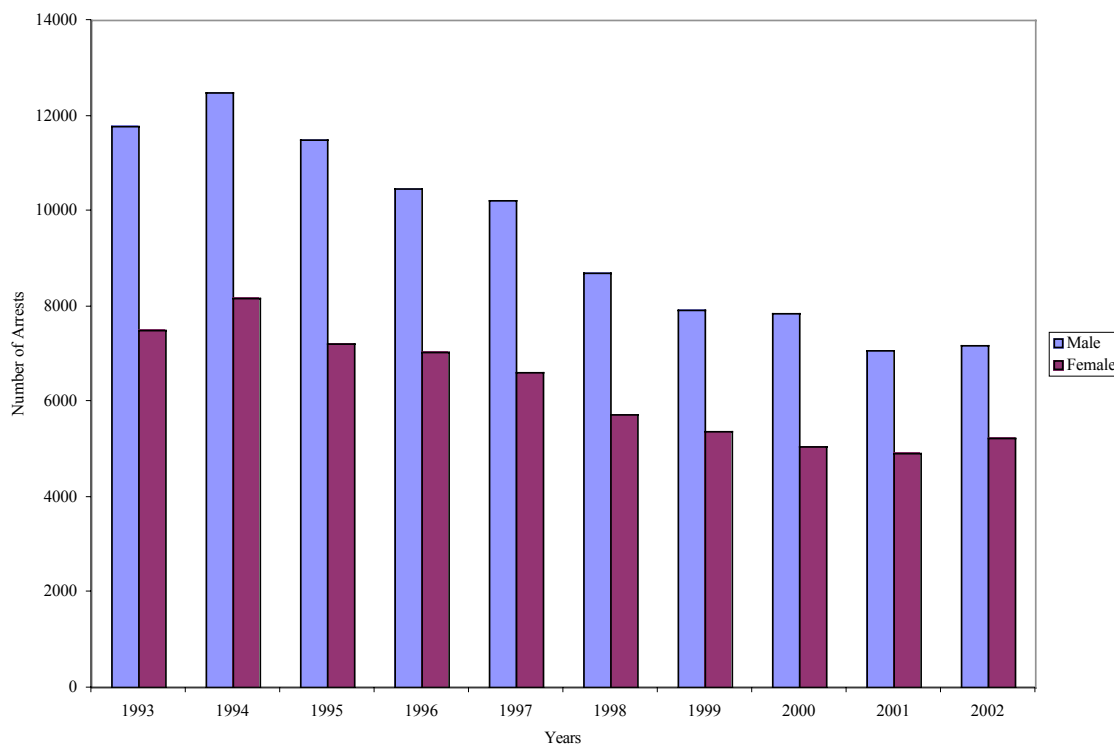
Chart 6: Juvenile Arrests for Status Offenses in Hawaii, 1993-2002

Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

Over the decade, runaway arrests declined 11% and curfew violation arrests greatly dropped 66% (Chart 6). A combination of these two status offenses shows a decline in arrests of 22% since 1993. Both offenses had a slight increase from 2001 to 2002.

Arrests by Gender

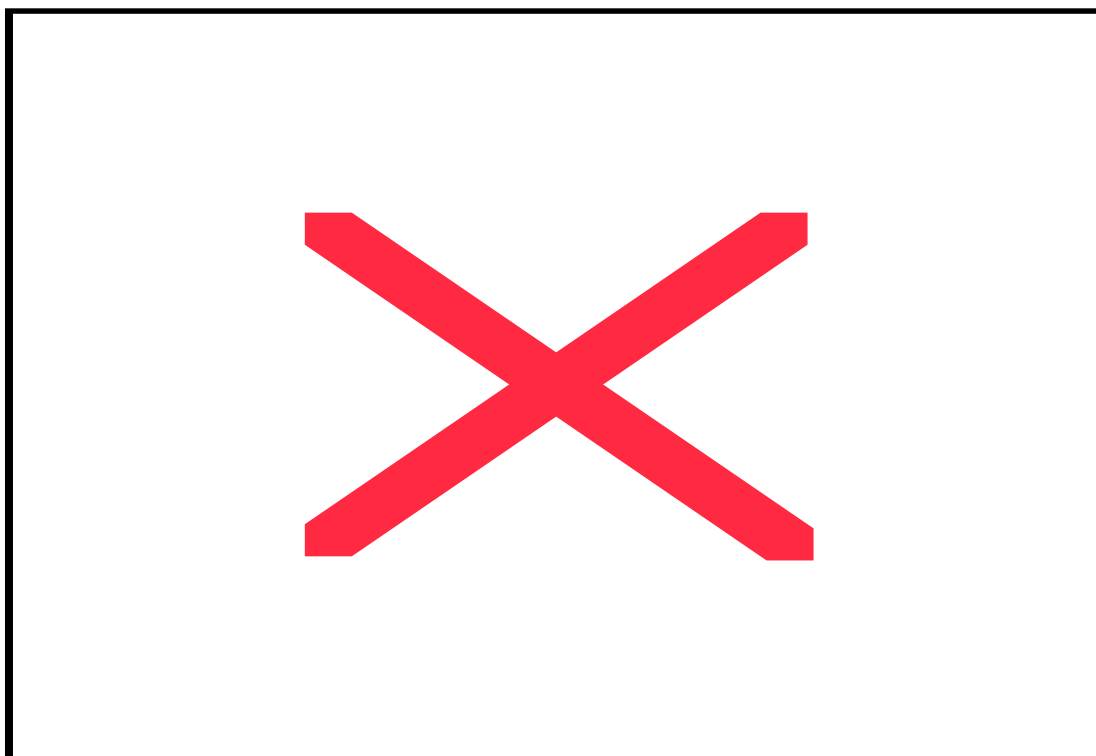
Juvenile males accounted for 68.5% of the arrests for Part 1 Index offenses and 55.1% of the arrests for Part II Offenses in 2002. This larger proportion of females with Part II arrests (44.9%) is attributed primarily to status offense arrests (Charts 8 & 9). This gender difference in number and type of arrests has been similar over the previous decade. Locally, then, arrests of girls account for over two fifths (42%) of juvenile arrests, compared to only 29% nationally.

Chart 7: Juvenile Arrests in Hawaii by Gender, 1993-2002**Chart 8:** Juvenile Arrests for Part I and II Offenses by Gender, 2002

Source for both: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

Because of the significance of status offense arrests in Hawaii's juvenile crime picture, arrests of girls in our state have always been higher than the national average. Arrests for males and females overall indicate that girls make up only a slightly higher percentage of arrests now than 10 years ago—42% in 2002 compared to 39% in 1993.

Chart 9: Status Offenses in Hawaii by Gender, 2002



Source: Uniform Crime Reporting System, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Taken from Crime in Hawaii, 2002. Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Justice Assistance Division.

Nearly three quarters (73.6%) of youth arrested for drug offenses were males as were 86% of those arrested for weapons offenses. In the offense of "other assaults," females were arrested for nearly one-third (31.5%) and with "offense against family members/children, they accounted for 33.6%. When turning to the two status offenses for which data is available, and particularly the offense of runaway, females are a majority of those arrested. In 2002, girls were 61.7% of those arrested for runaway.

Summary

Like the US mainland, Hawaii's juvenile crime problem, as measured by juvenile arrests, has generally decreased markedly; however, the decrease is uneven. Arrests of youth for index property crimes show decreases (some dramatic) in the last decade. The news, though, is not all good. Arrests of youth for serious crimes of violence showed an increase of 20% due to increases in arrests of youth for robbery and aggravated assault. This is unlike the national picture, where juvenile arrests in this category actually decreased by 29.3%. Arrests of youth for drug offenses, in particular, have risen 34% in the last decade which, while dramatic, is actually lower than the 59.1% increase seen nationally. Also, Hawaii's high arrest rate for status offenses--these offenses account for 35.8% of Hawaii's juvenile arrests and 12.3% of juvenile arrests nationally—produce challenges to a juvenile justice system used to dealing with boys and their problems.

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CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH GANGS: A REVIEW OF NATIONAL FINDINGS

By Shayna Freeman

Introduction

In 2003, the Youth Gang Project (YGP) reviewed past and current literature on the national gang problem, in order to shed light on Hawaii's gang situation. The areas of concern for gang problem researchers typically include gang growth, gang migration, types of gangs, race and ethnic composition, female involvement with gangs, and community and individual risk factors associated with gang involvement. This chapter will: 1) summarize contemporary findings in these areas and 2) propose potential gang prevention, mediation, and intervention programs.

National Gang Problem Research—Past and Present Findings

Historical youth gang research, from the mid 1920s to the early 1970s, reported street gangs as a mostly urban phenomenon. Prior to 1960, gangs were thought to exist in large urban centers and only included fifty communities across the United States, most notably New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Antonio, and El Paso (Klein 2002, p. 244). During this period American gang membership was considered primarily a male activity. These gangs consisted of several different ethnic and racial backgrounds, of which included European immigrant populations (such as Polish, Irish, Italian and Jewish), Black, and Hispanic groups (Klein, 2002). Starting in the mid-1980s, the frequency as well as the racial and ethnic composition of gangs began to change.

Gang membership in the United States has grown steadily and rapidly since this time, with more than 26,000 different gangs and nearly 850,000 members existing today (National Youth Gang Center, 2000). Gangs increased nearly tenfold, with over 2500 cities in the late 1990s reporting activity (Miller, 2001). The 2001 National Youth Gang Survey reported that all cities with a population of 250,000 or more have gang activity².

² The National Youth Gang Survey includes the following: a total of 1,216 police departments serving cities with a population of 25,000 or more (larger cities); a total of 661 suburban county police and sheriff's

The survey also stated that the largest gang-problem cities, those with a population of 100,000 or more, have consistently reported greater numbers of members over the years (Egley and Major, 2003). This increase in gang activity has resulted in the rise of gang-related crimes as well. The number of gang-related homicides in Los Angeles and Chicago alone was greater than the total number from the other 130 cities participating in the survey. While larger cities still encompass the majority of youth gang activity, smaller jurisdictions are beginning to take notice of street gangs and youth gang-related crime also, with rural counties reporting over 1,716 gangs in the year 2000 (Short, 2002; Klein, 2002).

Essential to understanding gangs is the ability to identify gang members and define gang membership. Studies on gang behavior have acknowledged the difference between “crews” and “gangs.” (De la Cruz, Alsaybar, Adefuin and Nguyen, 2002). Crews are characterized by their non-violent behavior and may often be the formative stage of a gang. They tend to emulate a ‘gangsta’ look but are not as popular and have fewer members in the group. Gangs typically engage in more criminal activities. This may range from graffiti/tagging to more serious law-breaking activities such as fighting, selling drugs and robbing homes (White, 2002). In Hawaii, an individual is identified by law enforcement as belonging to a gang if this person meets three of the following twelve criteria:

1. Self-admission of gang membership.
2. Tattoos depicting gang affiliations.
3. Style of dress consistent with gang membership.
4. Possession of gang graffiti on personal property or clothing.
5. Use of hand signs or symbol associated with gangs.
6. Reliable informant identifies a person as a gang member.
7. Associates with known gang members.
8. Prior arrests with known gang members; crimes consistent with usual gang activity.
9. Statements from family members indicating gang membership.

departments (suburban counties); a randomly selected sample (n=398) of police departments serving cities with a population between 2,500 and 25,000 (smaller cities); a randomly selected sample (n=743) of rural county police and sheriff’s departments (rural counties).

10. Other law enforcement agencies identify the subject as a gang member.
11. Attendance at gang functions of known gang hangouts.
12. Identified by other gang members or rival gang members.

This system is similar to that used by Los Angeles County. It has been deemed beneficial in jurisdictions where legislation allows for enhanced penalties and increased likelihood of prosecution if the defendant has been identified as gang-related.³

Risk Factors

In order to understand the underlying attraction of gangs, it is necessary to identify risk factors behind gang formation and membership.

Community risk factors include social disorganization, poverty, absence of meaningful jobs, and unemployment (Curry and Thomas, 1992; Juvenile Justice Department, 2000). Gangs tend to form in economically distressed areas that suffer from multiple marginality—combined disadvantages of low socioeconomic status, segregation, racial discrimination, and lack of education. The personal attributes of youth who join gangs often reflect growing up in such communities where street socialization and survival rely on a “tough guise.” Youth who join gangs often hold more antisocial beliefs, tend to resolve conflict with threats, and deal with stressful and dangerous situations fairly regularly (Maxson and Whitlock, 2000). Youth at risk for gang involvement often show higher levels of social isolation, higher tolerance for deviance, and higher levels of commitment to delinquent peer groups (Esbensen, Huizinga, and Weiher, 1993).

Researchers have found that one of the strongest predictors of gang involvement is association with delinquent peer groups (Juvenile Justice Department 2000, p.3). Youth who have high levels of interaction with antisocial peers and low commitment to positive, nondelinquent peer groups are more at risk for gang involvement (Juvenile Justice Department 2000, p.3). Additionally, peers from low income, disrupted, single parent families are also more at risk for gang involvement, although it is not sufficient to claim this is always the case (Klein, 2002). An analysis of gang environments shows that gangs

³ California’s Proposition 21 is one such example. In California, individuals convicted of committing a serious felony receive sentencing enhancements of up to 5 years if they are identified as gang members. (National Youth Gang Center 2004).

provide a mechanism to cope with oppressive surroundings (White, 2002). With strong attachment to delinquent peer groups and low attachment to positive family relations, these youth also often have a low attachment to school, low to no commitment to education, and poor grades.

On average, initial gang membership peaks at the age of 15, approximately the age of transition from middle school to high school (Hill, et. al., 2001). Because minorities are more likely to reside in high-risk neighborhoods, gang members more often tend to be of an ethnic minority, to be male, and to be living in an urban environment. This does not discount the presence of females in gangs nor is it limited to only ethnic minorities. Recent research has suggested that while Caucasians only constitute 11 % of urban gang membership, they make up close to 30% of suburban and rural gangs (Juvenile Justice Bulletin, 2000). Additionally, research into girl gangs has shown that females may account for nearly one-third of gang membership (Esbensen and Winfree, 1998).

Gangs and Ethnicity/Race

The still-marginalized minorities of the 1980s—Hispanics, Blacks, and various Asian groups—compose most of modern gang membership. The history of Hispanic gangs dates back to the fight over Northern Mexican land in the late 1800s. Today this area is known as Nevada, California, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Texas and Colorado (Valdez, 1998). Due to the hostile take over of their land, Hispanic gangs began as a sentiment of animosity toward the United States. Contemporary Hispanic gangs continue to be turf-defensive, but their motivation for membership is based in other reasons as well. Some reasons include protection from other gangs, a way to gain respect, and connection to the informal drug economy.

One significant and powerful Los Angeles Hispanic gang, La Eme, also known as the Mexican Mafia, is a gang that began in the adult prison systems in the late 1960s and found its way to the streets. As gang leaders were paroled from prison, they impressed the prison life mentality on younger gang members in their community. The parolees were considered *veteranos* or veterans and were given the utmost respect and honor by the street gang members. The philosophy became: "Only the strong survive to prey on

the weak." (Valdez, 1998). The most violent-prone became the most-feared and most-respected. With this gang mentality and the consequent codes for conduct and dress, Hispanic gang activity expanded to other major cities and gradually became more violent and criminal by the mid-to late 1980s. By the mid-1990s, Hispanic gangs comprised most of the 1500 gangs that existed in Los Angeles, with one form of gang conflict arising from battles with African American gangs (Valdez, 1998).

African American gangs began in the late 1920s in Los Angeles, California, and originally formed to protect themselves against White gangs. Prior to this time, African Americans migrated to California, due in part to the Gold Rush, and as their population increased, resistance to their resettlement did as well. By the 1960s, LAPD recognized these African American groups and their criminal activity as "gang-related." In the 1980s the number of African American gangs included up to 30,000 members in the Los Angeles area (Alonso, 1998). African American gangs range from political groups such as the Black Panther Party, to more violent and criminally active street gangs like the Bloods and the Crips—two gangs that have spread their network to over 100 cities (Alonso, 1998). Similar to Hispanic gangs, most of the gang-related activity of the African American gangs includes drug trafficking, and one of the main reasons for membership is protection from other gangs (Alonso, 1998).

Asian youth gangs also originally formed as a means of protection from other gangs (Kodluboy, 1996). Before the mid 1970s Asian gangs consisted mostly of youth from immigrant families living in the "Chinatown" of large cities, and since that time, have included other new immigrant groups, such as Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian gangs (Kodluboy, 1996). Particularly for Filipino and Vietnamese youth, the stress and assimilation pressures (such as language barriers, poverty, cultural differences) faced daily promote gang involvement for these youth. Asian youth also deal with other social problems from which the gang provides respite; these include drugs, alcoholism, racism, criminal activity, and violent neighborhoods (De la Cruz, et. al., 2002).

A report done by the Asian Crime Investigation Section of the Los Angeles Police Department states that Hispanic and African American gang members commit crimes against people, for example, murder and attempted murder (Tiampo, 2003). This, in part, explains the high rate of violent crime in areas such as Los Angeles and Chicago. Unlike

Hispanic and African American gangs, Asian gang members more often commit crimes against property that tend to be driven by profit. The everyday crimes range from shoplifting to auto theft to residential invasions (Tiampo, 2003). This insight into Asian gangs may potentially explain why gang activities in Hawaii are typically non-violent. However, violence cannot be discounted from the proliferating Asian gangs. They are increasing in size along the Pacific Coast and the consequent criminal activity in these areas is also increasing (National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, 2000).

Girls and Gangs

Gang behavior has traditionally been understood as primarily a male phenomenon. Early research into girl gang members presented them as maladjusted, sexually promiscuous girls who were merely auxiliary members of male gangs. In later years, the media image of the “girl gang member” often depicted these girls as overly masculine, “bad girls,” typically of an ethnic background (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 2003). Recent research into girl gang members has confronted such stereotypes and has revealed the impact of race, poverty, and crime and drugs in these girls’ lives.

Several studies suggest that the majority of girl gang members grow up in impoverished environments (such as housing projects), have relatives who are in a gang, and have parents who are on public assistance or work unskilled labor jobs (Laidler and Hunt, 1997; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 2003). Girls most at risk for gang involvement come from homes in crisis and are often exposed to drug abuse and physical and sexual violence (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 2003, p.90). Kitchen’s (1995) study of African American girl gang members shows the importance of race and class in these girls’ lives. Facing both racism and sexism, the girls often found themselves in communities filled with poverty and easy access to drugs. These girls sought respect and acceptance and found it in their gang involvement and consequent drug dealing. Similarly, Campbell’s study of girl gang members found that the gang provided the girls in the barrio an escape from “a future of meaningless domestic labor, subordination to the man in the house, and the powerlessness of the underclass community.” (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 2003, p.74). While girls may still be subject to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse in the gang,

the context of the gang gives these girls a sense of empowerment not otherwise found in their homes, schools, or elsewhere in the community.

Compared to nongang girls, girl gang members are far more at risk for committing serious crimes, using alcohol and drugs, and becoming victims as well as perpetrators of violence (Miller, 2001). Girls may enter gangs for protection from their neighborhood and household environments. However, gang life also opens up the possibility of being victimized by rival gang members and violence associated through gang life in general (Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 2003, p. 89). One of the most disturbing examples of girls' victimization in the gang is the practice of "sexing in" (completing, whether through force or compliance, a variety of sexual activities with male gang member(s)).

Some researchers have noted gender differences in why youth join gangs. One contention is that girls, more than boys, join gangs in search of "family." Whereas boys join gangs for protection, a sense of excitement, and for money, girls join gangs because of socialization and associational aspects (Maxson and Whitlock, 2002). Girls' family members and friends are more likely to be gang members. Girls enter gangs at earlier ages than their male counterparts, partly due to the same relational and associational reasons. Because of having children and starting families, girls also age out of gangs earlier than boys (De la Cruz, et. al., 2002). These differences are important to keep in mind as communities respond to youth gang activity and involvement.

Responding to Youth Gangs

While traditional responses to youth gang problems stressed prevention, contemporary youth gang responses models incorporate a mixture of approaches. The most common emphasis is an integration of prevention, intervention, and suppression. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (1997), for a gang response system to be effective, it is necessary for the values and cultures of the community to be taken into account. Since the ultimate goal of prevention and intervention programs is to reduce criminal activity of gangs, these programs must also address the risk factors mentioned earlier in the chapter. These include building community organization, improving conditions for youth, creating safe and healthy environments for youth, developing early

childhood programs, and utilizing local clubs and after-school programs (Bureau of Justice, 1997). A successful program is one that youth leave with an understanding of their actions and the consequences from them. Lastly, programs can also intervene and restrict gang activity by collaborating with law enforcement. Such suppressive techniques include curfew ordinances, restriction of unsupervised youth congregations, and strict firearm suppressions (Egley et. al., 2003).

The following are briefly summarized national examples of youth gang programs that combine a variety of approaches. More information on the programs may be found in the OJJDP Summary of Youth Gang Programs and Strategies (Howell, 2000).

Philadelphia's Crisis Intervention Network (CIN). Philadelphia's Crisis Intervention Network (CIN) is one of the first gang response programs. Self-labeled successful, the program pioneered the use of detached workers (outreach workers who are dispatched from their office and work directly with gangs in the community) that were mobile and could travel to specific areas with high gang activity. It is one of the first programs to work in specific gang areas instead of with specific gangs. The goal of the program is to defuse situations that could become violent or disruptive. This program was taken to Los Angeles Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS) and implemented to use similar tactics, such as social activities for gang members and mediations meetings (truce talks) between rival gangs. It is important to note that the program did not claim the kind of success as it had by its predecessors in Philadelphia.

Tucson Gang Project (OUR Town Family Center, Tucson, Arizona). In collaboration with the Tucson Police Department, the local Boys and Girls Club, the Pima County juvenile probation and parole, a research and evaluation firm, the Tucson Unified School District and a treatment agency, La Fontera, the Tucson Gang Project is able to provide services to over 100 youth at-risk for gang membership. The youth in the project are monitored daily for behavioral improvement. The program delivers a series of graduated sanctions for their negative behaviors (behaviors that condone violent and/or criminal behavior). With each group doing their part of the program, all participants in the project are able to come together at the weekly staff meetings and review the changing needs and progress in the community. The lessons learned from this project

include the need for collaboration among various agencies as well as the need to solicit community support.

Bloomington/Normal's Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression (Project OZ, Inc., Bloomington, Illinois).

This project services the City of Bloomington, with a lighter focus on Normal, Illinois. In the area there are roughly eight gangs with approximately 640 members. The project collaborates with the Normal and Bloomington Police Departments, the McLean County Juvenile Court, juvenile probation, the schools within the cities, the Western Avenue Community Center, the Bloomington Boys and Girls Club, the McLean County State's Attorney, and other community agencies that focus on gang activities and at-risk youth. The project provides support, suppression, and intervention services, such as job training and job placement opportunities. One of the most important aspects of the program is that project workers are able to extend services to incarcerated youth gang members about to be released. Regular staff meetings and biweekly meetings with the Bloomington Police Department allow for consistent flexibility in social work approaches and needs assessments of the community. Due to the success of the project, it has been able to continue through the support of State, Federal and the local community.

San Antonio's Gang Rehabilitation, Assessment, and Services Program GRAASP (San Antonio, Texas, Police Department). This project is located in the community on the south side of San Antonio. In the area there are roughly 15 gangs with approximately 1,664 members. The project collaborates with the San Antonio Police Department, Bexar County Department of Probation, the Texas Youth Commission (TYC), the San Antonio Unified School District, the University of Texas at San Antonio, Cellular On Patrol (a citizens' crime watch group), and other community groups. GRAASP holds regular staff meetings of all collaborators and performs case management of at-risk youth. The project supports community health fairs, graffiti removal and other community development programs and develops entertaining activities for the at-risk youth. GRAASP has been able to service over 100 youth as well as provide neighborhood renewal and clean-up services.

Riverside's Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression (Riverside, California, Police

Department). This project takes place in two high gang-crime areas within the County of Riverside and reaches approximately 212 gangs with roughly 1,230 members. Project participants include the Riverside Police Department, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, the Riverside County and Alvord Unified School Districts, Youth Service Center, Riverside County Probation, the City of Riverside Human Resources Department and the University of California at Riverside. Service providers assist youth daily, in order to help them refrain from joining gangs. The workers add personal attention by making visits to youth's homes, in order to keep the communication level high. The program includes job training and job placement within the community, and youth are also given a voice in the project. Their attendance and input are valued at staff meetings, and they help with the development of the project. With each group doing their part in the program, Riverside's Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression are able to come together at weekly staff meetings, review progress and needs, and revise approaches.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the major risk factors and dynamics of national gang activity. The following are information and lessons for those working with or identifying Hawaii's gang youth:

1) Gang members often come from disrupted families in disadvantaged communities. Youth at risk for gang involvement are often socially and economically isolated.

2) Personal attributes of at risk youth include higher levels of tolerance for deviance and delinquency as well as higher commitment to delinquent friends. One of the strongest predictors of gang membership is association with delinquent peer groups.

3) While boys often join gangs for money, excitement, and protection, girls tend to join gangs because of familial and friendship associations. Some researchers maintain that girls seek gang membership as an escape from abusive households; the gang serves as "family."

4) Programs that serve at-risk and gang youth appear most successful when they combine a variety of approaches. These include prevention services for the very young at

risk, intervention services for those already exposed to gangs, and suppression techniques to impede gang activity in communities. Essential to gang mediation projects are collaboration among a variety of agencies as well as community involvement.

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CHAPTER III

UNDERSTANDING GANG INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITIES: RESULTS FROM THE 2000 HAWAII STUDENT ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE STUDY

By Lisa Pasko

Introduction

Under the guidance of Dr. Renee Pearson Klinge, the University of Hawaii (UH) has conducted statewide school surveys—the Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Surveys—each spring in even-numbered years⁴. The surveys are administered every two years to 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders. These surveys, which rely on adolescent self-reports, provide a variety of information on Hawaii’s communities and youth. In addition to questions concerning alcohol and drug use, the surveys also question other risk factors and risk-taking behaviors, such as being involved in a gang, having friends who are in a gang, carrying weapons, stealing motor vehicles, getting arrested, failing academically, and being suspended from school. Throughout 2003, the UH YGP analyzed these data in order to understand more fully the extent of gang involvement in Hawaii’s school complex areas.

Methodology

With assistance from the UH Center on the Family and the Hawaii State Incentive Grant evaluators, the individual responses (1474 total) from the 2000 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Survey were aggregated into their respective School Complex Area (SCA). (The year 2000 dataset was the last dataset available for analysis at the time of this publication.) Depending upon where the student resided, responses from students who attended private schools or public charter schools were aggregated into the respective SCA public school boundary, as defined by the Department of Education (DOE). After aggregation, the data were split in half—one representing high school responses (10th and 12th graders) and one representing elementary and

⁴ The Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Survey are funded by the Department of Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse (ADAD) Division. See references for full citation of Dr. Klinge’s report.

intermediate schools (6th and 8th graders). This style of aggregated SCA data allowed for comparisons among school complex areas as well as comparison among older and younger students.

The 2000 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Survey represent an ethnically diverse population of intermediate and high school students from across the entire state. The data contain slightly higher responses from female students and from 6th and 8th graders, who were more likely to complete parental consent forms and to attend school. What is important to note in the following analyses is that several of the smaller school complex areas had low response rates, with only a few students responding. For example, because Hana (Maui County) had only one response from their 10th and 12th graders, Hana (high school level) was omitted from this analysis.

Of particular interest to YGP is the variable "gang involvement," which is a summated scale of three items on the 2000 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Survey. These items include 1) have you ever belonged to a gang; 2) did the gang have a name, and 3) are you currently in a gang? A "yes" to any of the above questions yields a "yes" toward gang involvement for the complex. Using the distribution (0-37.5%) and mean (19.0%) responses from all the complexes, YGP developed a scale of low to high gang involvement (1=0-13.5%; 2=13.51-16.8%; 3=16.81-20%; 4=20.1-24%; 5=24.1% or higher). The following tables, which are listed alphabetically and divided by intermediate/elementary and high school levels, show where each SCA falls in this scale.

Table 2: Gang Involvement by School Complex, Elementary and Middle Schools, Grades 6 & 8

| Complex | 1 (low) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (high) |
|---------------|---------|---|---|---|----------|
| Aiea | | | X | | |
| Baldwin | | X | | | |
| Campbell | | | | | X |
| Castle | X | | | | |
| Central Hilo | | | | | X |
| Central Kauai | | | X | | |
| East Kauai | | X | | | |
| Farrington | | | | | X |
| Hana | | | | | X |
| Hilo | | X | | | |
| Honokaa | | | | X | |
| Kau | | | | | X |
| Kahuku | X | | | | |
| Kailua | X | | | | |
| Kaimuki | X | | | | |
| Kaiser | X | | | | |
| Kalaheo | X | | | | |
| Kalani | X | | | | |
| Kapolei | | | | | X |
| Keauu | | | | | X |
| Kohala | | | | | X |
| Lahainaluna | | X | | | |
| Lanai | | | X | | |
| Laupahoehoe | X | | | | |
| Leilehua | | | | | X |
| Maui | | | X | | |
| McKinley | | | | X | |
| Moanalua | | | | X | |
| Molokai | | | | X | |
| Nanakuli | | | X | | |
| North Kona | | X | | | |
| Pahoa | | | | | X |
| Radford | | | X | | |
| Roosevelt | X | | | | |
| South Kona | | X | | | |
| Waianae | | | | X | |
| Waialua | X | | | | |
| Waipahu | | | | X | |
| West Kauai | | | X | | |

1= Less than 13.5% of the complex population report being gang involved;

2= 13.51-16.8% of the complex population report being gang involved;

3= 16.81-20% of the complex report being gang involved;

4= 20.1-24% report being gang involved;

5= 24.1% or higher percentage report being gang involved

Table 3: Gang Involvement by School Complex, High Schools, Grades 10 & 12

| Complex Area | 1 (low) | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (high) |
|----------------|---------|---|---|---|----------|
| Aiea | | | | X | |
| Baldwin | | | X | | |
| Campbell | | | | | X |
| Castle | | X | | | |
| Central Hilo | X | | | | |
| Central Kauai | | X | | | |
| East Kauai | | X | | | |
| Farrington | | | | | X |
| Hilo | | | X | | |
| Honokaa | X | | | | |
| Kau | | | | | X |
| Kahuku | | | X | | |
| Kailua | | | X | | |
| Kaiser | X | | | | |
| Kalaheo | | X | | | |
| Kalani | | X | | | |
| Kapolei | | | | X | |
| Keaau | | | | | X |
| King Kekaulike | | X | | | |
| Kohala | | | | | X |
| Lahainaluna | | | | | X |
| Lanai | | | | | X |
| Laupahoehoe | X | | | | |
| Leilehua | | | | | X |
| Maui | | | | X | |
| Mililani | | | X | | |
| Moanalua | | | | X | |
| Molokai | X | | | | |
| Nanakuli | | | X | | |
| North Kona | | | X | | |
| Pahoa | | X | | | |
| Pearl City | | | | | X |
| Radford | | | X | | |
| Roosevelt | | | X | | |
| South Kona | | | X | | |
| Waianae | | | | X | |
| Waialua | | | | X | |
| Waipahu | | | | | X |
| West Kauai | | X | | | |

1= Less than 13.5% of the complex population report being gang involved;

2= 13.51-16.8% of the complex population report gang involved;

3= 16.81-20% of the complex report being gang involved;

4= 20.1-24% report being gang involved;

5= 24.1% or higher percentage report being gang involved

For intermediate and elementary school complexes, the SCA's that placed highest on the scale include Campbell, Central Hilo, East Kauai, Farrington, Hana, Kau, Kapolei, Keaau, Leilehua, and Paho. SCA's placing lowest are Castle, Kahuku, Kailua, Kaimuki, Kaiser, Kalaheo, Kalani, Laupahoehoe, Roosevelt, and Waialua.

For high school complexes, the SCA's that fell highest on the scale involve Campbell, Farrington, Kau, Keaau, Kohala, Lahainaluna, Lanai, Leilehua, Pearl City, and Waipahu. The SCA's that scored lowest include Central Hilo, Honokaa, Kaiser, Laupahoehoe, and Molokai. One caveat to these 10th and 12th grade findings is that the response rates for Kau (8 responses total), Kahuku (26 responses total), Kapolei (49 responses total), Laupahoehoe (12 responses), and Keaau (15 responses total) were low. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that a few unusual cases can skew the results and consequently may cause a misrepresentation in gang involvement.

Risk Factors Correlated with Gang Involvement

In order to understand why some of these complexes have higher levels of gang involvement, YGP listed the top ten SCA's overall (divided by grade levels) and correlated each complex with other risk factors from the survey that can contribute to gang involvement. The following tables present this information.

Table 4: School Complex Area by Grade Level Reporting Highest Gang Involvement

| Area Responses | Percentage Reporting Gang Involvement | Total |
|--|--|--------------|
| Kau (10 th and 12 th graders) | 37.5% | (8) |
| Kau (6 th and 8 th graders) | 31.8% | (44) |
| Leilehua (10 th and 12 th graders) | 31.2% | (371) |
| Lanai (10 th and 12 th graders) | 31.0% | (42) |
| Hana (6 th and 8 th graders) | 30.8% | (26) |
| Kohala (6 th and 8 th graders) | 30.6% | (108) |
| Campbell (10 th and 12 th graders) | 30.2% | (462) |
| Waipahu (10 th and 12 th graders) | 29.0% | (614) |
| Farrington (10 th and 12 th graders) | 28.7% | (243) |
| Keaau (6 th and 8 th graders) | 28.5% | (179) |
| Mean percentage for all complexes | 19% | (1474) |

Table 5: Selected Risk Factors for SCA's Reporting Highest Gang Involvement, Year 2000

| Variables (% reporting) | Mean of all complexes | Kau 10 th , 12 th (8)* | Kau 6 th , 8 th (44) | Leilehua 10 th , 12 th (371) | Lanai 10 th , 12 th (42) | Hana 6 th , 8 th (26) |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| Gang Involvement | 19.0% | 37.5% | 31.8% | 31.2% | 31% | 30.8% |
| Poor family supervision | 45.9% | 25.0 | 70.0 | 48.0 | 52.3 | 76.9 |
| Family Conflict | 39.8% | 12.5 | 47.7 | 46.9 | 35.7 | 38.5 |
| Low school commitment | 44.8% | 12.5 | 34.0 | 47.7 | 38.1 | 53.8 |
| Academic failure | 42.3% | 25.0 | 34.0 | 41.4 | 50.0 | 57.7 |
| Depression | 45.2% | 50.0 | 63.6 | 46.9 | 45.2 | 61.5 |
| Ever suspended | 7.7% | 14.2 | 14.0 | 12.0 | 23.8 | 16.7 |
| Ever carried a handgun | 2.6% | 14.2 | 9.3 | 2.9 | 7.1 | 8.3 |
| Ever sold illegal drugs | 5.0% | 0 | 7.1 | 2.1 | 14.3 | 12.5 |
| Ever stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle | 2.2% | 0 | 7.0 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 12.5 |
| Ever been arrested | 4.0% | 0 | 9.0 | 4.6 | 9.5 | 12.5 |
| Ever attacked someone | 7.2% | 28.6 | 14 | 8.9 | 21.4 | 4.2 |
| Ever been drunk or high at school | 11.6% | 14.2 | 4.8 | 7.0 | 28.6 | 20.8 |
| Ever taken a handgun to school | 1.1% | 0 | 7.0 | 1.4 | 2.4 | 12.5 |
| Have a friend who has been suspended | 36.7% | 42.9 | 46.5 | 44.5 | 69.0 | 32.0 |
| Have a friend who carried a handgun | 4.9% | 14.2 | 16.3 | 5.5 | 4.8 | 16.0 |
| Have a friend who sold illegal drugs | 22.7% | 42.8 | 4.7 | 9.2 | 45.2 | 25.0 |
| Have a friend who has stolen a motor vehicle | 10.7% | 14.2 | 4.7 | 8.2 | 9.5 | 24.0 |
| Have a friend who has dropped out of school | 17.6% | 28.5 | 9.3 | 12.3 | 23.8 | 24.0 |
| Have a friend who has been arrested | 21.4% | 42.8 | 11.6 | 23.0 | 33.0 | 28.0 |
| Have friend who is in a gang | 15.6% | 42.8 | 21.0 | 22.9 | 23.8 | 16.0 |

* Number in () represents total responses in the survey. Footnote: some SCA's have fewer responses due to low response rates while others have fewer numbers due to the smaller size of the complex. In this analysis, Kau 10th and 12th and Farrington 10th and 12th have low response rates after considering the size of the complex.

Table 6: Selected Risk Factors for SCA's Reporting Highest Gang Involvement, Year 2000

| Variables (% reporting) | Mean of all complexes | Kohala 6 th , 8 th (108)* | Campbell 10 th , 12 th (462) | Waipahu 10 th , 12 th (614) | Farrington 10 th , 12 th (243) | Keaau 6 th , 8 th (179) |
|---|--------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Gang Involvement | 19.0% | 30.6% | 30.2% | 29.0% | 28.7% | 28.5% |
| Poor family supervision | 45.9% | 59.3 | 43.0 | 44.7 | 52.0 | 45.4 |
| Family Conflict | 39.8% | 51.9 | 42.3 | 40.1 | 45.0 | 47.4 |
| Low school commitment | 44.8% | 60.2 | 42.0 | 32.5 | 34.0 | 57.5 |
| Academic failure | 42.3% | 48.1 | 54.5 | 48.0 | 43.1 | 50.8 |
| Depression | 45.2% | 56.5 | 54.3 | 49.0 | 52.3 | 56.2 |
| Ever suspended | 7.7% | 11.3 | 7.4 | 9.0 | 3.4 | 17.2 |
| Ever carried a handgun | 2.6% | 4.7 | 2.2 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 2.3 |
| Ever sold illegal drugs | 5.0% | 5.7 | 5.6 | 7.2 | 31.5 | 2.9 |
| Ever stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle | 2.2% | 2.8 | 2.2 | 3.2 | 13.0 | 1.0 |
| Ever been arrested | 4.0% | 3.8 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 2.8 | 4.0 |
| Ever attacked someone | 7.2% | 8.5 | 6.8 | 10.0 | 6.2 | 9.0 |
| Ever been drunk or high at school | 11.6% | 13.2 | 19.2 | 17.2 | 10.3 | 9.7 |
| Ever taken a handgun to school | 1.1% | 1.9 | 0 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Have a friend who has been suspended | 36.7% | 50.5 | 38.0 | 39.8 | 32.9 | 45.4 |
| Have a friend who carried a handgun | 4.9% | 5.7 | 8.5 | 7.8 | 8.2 | 9.0 |
| Have a friend who sold illegal drugs | 22.7% | 12.4 | 34.7 | 28.9 | 31.5 | 13.2 |
| Have a friend who has stolen a motor vehicle | 10.7% | 10.4 | 17.0 | 13.8 | 13.0 | 13.1 |
| Have a friend who has dropped out of school | 17.6% | 17.0 | 32.0 | 26.4 | 22.0 | 18.8 |
| Have a friend who has been arrested | 21.4% | 22.6 | 33.6 | 26.4 | 23.3 | 18.8 |
| Have friend who is in a gang | 15.6% | 22.6 | 27.2 | 25.5 | 20.7 | 23.0 |

* Number in () represents total responses in the survey. Footnote: some SCA's have fewer responses due to low response rates while others have fewer numbers due to the smaller size of the complex. In this analysis, Kau 10th and 12th and Farrington 10th and 12th have low response rates after considering the size of the complex.

These data show that all of the complexes scored higher or the same as the overall SCA mean (45.2%) in depression. Lanai 10th and 12th was the same as the mean, at 45.2%, with Kau 6th and 8th reporting the highest level (63.6%) among the SCA's listed. Additionally, all of these SCA's placed higher than the mean (15.6%) when reporting if they have a friend who is a gang member (range: Hana 6th and 8th at 16.0% to Kau 10th and 12th at 42.8%). With the exception of Hana and Farrington, the top ten SCA's for gang involvement had higher percentages in 'ever attacking someone'. With the exception of Lanai, these SCA's also more often reported having a friend who has carried a handgun.

In examining the variables that SCA's scored conspicuously higher than the mean, several notable differences occur. Kau 10th and 12th reported 21.4% higher incidences of ever attacking someone, 20.1% higher in having a friend who sold illegal drugs, 10.9% higher in having a friend who dropped out of school, and 21.4% in having a friend who has been arrested. Kau 6th and 8th also had higher reports of ever attacking someone (6.8% above the mean). Kau 6th and 8th also had a noticeably larger percentage of poor family supervision (24.1% above the mean) and friends who have carried a handgun (11.4%). Leilehua scored high in poor family supervision and family conflict as well as in reported suspensions (4.3 % above mean).

Several variables stand out when examining Lanai. Variables relating to delinquent and violent activities (ever suspended, ever sold drugs, ever arrested, ever attacked someone, ever drunk or high at school) are well above average. Of all SCA's listed, Lanai reported the highest percentage (28.6%) of 'ever been drunk or high at school.' Additionally, Lanai also had higher reports of delinquent peer groups. Having a friend who has been suspended (32.3% above the mean), who sold illegal drugs (22.5% above mean), who was arrested (11.6% above the mean), and who dropped out of school (11.2% above the mean) were also remarkably higher in comparison.

Kohala 6th and 8th saw higher scores in family conflict (12.1% higher) and poor family supervision (13.4% higher than average). Academic failure and friend suspended were also higher than averages. Waipahu 10th and 12th, Campbell 10th and 12th, and Farrington 10th and 12th all had perceptibly higher scores in the areas of associations with delinquent friends and with personal risk factors, such as experiencing academic failure

and/or being drunk or high at school. Farrington scored highest than the other SCA's listed in 'ever sold illegal drugs' (26.5% above the mean) and in 'ever stolen or tried to steal a motor vehicle' (10.8% above the mean). What is interesting to note is that while Farrington generally scored higher on most risk factors, they scored the same or lower in educational variables. Similar to the mean, 43.1% of Farrington students report academic failure, while less than the mean report low school commitment (32.5%, compared to 44.8%).

Lastly, Keaau 6th and 8th reported higher levels of academic problems: low school commitment, academic failure, and suspensions. Additionally, having a friend who has been suspended and experiencing family conflict was also somewhat above the mean (8.7% higher and 7.8% respectively).

Overall, the data show that in rural areas—Kau, Leilehua, Lanai, Hana, Kohala, and Keaau—family and academic risk factors (e.g. poor family supervision, suspensions, etc) are consistently higher. In more urban areas—Campbell, Waipahu, Farrington—personal risk-taking behaviors (such as selling drugs) and delinquent peer groups yield comparatively higher reports. One exception is Lanai that reported myriad risk factors at higher levels.

In order to understand why these school area complexes report higher levels of gang involvement and correlate risk factors, an examination of the community dynamics is needed. The next section summarizes information about each community and school complex area.

Understanding the Communities

The following information on each community represents an amalgamation of data collected by the Center on the Family (2003), U. S. Census Bureau (2000), and State of Hawaii Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Branch (2003).

Kau. Kau School Area Complex includes neighborhoods, such as Ninole, Honuapo, and Naalehu, and has a population less than 6,000. Geographically isolated, the residents confront a number of challenges. Over 35% of Kau residents have less than a high school education (compared to the state average of 18.6%). The unemployment rate is the highest in the state (16.1%) and the per capita income, \$14118, is 34% below the

overall average income for Hawaii residents. This places Kau in the lowest 10% per capita income of all communities in the state. Over 33% of families receive food stamps, and the child abuse rate (18%) is 7% above the state's average (11%).

Kau also reports the highest number of idle teens (teens not in school or working) in the state. Compared to the state mean of 43.9%, 86.5% of Kau adolescents report feeling unsafe in their neighborhood, although adolescents reporting exposure to illicit drugs is actually lower than the state mean (10.4%, compared to 14.5%). Reports of weak neighborhood ties are about the same as the state's average (38.5% to 38.6%, respectively). Teachers less often report a safe classroom environment (58.9%, compared to the state average 68.2%). The student ethnicity composition for the complex is 42% Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian, 32% Filipino/a, and 11.1% White (with the remainder divided among various ethnicities). The ethnic makeup of the community is about one-third White, one-third Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian, and less than one quarter Asian. Overall, Kau is an ethnically mixed community that faces many economic, social, and educational difficulties.

Leilehua. The Leilehua School Area Complex consists of Kunia, Wahiawa, Wheeler Army Airfield, Schofield Barracks, and Whitmore Village and is home to nearly 42,000 residents. Similar to Kau, Leilehua has a high unemployment rate at 9.3%, and the per capita income is the same as Kau, \$14,118. This also places Leilehua in the lowest 10% of all communities in Hawaii. Residential stability is also low, with nearly half of the residents in the military. The community educational attainment level is slightly above the state mean, with 31.8% of residents with some college education and 42.4% with a high school diploma. Safe neighborhoods and close community ties also appear problematic for Leilehua: 56% of adolescents report unsafe neighborhoods and 51.3% (compared to 38.6% for the state) report lacking close neighborhood ties. The ethnic make-up of Leilehua High consists of primarily Filipino/a (24%), Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian (18.2%), White (17%), and African American (9.1%). The community itself is also diverse, with 33% White, 28% Asian (over half of which are Filipino/a), 11.4% African American, and 11.8% Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian.

Nearly 35% of students in Leilehua SCA receive free or reduced cost lunch, and over 9% of households in the community receive public assistance (compared to 6.8% for

the State of Hawaii). Over 9% of children in the Leilehua area are at risk (defined by the DOE as children age 4-19, who are not high school graduates, living with one parent who is not a high school graduate, is single, divorced, or separated, and is below the poverty level). This is over four times the state's average. For Leilehua, residential instability, unsafe neighborhoods, and poverty appear as key hardships faced in the community.

Lanai. The island of Lanai has approximately 3,200 residents, with a large Asian population and the second-highest Filipino/a concentration. The per capita income is \$18,668 and is 13% below the state average. Relatively few residents receive food stamps or public assistance, and the unemployment rate for the area (5%) is below the state's average. In Lanai, There are no "idle" students and no students are assessed by the DOE as being at-risk. Most teachers report a safe school environment, and school attendance is the same as the state average, at 95%.

Nearly half of the residents do not have a high school diploma; this is 2.5 times higher than the mean for the state. Lanai has the third largest percentage of children in special education programs in Hawaii. Less than 2/3 of seniors at Lanai High plan to attend college. The percentage of recent immigrants and children seeking English proficiency courses exceeds that of most communities in Hawaii. If these data are coupled with previous findings in this chapter—higher use of alcohol and/or drugs at school, academic failure, suspensions—than a key challenge for the community appears to be an educational one.

Hana. The Hana area of Maui has 1,855 residents, and it has the second highest number of Native Hawaiians (34.5%) (Niihau has the most), with almost 2/3 of its residents claiming part-Hawaiian ethnic identity. The per capita income is \$16,439, 24% below the state average. Over 75% of students receive free or reduced lunch and nearly 11% of households receive public assistance. Over 32% of children age 3-19 years live in poverty, which is nearly three times higher than the average for the state. However, the unemployment rate for Hana is the same as the State of Hawaii's, 6.3%, and zero percent of students are categorized as at risk. Residential stability (residents who have lived in the same house from 1995-2000) is higher (72.6%) than Hawaii's mean (56.8%).

Although joblessness may not appear to be a hardship for Hana, the community does experience some educational challenges. The Hana area has more residents without

a high school diploma (21.8%) and fewer residents with college experience. It also has the third-highest percentage of “idle” teens and has the highest percentage of third graders who score below average on the SAT.

Kohala. The Kohala community on the Big Island incorporates Hawi, Hikapaloa, Kapaau, and Niuilii and has just over 6,000 residents. Compared with other communities, Kohala has large numbers of multi-ethnic people as well as a greater proportion of White residents. Although the percent of households receiving food stamps is slightly higher (18.7%) than average (13.2%), the per capita income for Kohala is only slightly lower than the state’s average. Unemployment and residential stability are not problems for the community. Additionally, most Kohala adults have earned a high school diploma (83.8%).

However, the percentage of “idle” teens in Kohala is high (14.5%). Almost 60% of adolescents report a lack of interest in school, and there is a greater proportion of special education students in Kohala than in other communities. More adolescents (55.8%) report feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods (compared to 43.9% for the state), and almost one quarter of adolescents report exposure to illicit drugs in their schools and communities. Fewer Kohala parents report checking their children’s homework (54.7%, compared to state average of 63.2%) and fewer parents feel positive about their children’s safety (59.3%, compared to 66.8%). Despite this, public school attendance (96.3%) is high, as are school graduation rates (100%). Combining this information with this chapter’s previous findings of poor family supervision (59.3%) and family conflict (51.9%), what appears problematic for Kohala is community safety and adequate supervision of children, especially those who are idle.

Campbell. Campbell area includes Ewa, Barber’s Point, East Kapolei, Honouliuli, Ocean Pointe, West Loch, and parts of Iroquois Point and Waipahu. It is home to almost 44,000 residents. Half of the residents are Asian, with 37% Filipino/a; Hawaiians/Part-Hawaiians constitute 17% of the population. The per capita income is \$17,645, 18% below the state mean. Although nearly 20% of families receive public assistance, unemployment is low (5.7%), home ownership is high (68.5%), and few young children live in poverty.

However, key challenges for Campbell area include strength of neighborhood ties and safety in the community. With rapid population growth, Campbell area has lower residential stability (51.1%) than other communities. More adolescents in these neighborhoods report feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods (60.5%, compared to the state mean of 43.9%). Adolescents also more frequently report lacking close neighborhood ties (47.1%, compared to 38.6% for the state). Fewer 8th graders also feel safe at school (28.9%, compared to 37.6% state average); fewer teachers report a safe teaching environment; and fewer parents report feeling positive about their children's safety. Campbell adolescents also report more exposure to illicit drugs in their neighborhood.

Waipahu. With more than 51,000 residents, the Waipahu area includes Waipahu, Waipio, Waikele, Robinson Heights, Royal Kunia, and parts of Village Park. It has one of the highest percentages of Asians, particularly Filipino/as (43.1%) and Pacific Islanders (6.2%). It has the fourth highest concentration of recent immigrants to the state. The per capita income is \$17,549 and is in the lowest 20% of the state. Over 14% of households receive public assistance; this is over twice the state's average. The percent of children who live below the poverty is about the same as the state. However, the percent of children at risk (age 4-19, living with a single parent who is not a high school graduate, is single, divorced or separated, and is below the poverty level) is four times higher than the state's average.

Similar to Campbell, some data suggest that safety in the community and in the schools are key areas of concerns for Waipahu students and schools. Over half (51.8%) of Waipahu adolescents report feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, and only 27.6% of 8th graders report feeling safe at school, compared to the state mean of 37.6%. Fewer teachers report a safe working environment in Waipahu than in other communities (58.9%, compared to state average of 68.2%). However, in Waipahu, fewer adolescents report exposure to illicit drugs (12.4%, compared to state mean of 14.5%), and the percentage of idle teens is about the same as the state (9.4% to 8.6%, respectively).

Farrington. With over 46,000 residents, Farrington's includes the areas most commonly known as Kalihi. It has the highest percentage of Filipino/as (46.7%), Asians (65.8%) and immigrants. The per capita income is \$14,634, which is 32% below the state average. The unemployment rate is high in the area (8.6%), and the percentage of adults

with less than high school degrees is also higher than the state average (36.0%, compared to 18.6%). Farrington has over double the percentage of households receiving public assistance and one and a half times the percentage of children living in poverty. At almost 20%, the percent of children at risk far exceeds the state average (2.9%).

Compounding these economic and social hardships, Farrington area also report lower levels of safety and weaker family/neighborhood ties. Over 64% of adolescents report feeling unsafe in their neighborhood (20% above the state average). More adolescents feel they lack close neighborhood ties (45.9%) and close family ties (36.1%). Additionally, 12.3% of Farrington teenagers are idle, compared to the state average of 8.6%. Despite this, adolescents report less exposure to illicit drugs than in other communities (11.5%).

Keaau. Keaau is home to nearly 17,000 residents and includes Keaau, Glenwood, Kurtistown, Mountain View, and Volcano. The area is ethnically diverse, with one-third White, one-fourth Asian, and almost one-third bi or multi-racial. Almost 27% of residents identify themselves as Hawaiian or Part-Hawaiian. The per capita income for the area is \$15,055, which is 30% below the state average and among the lowest in the state. The number of households receiving public assistance is 3 times the state average. Unemployment is high (9.4%), and the percentage of children living in poverty is one of the highest in the state (24.4%). At 13 per 1000 children, the child abuse rate in Keaau is also slightly higher than the state average (11 per 1000 children), and the percent of children at risk is double the state mean. Nearly 32% of adults in Keaau have less than a high school diploma.

In addition to these multiple economic, social, and educational hardships, problems with safety in schools and communities are also challenges. Half of adolescents in Keaau feel disconnected from their neighborhoods, and 52.6% feel unsafe. Fewer parents feel positive about their children's safety (59.6%). However, adolescents report less exposure to illicit drugs (11.5%) than the state average (14.5%), and fewer 8th graders report feeling unsafe at school. There are also fewer adolescents who are idle (7.3%).

Conclusion

Assessing the results from the 2000 Hawaii Student Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use Surveys with additional information about the community, several overall conclusions emerge to understand gang involvement. School area complexes with higher levels of gang involvement also report higher levels of depression and more associations with friends who are in a gang. Overall, SCA's in rural areas had more frequent reports of poor family supervision and/or family conflict, whereas SCA's in more populated areas had higher percentages in reports of having delinquent friends and doing delinquent acts. With the exception of Kau, the SCA's highest in gang involvement also had higher percentages of academic failure and/or low school commitment.

The communities surrounding these school area complexes suffer from myriad economic, social, and educational ills. High unemployment, poverty, child abuse, dependence on public assistance, family disruption, and lack of education are common hardships in these areas. Additionally, residential instability and disconnection to the neighborhood are often reported problems for these communities. Even in those communities where neighborhood ties are not necessarily weak, adolescents' reports of feeling unsafe in the community still emerge (such as Kau). Coupling this with higher percentages of family conflict, child abuse, and poor family supervision, "feeling unsafe in the community" may potentially mean feeling unsafe around people who are familiar, rather than fear of strangers. Interestingly, not all adolescents in these communities report more exposure to illicit drugs in their neighborhood, and the percentage of idle teenagers is not always higher than the state average. However, as the communities change and suffer, close, positive bonds to neighbors and families as well as feelings of safety also disintegrate. What is important to keep in mind is that these very needs—protection and familial bonds—youth often cite as reasons for joining a gang.

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CHAPTER IV

TRUANCY IN HAWAII: RESULTS FROM THE STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM LEVEL II SURVEYS

By Joanne Nakano

Introduction

Because truancy is potentially linked to gang-related activity (i.e. students miss school because they are in a gang or because they fear gangs), YGP has continued to examine the predictors and correlates underlying truancy. Previous YGP work on truancy revealed that parents attributed truancy to peer or sibling influence, whereas students reported that disconnection from school and fear of violence best explained their truant behavior (Chesney-Lind, et al; 2003). This chapter summarizes YGP's current findings and includes four sections. The first section summarizes contemporary national research on truancy. It outlines causes for chronic absenteeism and describes promising national programs that deal with truancy. The second section presents findings from HPD's Student Attendance Program (SAP) Level II surveys. These surveys, completed by students who were deemed truant for a second time, provide a great source for analyzing students' personal explanations for their absenteeism. The third section includes parents' accounts for their children's truant behavior. Lastly, this chapter ends with a look at future directions for handling truancy in Hawaii.

Literature Review

Truancy is complex and a difficult issue for schools to fully address. For this reason, it is considered to be one of the top ten problems facing schools (Colorado Foundation for Families and Children, 2002). School attendance has been and continues to be an important goal for schools across the United States. One of the obstacles to understanding the problem is finding a consistent definition of truancy. Truancy may mean a wide range of offenses from being tardy or skipping one class to missing an entire school day. Furthermore, it is difficult to report or track unexcused absences because parents may delay in sending excuse notes or because teachers may not report all tardy/absent students. Hawaii Revised Statutes 298-9 defines truancy as skipping school

or remaining on school campus but not attending class. If a student is tardy or absent for 4 hours or more in the day, he or she may be taken into custody for truancy. Most schools in Hawaii consider all unauthorized absences as truant behavior, even if only one missed school period (Yamauchi, 2003).

Students are truant for a variety of reasons. The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children (2002) provides a useful resource, outlining school, family, and community factors contributing to truancy. These include an absence of educational goals, lack of stimulation for students, neglect of diverse student needs, lack of consistency in attendance policies and procedures, peer relationships that foster truancy, and limited family support. Other studies concur with these findings. The 1992 study of students in the Linn-Benton Education Service District found boredom, loss of interest in school, suspensions, “irrelevant” courses, and bad relationships with teachers as causes for truancy (Dekalb, 1999). Some students may feel alienated and do not have a sense of belonging with their peers and teachers (Yamauchi, 2003). Compounding this detachment from the classroom are exclusive disciplinary procedures used by schools, such as suspensions or detention for truant behavior. Such practices, which remove students from school, can lead students to feeling an even greater disconnection from school. It can send a message to already struggling students that they are not wanted. (Gonzales, et al; 2002).

Truancy has been linked to potential delinquent activity. Chronic absenteeism may be a predictor of criminal behavior and delinquency. It may also be a sign of parental neglect and a need for welfare and protective services (Coeyman, 2002). Students who fall behind affect their chances for promotion, graduation, self-esteem and potential future employment. Furthermore, many law enforcement agencies report that students who are not in school during regular hours are committing crimes such as shoplifting and vandalism.

National Responses to Truancy

According to *A Manual to Combat Truancy* from the U.S. Education Department, five primary elements are essential for implementing effective truancy reduction strategies: 1) Parents should be involved in all truancy prevention activities. 2) Students

must face firm sanctions for truancy and understand that there is zero-tolerance for truant behavior. 3) There should be meaningful incentives for parental responsibility. 4) Schools should have ongoing truancy prevention programs. 5) Lastly, local law enforcement should be involved in the truancy efforts.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals also makes several suggestions regarding school attendance. School attendance policies must be strong. The formulation of policies should be broadly based on the participation of students, staff, administrators, parents and the community. Further, attendance expectations should be specified in writing and policies should be well publicized. Most importantly, attendance policies should be consistently enforced at *every* level and absences should always be followed-up by a telephone call or letter (DeKalb, 1999).

Overall, solutions to school truancy need to combine accountability as well as reconnection of the student to the classroom. Several different approaches can be pooled to meet this accomplishment. These different approaches may include (but not limited to) strict laws and enforcement, development of positive learning environments, tutoring programs, and community mentoring programs. The following list summarizes suggested approaches to handling truancy.

Summary of suggested approaches:

- 1) Increase parental involvement in child's education
- 2) Create firm sanctions
- 3) Publicize strong school attendance policies
- 4) Develop consistency in enforcing attendance policies
- 5) Foster collaboration between schools and law enforcement
- 6) Offer tutoring programs and opportunities to make up missed classes and work
- 7) Offer school-to-work opportunities

There currently exists a variety of national programs that utilize several of these suggestions.

In Boston, a new wireless technology, donated by Nextel and AirClic, allows access to every student record from 130 schools in the area. The wireless phone database can tap into student information such as parents' names and phone numbers, school assignments and class schedules. Truancy officers from each school in the district scout

out students skipping class and follow through immediately with the appropriate response using the wireless system.

In St Louis County, schools initiated a preventative program targeting elementary and middle school students. The program structure includes holding weekly “court” sessions where a judge meets with each student and their parent and reviews the previous week’s attendance and performance. At the same time, incentives are given out to those with positive achievement.

Orange County, CA, schools also provide another significant truancy program, one that targets *both* truant students and their parents. In this program, prosecutors send out letters to parents explaining “parent” responsibilities. If the letter is not enough, parents will first go to meetings with their child and then to a student attendance review board hearing. If these interventions still do not work, parents and their truant child will be subject to juvenile court sanctions. Programs such as this one are parent-focused and are based on the belief that the root causes of poor school attendance or cutting class are the lack of parental control due to poor parenting skills, child abuse or neglect in the home, and family instability. (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001)

Another example of an effective truancy program can be found in Baltimore, MD. This high school adopted a career-focused academy to increase student engagement where low-performing students receive extra-support (“Urban Policies”, 1997). The guiding principle of this program is that alienation from school is the dominant reason explaining student absenteeism. The primary focus of the program is to foster a nurturing learning environment, where teachers “arrive on time, give frequent praise, interact with the entire class, minimize verbal reprimands and de-emphasize competition in the classroom.” (DeKalb, 1999)

Finally, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has also implemented a Truancy Reduction Demonstration Program (TRDP). The key components in this project are parental involvement, meaningful consequences for truancy, meaningful incentives for attendance and ongoing school-based truancy reduction programs (Baker, Sigmon & Nugent, 2001).

Since 1990 in Hawaii, one response to truancy, funded by the Youth Gang Response System, has been the Student Attendance Program (SAP), a joint project

between Hawaii's DOE and law enforcement (Chesney-Lind et al, 2003). Previous YGP research studied the effectiveness of SAP in terms of truancy recidivism, how the program was delivered at Saturday morning site visit observations, and surveys completed by participants (Chesney-Lind, et al, 1992; 1995; 1997). The program underwent modifications during the years however, the evaluations showed that initially the students who attended SAP had improved attendance in the short term (for 30 days) but participating schools did not generally show better attendance for the year. The studies concluded that a few chronic truants consistently affected attendance rates and they were not necessarily being handled by the SAP sessions.

A major goal of the SAP is to prevent at-risk students from dropping out of school. Under this program, first-time truants received sanctions in the form of counseling or a parent conference. Second-time truants were required to attend a 4-hour Saturday class at a police facility. They and their parents also were required to attend an evening counseling session with an officer. In the past year, during these counseling sessions, parents and students filled out surveys designed to capture parents' and students' explanations for the truancy. Failure to follow the program may lead to penalties, such as arrest for truancy, police counseling, or referral to Family Court.

Although SAP Level II was discontinued in 2003, the surveys collected during the 2002-2003 school year offer great information for understanding truancy in Hawaii. For this reason, these data are presented in the next section.

Student Attendance Program Level II Findings

The SAP II surveys were distributed from October 2002 to May 2003. During the program, the surveys were distributed to second-time truant student and their parents. The program was not required to keep a record of the school that each truant attended; therefore, that information is unavailable to YGP. The surveys can only be identified as either Honolulu or Non-Honolulu, based on the Oahu police stations where the surveys were collected.

Student surveys. The student survey consisted of 12 open-ended questions and one closed-ended question:

(1) When did you first start missing class?

- (2) How often do you miss class?
- (3) When you miss class, who are you with and how many?
- (4) What do you do when you skip class?
- (5) Is there any particular day of the week that you skip school, or certain classes on a regular basis. If so, what day and which class?
- (6) Do you have an outside job? If so, how many hours a week?
- (7) Do you participate in extra-curricular activities?
- (8) What do you like about school?
- (9) What do you dislike about school?
- (10) Do you think it's important to get a diploma, why or why not?
- (11) Do you have any handicaps or health problems and are you on medication?
- (12) Is there anything else we need to know about why you don't go to school?

The closed-ended question was a list of nine reasons that may affect a student's attendance. The students were instructed to check all that applied: 'bullying', 'sexual harassment', 'can't see the chalkboard', drugs, 'have to baby sit younger brother or sister,' 'have to work in the family business', 'don't fit in,' 'fear of gangs or weapons,' or 'trouble understanding English.'

Students were also asked to identify their ethnicity and gender. A blank space was provided for each student to list his/her ethnic background. To simplify analysis of this question, YGP categorized students by the first ethnicity listed.

Parent surveys. Parent surveys included eight open-ended questions:

- (1) Are you concerned about your child missing school?
- (2) What have you done to get your child to go to school?
- (3) What worked, what didn't work?
- (4) What consequences or punishments work?
- (5) What motivates your child?
- (6) Have you worked with the school on attendance issues?
- (7) Does your child have any medical conditions, handicaps or on any medications?
- (8) Is there any other factor that might have affected your child's school attendance?

There were a total of 210 student and 203 parent surveys collected. Out of the 210 student surveys, 89 were collected from Honolulu police stations and 121 from non-

Honolulu stations. Of the 203 parent surveys, 87 were from the Honolulu area and 116 from Non-Honolulu stations. The following information contains findings from the surveys. Because several open-ended questions on the surveys were left blank or had vague responses, those questions have been removed from analysis.

Results

After reviewing the SAP II surveys, it was revealed that 51% of students are with 1-4 friends when they are skipping school. Thirty-two percent stated that they “cruise” when they are missing class, and 23% reported hanging out at home or a friend’s house. When analyzing the checklist of reasons why students are truant, YGP found that the most common responses were bullying (13%) and “not fitting in” (12%) (See Tables 7-8).

Table 7: Company with when Truant, by Gender

| Company: | Girls % (n=91) | Boys % (n=117) | Total* (n=208) |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Alone | 20 (22%) | 39 (33%) | 59 (28%) |
| 1-4 Friends | 48 (53%) | 58 (50%) | 106 (51%) |
| 5-9 Friends | 6 (7%) | 7 (6%) | 13 (6%) |
| 10+ Friends | 1 (1%) | 1 (.5%) | 2 (1%) |
| Family | 11 (12%) | 9 (8%) | 20 (10%) |
| Other/Missing | 5 (5%) | 3 (3%) | 8 (4%) |

*Two surveys were excluded from the analysis due to missing information on their gender.

Although there were no significant differences among boys and girls in *company* and *activities of choice* while skipping school, there were some differences in boys and girl’s reasons for not attending school. Tables 7 and 8 show that answers were fairly consistent between gender for the survey question, “When you miss class, who are you with and how many,” as well as for the question, “What do you do when you skip class.” Most of the students (165) surveyed, whether boy or girl, stated that they are alone or

with 1-4 friends when skipping school. Slightly more boys tend to be alone during their absence from school and 4% more girls than boys are spending time with their family when truant.

When asked what activity students do when they are skipping school, boys and girls responded similarly. Most boys and girls replied that “stay at home or a friend’s house,” or simply “cruise” as the most frequent activity they do when they are truant.

Table 8: Activity Performed, when Truant, by Gender

| Activity: | Girls% (n=91) | Boys% (n=117) | Total (n=208) |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Home/Friend’s Home | 20 (22%) | 28 (24%) | 48 (23%) |
| Cruise | 33 (36%) | 33 (28%) | 66 (32%) |
| Sleep/Eat | 6 (7%) | 13 (11%) | 19 (9%) |
| Homework | 6 (7%) | 3 (3%) | 9 (4%) |
| Mall/Beach | 7 (8%) | 9 (8%) | 16 (8%) |
| Other | 9 (10%) | 19 (16%) | 28 (14%) |
| ‘Nothing’ | 6 (7%) | 7 (6%) | 13 (6%) |

Considerable differences were found by gender concerning *reasons* for being truant (see Table 9). Sixteen percent of girls stated “not fitting in” as another reason for being truant. “Not fitting in” was the top reason (10%) for boys skipping school. Girls and boys reported similar levels of fear of gangs as a reason for being truant. Few students claimed having to baby-sit (5 responses total) or working in the family business (1 response total) for truancy. More students stated not being able to see the chalkboard (10 responses) or trouble understanding English (12 total). It is uncertain, though whether “not being able to see the chalkboard” is due to vision problems or classroom arrangement. Drug use as a cause for missing school was only mentioned by three students.

Table 9: Reasons for Being Truant, by Gender

| Reasons: | Girl % (n=91) | Boys % (n=117) | Total (n=208)* |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Bullying | 19 (21%) | 7 (6%) | 26 (13%) |
| Sexual Harassment | 6 (7%) | 1 (1%) | 7 (3%) |
| Can't See Chalkboard | 4 (4%) | 6 (5%) | 10 (5%) |
| Drugs | 2 (2%) | 1 (1%) | 3 (1%) |
| Have to Baby sit | 2 (2%) | 3 (3%) | 5 (2%) |
| Work in Family Business | 0 (0%) | 1 (3%) | 1 (0%) |
| Don't fit in at School | 15 (16%) | 10 (9%) | 25 (12%) |
| Fear of Gangs | 7 (8%) | 7 (6%) | 14 (7%) |
| Trouble Understanding English | 7 (8%) | 5 (4%) | 12 (6%) |

*Totals represent total responses overall in survey—not total responses for these particular questions.

What is of particular interest in these data is the gender difference found in the “bullying” explanation for truancy. One-fifth (21%) of girls reported “bullying” as a reason for not going to school, while only 6% of boys did. A logistic regression illuminates this finding further. Table 10 summarizes the results from the regression analysis, with gender as the dependent variable (female=1) and the aforementioned list of reasons as the independent variables. The variables, drugs and working in the family business, were excluded in the analysis due to the small response rate. Table 10 shows that the only significant predictor (at .008) of a female response for truancy is bullying. Girls are almost five times (4.91) more likely than boys to report bullying as an explanation for their truancy. Although not significant at .05, girls were also four times (4.054) more likely than boys to report sexual harassment as a reason and nearly twice (1.84) as likely to state “don't fit in” as a cause.

Table 10: Logistic Regression, Gender Difference in Explanations for Truancy

| | B | S.E. | df | Sig. | Exp(B) |
|----------------------------------|--------|-------|----|------|--------|
| 1. Bullying | 1.591 | .601 | 1 | .008 | 4.910 |
| 2. Sexual harassment | 1.400 | 1.152 | 1 | .224 | 4.054 |
| 3. Trouble seeing chalkboard | -.154 | .716 | 1 | .830 | .857 |
| 4. Don't fit in | .610 | .468 | 1 | .193 | 1.840 |
| 5. Fear of Gangs | -1.040 | .762 | 1 | .172 | .353 |
| 6. Trouble understanding English | -.280 | .692 | 1 | .686 | .756 |
| 7. Babysitting | -.189 | .941 | 1 | .841 | .828 |

What is important to note is that while some of this gender difference may be due to willingness to report (i.e. girls may be more at ease to report said reasons for truancy), these findings also give some cause for re-conceptualizing “bullying” and violence in schools. Recent research on aggression in girls (see Wiseman, 2003; Brown, 2004) suggests that relational aggression among girls is a serious issue and one that parents and teachers often miss. When you include covert aggression such as gossip, social isolation, and rumor spreading, the gender difference in aggression disappears. Essentially, boys specialize in direct aggression (violence and overt verbal aggression), while girls specialize in covert aggressions. What this suggests is that conventional approaches to the reduction of bullying, both in Hawaii and elsewhere, which simply target direct or physical aggression, need to be re-thought with an eye toward including covert aggression. Such changes are particularly necessary for girls at risk of being delinquent (Okamoto and Chesney-Lind, 2002).

Ethnicity and Truancy

“Bullying” and “not fitting in” were found as key reasons for students being truant across most ethnicities (see Table 4). Asians reported the highest percentage of

bullying at 23%, and bullying was the most frequent explanation for truancy for Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian students. Asians also reported “sexual harassment” as an explanation for truancy more than any other ethnic group. While “not fitting in” was not reported often by Asian students, it was the most frequent response for White students (30%), followed by bullying (20%). Gangs were reported as more of a reason for truancy for Hawaiians (12%) and for Filipinos and Asians (8%).

Table 11: Reasons for Truancy, by Ethnicity

| | Samoan (n=21) | Hawaiian (n=59) | Filipino (n=50) | *Asian (n=13) | White (n=10) | *Other (n=15) | Total** (210) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Bullying | 2 (9%) | 8 (16%) | 6 (10%) | 3 (23%) | 2 (20%) | 1 (7%) | 85 (40%) |
| Sexual Harassment | 0 (0%) | 1 (2%) | 1 (2%) | 2 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 4 (0%) |
| Trouble Seeing Board | 0 (0%) | 2 (4%) | 5 (8%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 8 (4%) |
| Drugs | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (2%) | 1 (8%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (1%) |
| Baby-sit Siblings | 2 (9%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (1%) |
| Work in Family Business | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (2%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (0%) |
| Don't Fit In | 2 (9%) | 7 (14%) | 8 (14%) | 1 (8%) | 3 (30%) | 2 (13%) | 23 (11%) |
| Gangs | 1 (5%) | 6 (12%) | 5 (8%) | 1 (8%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 13 (6%) |
| Trouble Understanding English | 0 (0%) | 1 (2%) | 4 (7%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (20%) | 8 (4%) |

*Asian includes Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. 'Other' includes all other ethnicities not listed in this table (namely Hispanic).

**Totals represent total responses overall in survey—not total responses for these particular questions.

Open-Ended Student Survey Questions

When looking at the combined answers across all ethnicities and gender to the open-ended question, “What do you *dislike* about school?” the data reveal that disconnection from school and positive peer groups continue to be powerful explanations for truancy. In 73% (153 out of 210) of the responses, students stated some form of “disconnection” from school, which include being bored in class, disliking teachers and/or classes and subjects, or not fitting in with peers. One student wrote, “We do nothing in class at my school, it’s boring when there’s nothing to do.” Another student stated, “I do not like the teachers and subjects.” In some extreme cases, students reported disliking teachers that made them feel “humiliated” in class. One student answered, “I don’t dislike school, it’s just when I’m late I get scared of my teacher humiliating me, so I miss class.”

There were also a number of students stating, “other kids,” as a reason for disliking school. One student said, “I don’t like when I go to school and the kids gang up on me.” Other open-ended responses ranged from feeling fearful to lacking a sense of belonging in the classroom. The statements provided in the surveys demonstrated that alienation from school—whether it is in the form of boredom, humiliation, dislike of teachers and subjects, or fear of fellow peers—is a strong link to truancy.

Parent Surveys

Table 12 shows how parents answered the question, “What have you done to get your child to go to school?” One-third (33.3%) of the parents replied that they “talk with son or daughter,” with the next most common response being “drop son or daughter off at school” (14.8%). Twelve percent stated that they “wake their child up to go to school,” and 11.8%, “make it a point to check in frequently with the teachers, administrators or counselors.”

Table 12: Parents' Explanations: Strategies Tried

| | Number of Responses | Percentage of total responses |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Wake up son/daughter | 25 | 12.3% |
| Drop son/daughter off at school | 30 | 14.8% |
| Check in with school/teachers | 24 | 11.8% |
| Talk with son/daughter | 67 | 33% |
| Take away privileges | 12 | 5.9% |
| Yell, scold, threaten | 20 | 9.9% |
| Other | 17 | 8.4% |
| N/A | 8 | 3.9% |
| Total responses | 203 | 100% |

As shown in Table 12, most parents in the survey felt that “nothing” worked to keep their children in school (33.5 %), or they could not identify one method that has worked. Sixteen-percent felt that talking with their son or daughter worked to reduce truancy.

[Intentionally left blank to accommodate tables.]

Table 13: Parents' Explanations for Truancy: What Has Worked

| | Number of Responses | Percentage of total responses |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Nothing has worked | 68 | 33.5% |
| Taking away privileges | 11 | 5.4% |
| Talk with son/daughter | 34 | 16.7% |
| Yell or threaten, negative reinforcements | 7 | 3.4% |
| Talk with School | 14 | 6.9% |
| Other | 28 | 13.8% |
| Don't know | 7 | 7% |
| N/A | 34 | 16.7% |
| Total | 203 | 100% |

Table 14: Parents' Explanations for Truancy: Factors Affecting Child's Attendance

| | Number of Responses | Percentage of total responses |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| No other factors | 59 | 29.1% |
| Friends/peers | 33 | 16.3% |
| Family problems | 26 | 12.8% |
| Dislike school or teachers | 26 | 12.8% |
| Fear | 16 | 2.5% |
| Other | 28 | 13.8% |
| Don't know | 5 | 7.9% |
| N/a | 10 | 4.9% |
| Total | 203 | 100% |

Of additional reasons, influence from friends appeared to be the leading reason why parents felt their children were truant (16.3%), followed by family problems (12.8%), and disliking the school or teachers (12.8%). Overall, parents did not offer

responses that showed they were aware of their child's fear of gangs, feelings of not fitting in, or being bullied at school.

Most parents were at a loss when it came to ways to address their child's truant behavior. Also, the majority of parents surveyed had already worked with the school on attendance issues previously and believed nothing seemed to work. When asked, "What other factors might affect your child's attendance," many parents stated reasons related to a lack of interest in school. One parent said, "My son loses interest when things start sounding the same." Another parent stated, "My child has no excitement to learn from the teacher." In summary, parents blamed their children's chronic absenteeism on low motivation levels.

Many parents also listed family problems as a factor influencing their child's attendance. This explanation was only offered in very few of the students surveyed. This shows a discrepancy between what parents and students believe causes truancy. It is also interesting to note that many parents did not know what motivates their children to attend school and were unaware of any other influential factors causing their children's truancy. Furthermore, many parents appeared to have limited English ability as noted on their surveys. Due to lack of communication and cultural conflicts, the inability to understand English can impede parents' involvement with the schools and their child's academics.

Handling Truancy in Hawaii

In Hawaii, after students do not comply with policies or attend truancy programs such as SAP, they can be arrested for truancy. When truant students are arrested, their cases and petitions for hearings are sent to a trial in Family Court. In the 2003 legislative session, a bill (House Bill 1562) was introduced to establish a truancy court within the Family Court system. If passed, this would allow for most truancy cases to be taken out of Family Court and to be handled through alternative methods. The intent of the bill is to alleviate some of the Family Court's caseload and to foster more personalized attention for truant students. The truancy court program will also provide counseling services to truant students and their parents. This bill has been carried over to the 2004 regular legislative session. Additionally, House Bill 2777 and Senate Bill 631 allows an administrative hearings officer to improve administrative penalties and fines on a truant

child, parent or guardian. Senate Bill 701 lowers the compulsory education age from six to five years old, making attendance in kindergarten mandatory. Again, these are mentioned merely as examples of legislation related to truancy reduction under consideration in Hawaii.

In Fall 2003, a collaboration of staff members from OYS, Family Court, HPD, DOE, and UH (including two members of the YGP staff and the Project Director of Project PACT in the College of Education), convened the Truancy Prevention Study Group. The group's main objectives are to understand truancy, understand schools' current truancy programs and policies, and devise other solutions for truancy in the future. The Truancy Prevention Study Group gathered resource materials, reviewed DOE data on absenteeism, and selected a few schools on Oahu to interview on efforts for addressing truancy. Overall the trend, based on three schools interviewed, appears to be moving away from punishment and more toward keeping students motivated and interested in school. Below are examples of how three Oahu schools described their methods for reducing truancy⁵.

Campbell High School. Campbell High School has recently implemented a Career Development Academy. Some highlights include having core (history, English, math) classes all in one building, providing classes that are team-taught, and making sure teachers talk about report cards individually with each student. Campbell High also has an "alternative school" for 9th and 10th graders called the Twilight Program—a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club and the Coalition for a Drug Free Hawaii. Students, chosen based on their drop-out risk, attend the Twilight Program everyday from 2:30 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and earn 4 credits. They learn subjects such as English, math, social studies and guidance. These approaches aim to improve teacher-student relations, to increase opportunities to earn a diploma, to make up missed classes, and to reduce feelings of separation in the classroom.

Some other resources Campbell High School has tapped to fight truancy are Big Brothers and Big Sisters, a Culinary Arts Program, and a Police Activities League. Furthermore, Campbell High School is a PBS (Positive Behavior Support)

⁵ Edralyn McElroy, OYS Children and Youth Specialist, completed the interviews for the Truancy Prevention Study Group. She interviewed either principals or vice principals.

school—meaning that they contract with a University of Oregon program to record school data and conduct research-based responses to problem behaviors⁶. With up-to-date data, the school can identify problem areas and plan for truancy prevention programs more effectively.

Leilehua High School. Leilehua High School has developed a “student-centered” approach where the emphasis is to find successful experiences for students. Leilehua has applied a program called SMARTS (Student Maximizes Academic Resources Tutorial Services), a drop-in center with a social worker (paid by school funds) and counselors available in times of need. With the SMARTS program, tutorial services for all students are provided on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. A SMARTS *Plus* program is also available to Leilehua High School students. The SMARTS *Plus* program provides Tuesday and Thursday evening counseling to students who qualify for the service.

They have also implemented an anger management program, as well as a Culinary Arts Academy, in which college students in culinary arts teach the high school students cooking. Other approaches at Leilehua include having an on-campus work-study program and providing students with programs that create job opportunities.

Kahuku High School and Intermediate. At Kahuku High School and Intermediate, where they pride themselves in an achievement/challenge-based culture, students have an interest in building homecoming floats, participating in speech and debate teams, and playing sports or other activities. There is a strong student and community involvement in sports, music, clubs, and other groups. Since sports are popular in the Kahuku community, Kahuku High School has used it as their biggest strength to keep truant students connected to school.

Kahuku also has a School Attendance Monitor who keeps track of absentees daily. Attendance incentives are also given annually to students with perfect attendance. The Principal awarded certificates and a perfect attendance pin to approximately 500 students in the 2002-2003 school year.

The Truancy Prevention Study Group reviewed other Hawaii truancy reduction efforts. Two of these are Project PACT and ESAP.

⁶ See www.pbis.org for more information on Positive Behavior Interventions and Support

Project PACT addresses truancy and school attendance in grades K-12 in the Waianae Complex.⁷ It is modeled after a Safe and Drug Free Schools project, IMPACT. Project PACT (Partnering to Assess and Counteract Truancy) is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and operates with these partners: College of Education at UH Manoa, Departments of the Attorney General, Education, Health, Human Services, the Judiciary, and HPD. This collaborative effort to address truancy in the Waianae Complex is administered by the UH, College of Education and its baseline data from 1997-2000 is on its web site as are other helpful information about truancy reduction such as a “Map of Truant Services.”

Begun in 1999, *Elementary School Attendance Program (ESAP)* is a collaborative effort between Family Court, National Guard, DOE, and HPD. It is implemented in all elementary schools on Kauai, in the McKinley school complex elementary schools in the Honolulu District, and is in various stages of implementation in selected schools in Waianae and Molokai. ESAP began in the Honolulu District, and the continuation of the program is dependent upon funding for the program. ESAP includes parenting classes and preventive classes to elementary school students. The goal of the program is to provide prevention and early intervention to children and families. Students who are frequently absent in middle and high school also have records showing chronic absenteeism in their elementary school years. The ESAP program hopes to intervene at an early age to prevent truancy in secondary school (Yamauchi, 2003).

⁷ <http://www.hawaii.edu/wccc/pact/>

Summary and Future Directions

It is agreed that truancy is a problem behavior that can lead to more serious problems for our education system and the community as a whole. Therefore, it is important for schools to find effective ways to combat the problem with policies and programs tailored to best fit their needs. Some schools find that court sessions help alleviate truancy, while others rely on technology. Others, such as in the Oahu examples, try to make school more interesting and challenging to students so they want to attend school. Schools also strive to improve the safety of students at school and offer extra-curricular activities which require they participate during school hours.

The SAP II data shows “bullying” and “not fitting in” as key reasons for students being truant. Through a closer, qualitative examination of the SAP II surveys it was also discovered that students appear to be bored with their classes, have a dislike for their teachers, and feel a detachment from the school environment. The parents’ perspective differed somewhat from the students. Parents cited dislike for teachers and classes, influence of delinquent friends, and family problems as main explanations for their children’s truancy.

The State of Colorado indicates that best practices in developing truancy reduction programs are 1) involving parents in all truancy prevention activities, 2) ensuring students face firm sanctions, and 3) providing tutoring programs, career academies, and school-to-work opportunities. The Truancy Prevention Study Group in Hawaii has found that some schools in Hawaii seem to be working toward these elements as shown through the three examples above. With ESAP, the approaches to truancy prevention at the elementary school level may lead to a more personalized approach to combat absenteeism. Further, smaller classrooms and a smaller student to teacher ratio will help to improve truancy efforts. A program like ESAP, which has a strong emphasis on parenting, will address truancy prevention before students enter secondary school (Yamauchi, 2003).

Hawaii’s Truancy Prevention Study Group, staffed by OYS, has secured a \$35,000 budget for the 2004 school year to address truancy on Oahu. The study group is currently working on a few ideas, one of which is conducting a survey of Hawaii’s schools to find out more about what the schools are doing to address truancy. Secondly, a

truancy standards tool kit will be created using information gathered from the surveys. The tool kit will consist of a CD-rom, which will include truancy prevention “best practices” and will feature “model programs” throughout the state. Lastly, a series of truancy prevention workshops will be held in September on Oahu and the Big Island. All attending public school teachers and principals will receive the standards tool kit prior to the date of the conference. The goal of the conference is for schools to gain knowledge about best practices to combat truancy. The conference will also be utilized as time for various schools to share with each other their truancy prevention efforts and to connect them so they can continue to offer each other “tips” and support.

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