

Chapter 39

The Impact of School Social Bonds: Risk–Behavior Among Indigenous and Non–Indigenous Students in the Northern Marianas

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ABSTRACT

Students' experiences in the school environment are not limited to purely academic activities, responsibilities, and relationships. Their complete educational experience encompasses social ties, commitment centered on stakes in conformity, beliefs about rules and regulations, and involvement in pursuits that are indirectly tied to their scholastic performance. Using CNMI Youth Survey data, this chapter explores these social bonds in the school setting and examines their impact on indigenous and indigenous high school students in the Northern Mariana Islands. The relative importance of these social bonds is compared to the influence of social bonds outside the school environment. The findings highlight the importance of teacher attachment and the belief in the validity and fairness of school rules on the risk-behavior for both indigenous and non-indigenous youth, with non-indigenous youths experiencing teacher attachment as a relatively stronger protective factor.

INTRODUCTION

Most people would agree that the primary objective for secondary schools is to provide education in a safe and healthy environment that prepares students for the next phase in life, whether it be in the academic arena or in the labor force. Beyond the quality of reading materials, teacher certification and training, and the newness of the physical structures, it is the nature and quality of the social bonds that impact the well-being and safety of students. These bonds take on a variety of dimensions, from attachment to teachers to involvement in conventional school activities. The relationships between school attachment

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and student outcomes are documented, with likely implications for university teaching staff and support services (Humphreys 2020). Indeed, Pinhey et al. (2002) found that Asian-Pacific males on Guam who participate in extracurricular activities are well incorporated and connected into their school environment and are less likely to engage in physical altercations. The present study focuses on school bonds, with specific attention given to teacher attachment, school commitment, school belief, and school involvement. The effects of these bonds on risk-behavior (juvenile delinquency) on indigenous and non-indigenous youth are explored. The relative impact of school social bonds is compared to bonds existing in outside the school environment.

BACKGROUND

Socio-Historical Context

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), otherwise known as the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI), is located a little over 1,000 miles southeast of Japan and includes 14 main islands. There are three inhabited islands, Saipan being the most populated followed by Tinian and Rota. The history of the CNMI can be divided into distinct periods of pre-colonial and colonial eras. In the pre-colonial period, people from the Philippines and Southeast Asia may have settled in the islands more than 3,500 years ago (Farrell 1991). Although evidence suggests that present day Chamorros are not descendants of the original settlers, there is no conclusive evidence (McPhetres 1994). In this era, Chamorros organized along matrilineal lines of descent, practiced ancestral worship, but were forcibly converted to Catholicism with the arrival of the Spanish in the 1500s.

The Spanish period (1521 to 1899) was marked by the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. After several name changes, the islands in 1668 were named *Islas de las Marianas* in honor of Mariana of Austria, widow of Philip IV of Spain. By 1710, Chamorros, except for a few hundred on Rota, were relocated to Guam. After a typhoon devastated their low-lying atolls in the early 1800s, a group of people from the Caroline Islands, who had regularly traded with Chamorros and were familiar with the islands, settled on Saipan with the permission of the Spanish administration. Chamorros began to return to Saipan between 1865 and 1869.

The German period (1899 to 1914) began when the islands, apart from Guam, which was lost to the United States in the Spanish-American War, were sold by Spain to Germany. The islands remained under German administration until the beginning of World War I in 1914. Unlike the Spanish, the Germans had little contact with the indigenous population. They did not bring in a garrison force, nor did they bring in their own nationals as a labor force like the Japanese did in the period to follow.

The Japanese period (1914 to 1944) began when the Japanese claimed the islands from the German administration and expelled all German citizens. American military forces gained control of the islands in World War II. Japan renounced all claims in the mandated islands as previously acknowledged by the League of Nations. Japan also recognized the United Nations' establishment of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands with the United States as the administering authority.

In the late 1970s, the islands became self-governing under the terms of a *Covenant to Establish a Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands in Political Union with the United States of America*, which was negotiated between the United States government and the people of the Northern Mariana Islands. On November 4, 1986, United States citizenship was conferred upon the people of the islands

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