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The History of Micronesian Immigration
and Its Affect on the Experience
of Micronesian Children
in Hawaii's Schools

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BY

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Dedicated to Koadilik and in honor of Sally and James Keating

ABSTRACT

This thesis is intended to research and analyze the situation between Micronesian immigrant children attending public elementary school in Hawai'i, their families and their educators. Significant problems have arisen at schools as greater numbers of Micronesian children enter Hawai'i's schools and educators are unable to communicate with the families of children having academic difficulty. I aim to identify the nature of the problem from the perspective of both the educators and the Micronesians and search for solutions.

The research discusses the history of Micronesia and how the various colonial powers who have ruled the region have affected Micronesians and their relationship to education. Also studied are comparisons to other immigrant populations in the United States and throughout the Pacific and their experiences and difficulties in adapting to new educational systems and cultures as well as a case study of a local elementary school and interviews with both the educators and the Micronesian families involved. Finally educational literature and current philosophies on multicultural education offer solutions that tie in with research on Pacific Islander immigrant populations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

GOALS OF THE STUDY:

The topic of Micronesian immigrant children in Hawai'i's schools came to my attention during the course of my studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. According to some of my classmates who were teachers and administrators, Micronesian immigrant children and their families have been a concern among educators. The inability of many Micronesian children to keep up with their peers and the difficulty in engaging the children's parents to help their children succeed in school was a serious concern raised in several classes.

My research was multifaceted. First, a synopsis of the history of Micronesia and how colonization affected the people and their education, while the inclusion of more recent history helps explain the political and sociological forces that have brought the current wave of Micronesian immigrants to Hawai'i in much larger numbers than have been seen before.

My intent was to identify the nature of the problem from the point of view of both the educators who expressed concern about the status of Micronesian immigrant children in Hawai'i's public elementary schools as well as the Micronesians who are the focus of such concern. I spent a semester as a volunteer at a local elementary school in an after school program to help struggling students with their homework. The school I chose had a large population of immigrant Micronesian children and the group I assisted was predominantly Micronesian. I also have interviewed some Micronesian families about the problems perceived by their children's educators to identify their concerns about their children's education in their new country. My goal is to determine whether there is common ground between what the educators see as a problem population of children and the unique set of needs they bring to school and what the parents' expectations of an American education are and how their needs are being met and to see what can be done to improve the situation. I then will look for related literature and case studies on the subject of minority and

immigrant education, hopefully to find advice to help the teachers, the students and their families find ways to improve the education of the ever growing populations arriving in Hawai'i from the various islands in Micronesia.

Part of the unique challenge facing me as a researcher and the teachers as educators is defining the Micronesian population. As we will see in the chapter on history, Micronesia is a very complex, vast expanse of islands and cultures that are not easily defined. This will make my challenge and the challenge of educators more difficult because most people who are not more than casually familiar with the region assume that the Micronesians are one group of people from a nation of many islands, similar perhaps to the Philippines. Like the Philippines, this is not true. The geographic, linguistic and cultural differences from the north to the south are profound. The difficulty within Micronesia is that unlike the Philippines the populations of each island group is relatively small. So rather than dealing with large numbers of similar immigrants, we are dealing with small numbers of distinct islanders who want their differences respected.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

As mentioned before, the topic of Micronesian children having trouble in Hawai'i's public schools came to my attention unintentionally. The level of frustration and consistency of complaints by my fellow students alarmed me. There were approximately five different students who wrote separate papers about Micronesians in Hawai'i and Guam, and four of them were negative. Their reports referred to the difficulty that the Micronesian children were having in assimilating in the American classroom and falling far behind their peers in their studies. Children were arriving from Micronesia and entering school unable to hold pencils or use scissors, which came as an unbelievable shock to some of the teachers. (That the children could probably wield a machete with finesse is a skill uncalled for in most elementary classrooms!) The teachers were concerned because some children had been held back several years in a row and would be permanently placed in remedial classes for mentally and physically challenged students if they fell too far behind. To make

matters worse, communication with the children's parents was abysmal. It seemed that all efforts to reach the parents of children experiencing difficulty were ignored. Phone calls went unanswered, letters that had been painstakingly translated went unread, parent teacher conferences were ignored. There was a massive breakdown in communication that left the educators feeling powerless to help and puzzled at the behavior of the Micronesian families.

When I initially contacted an elementary school to ask for permission to study the situation of Micronesian immigrant children, the principal asked me immediately if I could speak 'Micronesian' and could I come down to the school to work as an interpreter. Unfortunately, I cannot speak any of the many languages spoken throughout Micronesia, but her obvious need for help with this particular immigrant group could not have been more apparent.

THE AUTHOR'S RELATION TO THE STUDY:

It must be said that my interest in the Micronesian community is more than academic. I have, through marriage, a large extended family from the island of Pohnpei in the Federated States of Micronesia, or FSM. I have been involved with the Micronesian community in Hawai'i, especially the Ponapeans, for over a decade and have deep personal feelings and concerns for the well being of this particular community in Hawai'i.

Through these personal connections I was able to interview people and use interpreters freely. My informants in this study were pivotal and without them I could not have completed this study. Their insights and confidences allowed me into the Micronesian community. This would not have been possible without a great deal of trust and mutual respect. Some may feel that my objectivity as a researcher has been compromised by my close personal relationship with some of the informants and because I am an outsider, not a Micronesian, but an American. Common sense and sensitivity dictate caution when looking at any people and I take my cue in this from the opinions expressed in recent years by indigenous peoples who resent the presence of 'impartial' anthropologists snooping into their culture for 'objective

research purposes'. Linda Tuhiwai Smith wrote in *Decolonizing Mythologies* that "(r)esearchers enter communities armed with goodwill in their front pockets and patents in the back pockets . . . their acts and intentions are always justified as being for the 'good of mankind' "¹

Instead I feel privileged to have access into the Micronesian community into which I was not born but adopted. The generous cooperation of my informants was due to our friendship. The study done by New Zealander Patricia Kinloch, which will be examined later in this paper, considers the delicate balance between friendship and subject when conducting research. Kinloch cited another researcher, A. Richard King, who wrote that "(a) relationship in which friendship outweighs any other role definition provides opportunities for insights otherwise unobtainable by an outsider."² I based much of my information on the local Ponapean community who could be considered 'friends as informants'. The interviews conducted at the schools however, were those of a traditional informant interviewed in the field. I had to believe that they would tell me about the situation to the best of their ability.

WHO IS AFFECTED BY THE STUDY:

My intention is to help foster a better understanding between the two groups in the study, namely the educators responsible for the Micronesian children in the classroom and the Micronesians themselves, both the children and their families. Hopefully a better understanding between the two groups will emerge so that the educators can more effectively communicate their desires and expectations to the families and children in their schools. As we shall see, Micronesia is a complex place, not easily summed up. Improvements in mutual understanding and communication with this group of Pacific Island immigrants requires skill and knowledge. I hope to further the amount of knowledge available to educators who have questions about how to best serve the Micronesian children in their classrooms.

HYPOTHESIS:

After identifying the problem as seen by the educators in the study, it comes as no surprise that history, yet again, repeats itself. The 'problem' of educating immigrant children in the United States is as old as the public education system itself. Horace Mann, father of the common school, knew that a well educated society was essential in a democracy. If we were to govern ourselves, then we had to be aware. Assimilation was a given for our founding fathers. In the effort to create an ideal society the answer sought by many of the great early educators, from Mann to Dewey was to replicate the best society had to offer, while carefully considering and amending the flaws. Dewey wrote that in order to create the American dream of a free democratic society that:

(we) cannot set up, out of our heads, something we regard as an ideal society. We must base our conception upon societies which actually exist, in order to have any assurance that our ideal is a practicable one. But . . . the ideal cannot simply repeat the traits which are actually found. The problem is to extract the desirable traits of forms of community life which actually exist, and employ them to criticize undesirable features and suggest improvement.³

In the early centuries of development, there was no real challenge to the assumption that the United States would be a Eurocentric nation. Serious dissent came as Americans began to question who decides what is to be culturally replicated, what is to be taught in schools and what is to be challenged and perhaps discarded. The social upheaval seen in the twentieth century changed the rights of minorities and women forever in America. No longer would the status quo of ruling Eurocentric males go unchallenged. Upheaval continues today as minorities are quickly becoming majorities in some of our largest states such as California and Texas and in New York City.

The changes in American society were reflected by changes in school curriculum and pedagogy. Multiculturalism became the buzzword from the 1960's onward. The efforts to educate American children without racial and ethnic bias would give birth to many school programs aimed at serving minority, immigrant and children

considered 'at risk'. What happened in many cases was a watered down curriculum that did not serve the children as well as intended. The new curriculum and pedagogy were producing students who could barely read or write. The 'dumbing down' of the American schools is well documented in Dianne Ravitch's scathing book, *Left Back*. (Ravitch, 2000) Although I may not agree with all of her opinions, Ravitch made some good points.

With many of the nation's schools in crisis and the school standards mandate in place, the efficacy of the still fledgling multicultural educational philosophies is being severely challenged. Public opinion has shifted back to a more conservative belief that the three R's should rule and efforts spent on an inclusive multicultural education would be a distraction. I will try to demonstrate that a multicultural educational program does not preclude excellence. Multicultural education in most cases has been little more than a cursory attempt in schools to sprinkle some ethnic history and culture into the curriculum. Rockefeller, an educational philosopher, thought that "(w)e need a new, deeper appreciation of the ethnic histories of the American people, not a reduction of American history to ethnic histories."⁴ What has been offered until now may have been enough to quiet some minorities who demanded equitable representation in education. After all isn't something better than nothing?

It is my hypothesis that something is not enough and that it is the right of every American to be included in the education of their children on every level. I believe that communities having ownership of their schools would ensure the inclusion of their language and culture. In addition to the broad study of an inclusive, truthful American history and an otherwise rigorous academic curriculum, communities with special interests, such as minorities and immigrants, should have the option of including similarly rigorous inclusion of their history, language, science and arts in the schools if they choose. There is substantial proof, discussed in a later chapter, that small, community based schools that are committed to excellence can educate children even in the most difficult circumstances. Schools that encourage the participation of the community at every level from early childhood development to continuing adult education to after school recreation and tutoring can make the school

the focus of the community and would serve all children well, regardless of background. Dewey's lab schools were the model of such schools and they have flourished in communities willing and able to fund them.

If Americans have learned anything from the civil rights, women's and labor movements, it is that when 'the people' want something that is right and just, it can be negotiated in an intelligent, civilized manner that respects all parties concerned, or the issue can be fought at great social cost over many years to achieve the same ends. It is clear to me that we have but one choice, to continue the great traditions of democracy and freedom in the United States, we must invest heavily in the education of the world's first truly multi ethnic, racial and lingual society. To deny any of our citizens, especially the weakest members such as minorities and immigrants, inclusion of their language and history in their children's education is to injure not only the people in question, but our society as a whole. Only by intensive, rigorous education in many languages for many cultures can we become not only the most powerful nation on earth by force, but the best educated nation by mutual consent and cooperation.

The United States could stand as an example of what is best among humans and lead the way for emerging democracies by demonstrating that compassion, respect and inclusion of minorities and immigrants will pave the way for a richer society and avoid the ethnic balkanization that plagues many corners of the modern world. Again Rockefeller's thoughts. "The call for recognition of the equal value of different cultures is the expression of a basic and profound universal human need for unconditional acceptance . . . the formation of a person's identity is closely connected to positive social recognition - - acceptance and respect from parents, friends, loved ones, and also from the larger society."⁵ It is with that hope that I submit this paper.

METHODOLOGY:

My research was done over the course of the three years spent in the Master's of Education program at the University of Hawai'i. When I first became aware of the frustrations expressed by the educators in my classes, I began to inquire of the

teachers more specifically about the nature of the problem. I then interviewed some informants in the Micronesian community about their perception of education in Hawai'i and why some Micronesian children might be having a difficult time adapting to the school environment. I read as much of the related literature as I could find. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of information about the Micronesian community here. The community is relatively new and other than statements by officials, little has been written about their experiences in Hawai'i from the point of view of a Micronesian author. Most frequently in the newspapers are complaints from the government about the social costs the Micronesians bring with their health problems, which I will discuss later. The children's educational situation is rarely discussed in local news.

I decided to study an elementary school that I knew had a sizable population of Micronesian immigrant children. With the generous permission of the principal, I volunteered in an after school program designed to help 'at risk' children. I was also able to interview some of the staff who worked in close contact with the Micronesian children. Most fruitful were the interviews with the teachers of English as a Second Language, or ESL teachers.

All of the adults interviewed were tape recorded with their permission with the understanding that after the research was done, the tapes would be destroyed. All the names have been changed, as has the location of the school, the number of people and their sex and age in homes and classrooms interviewed. After the tapes were transcribed, they were destroyed. Any information about children in the study is a generalized composite of many children and is used to summarize the general sentiments of what they expressed to me and my observations of their situations

LITERATURE REVIEW:

There are some very informative books written by well known Micronesia scholars such as Francis X. Hezel, and David Hanlon which illuminate not only Micronesia's past, but also follow the course of present situations in Micronesia,

trends among Micronesians abroad and peer into the future.

The literature I found about Micronesian immigration to other islands in Micronesia as well as the experiences of other Pacific Island immigrants such as the Samoans in New Zealand and Hawai'i has been well documented over the past several decades. I use these situations as a basis for comparison to try and discover any similarities or differences between the Micronesians arriving recently in Hawai'i and other Pacific Island migrants in recent years.

I have also drawn on current events, such as articles in *The Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Weekly* magazine to record what is being said about the Micronesian community. For example, concern expressed by former Governor Cayetano and current Governor Lingle about the financial costs to the state of Hawai'i due to the number of Micronesian immigrants with serious health problems has appeared in the newspapers and has been discussed in editorials.

I found that the topic of my thesis easily related to the literature in Educational Foundations. My experience in the graduate program in courses about educational history, philosophy, school restructuring and social change were all very pertinent to my thesis. From Horace Mann and John Dewey to Michael Fullan, John Ogbu and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, it seems that centuries of wisdom will be needed to solve the complex problems of educating a quickly changing, diverse yet ever more inclusive world. The advances in technology bring together a wide variety of people. It is an exciting and challenging time to be an educator.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Finally I would like to thank some of the people without whom I could not have done my work. First and foremost, my informants within the Micronesian and especially the Ponapean community who were very generous with their time and information. I was introduced to some key people who were able to act as translators and helped me gain access into the homes and lives of people that I could not have reached on my own. Their trust in me to write a fair synopsis of their small community in Hawai'i and to expose some elements that may be seen as

unflattering is an honor that I do not take lightly.

Also I would like to thank the educators who were gracious with their time and resources. The principal of the school I studied was more than cooperative and willing to help me and eager to see the results of my work. As with the informants from Micronesia, the educators were willing to open up and expose true feelings which took courage and trust. I hope that by showing the feelings of both sides, the Micronesian immigrants and the educators, a better understanding will arise to benefit all.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF MICRONESIAN HISTORY

INTRODUCTION:

The study of Micronesia is a complex one, a reflection of the islands and the people. Micronesia is a circle, drawn arbitrarily by colonizing powers, that encompasses more than two thousand islands scattered between the Philippines and Hawai'i. This is an area larger than the U.S., yet the total land mass is only about the size of Rhode Island. From Palau in the west to the Marshalls in the east is about 2100 kilometers. The most northerly islands are those of the Marianas while the Gilberts lie to the extreme equatorial south, spanning another 1300 kilometers. The main island groups are those of Yap, Palau, the Marianas, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, the Marshalls and the Gilberts. There are both high volcanic islands and low lying atolls. The higher islands of the west gradually disappear as one moves to the east, which is almost completely comprised of atolls. These islands are in the heart of the Pacific Ring of Fire, along which runs the Marianas Trench, the deepest point of the Pacific, an unfathomable 11,033 meters.⁶

HISTORY:

Micronesia's history is as fascinating as it is unique. There is still much debate as to the exact origins of the inhabitants of the islands. Oral histories exist but are largely incomplete as many islands suffered huge population losses with the introduction of foreign diseases. The history of the area since contact with the West has been documented only unevenly. Some islands were of keen interest while others were ignored. Broadly, Micronesia's history up to independence can be divided into the historical subdivisions of: pre contact with the West and then subsequent rule by the Spanish, the Germans, the Japanese and finally the Americans. Each island had a unique relation with each of the aforementioned powers. An overview of the complex history of the region follows.

PRE CONTACT:

Shrouded in mystery is a phrase that perfectly suits the story of ancient Micronesia. Depending on which source one views, Micronesia was settled from the east, the west and the south. The islands hold archeological evidence dating as far back as 3000 BC. The languages are representative of Indonesia, Melanesia, Polynesia and even southern Vietnam. As confusing as it sounds, it may all be true. Through archeology, linguistics and anthropology, a picture is forming of the *probable progression of people into the region*. The oldest carbon datings are from Guam and the Marianas, with fire pits being dated as old as 3000 BC.⁷ The general consensus is that Micronesia was colonized over many thousands of years, after which much traveling, trading and intermingling of bloodlines occurred, making any neat theories of the region impossible. The migration of people into the Pacific seems to have been from two distinct sources, one from the south in the region of modern day Melanesia, and the other from the west in the areas of the Philippines and Indonesia.

Language patterns intimate that Melanesia was the source of the inhabitants of central and southern Micronesia. These would include the islands in the Carolines, the Marshalls and the Gilberts. It appears through linguistic analysis that from the Melanesian islands near Vanuatu, people sailed in a northeasterly tack, by Nauru, the Gilberts and then into the Marshalls. From the Marshalls, linguistic and oral history tells of a westward migration into the Carolines.⁸ Western Micronesia, consisting of Palau, the Marianas and Yap, was probably settled by peoples from Southeast Asia including Indonesia, the Philippines and southern Vietnam.⁹

Though there is still much debate about who went where when, what does seem certain is that there was a continual movement of people throughout the region over vast periods of time. Language provides some of the best clues about the movement of people. The languages of the people in the area belong to one of the world's largest language families, Austronesian, formerly called Malayo-Polynesian. It is made up of approximately 500 languages which are spoken in Micronesia, Polynesia, much of Melanesia, the Philippines, Indonesia, most of

Malaysia, Madagascar, and in parts of Formosa (Taiwan), Vietnam, and Cambodia."¹⁰ Yapese is the only language in Micronesia that is a direct offshoot of the Austronesian trunk with no other known affiliates. The Carolines and the Marshalls are also a direct offshoot, but have suspected links with the language group that encompasses the Gilberts and the Polynesian languages. Palau, the Marianas and the Gilberts fall under the Malayo-Polynesian branch of languages that umbrellas virtually all of southeast Asia, Polynesia and Melanesia.¹¹ The ancient origins of the languages of Micronesia as well as the evidence from carbon dating of fire pits, seems to indicate that some of the very earliest settling of distant islands in the Pacific took place in Micronesia, well before most of Polynesia.

Proto-Austronesian spoken in the New Guinea/ Indonesia area may indicate the source of the human trail into Micronesia. Rehag wrote:

Possibly as early as 4000 B.C., the people who spoke this language began to disperse to other areas in the Pacific. By approximately 3000 B.C., the ancestors of the people who speak Oceanic languages had reached at least as far as southern Melanesia, and further dispersal was taking place. Possibly by 1000 B.C., the people who spoke Proto-Micronesian, the ancestral language of Gilbertese, Marshallese, Kusaie, the Pohnpeic and Chuukic languages, and possibly Nauruan, were beginning their settlement of Micronesia. Where these first Micronesians came from is unclear, but linguistic evidence indicates earlier ties with the northern New Hebrides. Their homeland was probably in the eastern part of Micronesia. An eastern homeland, which matches what Ponapean legends suggest, is based on the hypothesis that since languages change through time at approximately the same rate, earlier settlement areas should show greater linguistic diversity than later ones. If we consider Micronesia (remembering that Palauan, Yapese, and Chamorro are not Micronesian languages), then it is in the east that this diversity occurs.¹²

Yap is somewhat of an enigma in that its origins are so unique as to form a mystery akin to that of the Basque in Spain, where no known origins can be logically construed. Also the extreme southern islands of Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro have distinctly Polynesian languages and cultures that may be due to more recent arrivals.

In marked contrast to the uncertainty surrounding the path and timing of peoples' trails, is the method in which these amazing journeys were undertaken. The Micronesians were and continue to be some of the greatest sailors in history. The prowess of the navigators and the strength of the vessels they sailed are only recently coming to international attention. The traditional Western assumption that Pacific Islanders drifted about and bumped into islands accidentally, as suggested in works like *Kontiki*, has been thoroughly put to rest thanks to the Micronesian navigator Mau Piailig. Mau's knowledge of the sea and stars brought great pride to all Pacific Islanders when he guided the traditional sailing canoe, *Hokule'a*, from Hawai'i to Tahiti in 1976 using only traditional navigational methods.

The reverberations of this historic voyage are being felt throughout Oceania as islanders try to recover vital skills that were all but lost with the arrival of Western explorers and the subsequent decimation in the populations due to foreign introduced diseases. The Micronesians were especially accomplished sailors and navigators, as many of them lived on small atolls. Margolis noted that "to atoll dwellers, the sea was everything, and how to exploit it, how to recover from its force, and how to cross it to find additional resources became the driving force of these cultures . . . 'Men who can't navigate aren't looked up to'. Mau has said, 'They don't have a name . . . The ancients had faith in the words of their fathers. This is what we call courage. With this courage, you can sail all over the world.' " ¹³ And sail all over the Pacific they did, many millennium B.C., which is a feat that boggles the mind.

SPANISH RULE:

Margolis continued that "the rape of Oceania began in Micronesia, when Magellan stopped off in Guam and the Southern Marianas" ¹⁴ Stopped off or bumped into as may be the case. Historian Smith wrote that on March 6, 1521, when Magellan and his crew found the islands, his fleet had been:

reduced from five to three small ships and were badly in need of provisions. They had sailed from the Straits of Magellan into the Pacific Ocean and missed

numerous South Pacific islands. Consequently, when the expedition reached the Marianas . . . many had died of scurvy and famine. The remaining Spaniards had been reduced to eating rats and the salt impregnated leather from the riggings. The natives were friendly and traded food gladly for trifles of iron and clothing. Seeing the weakened conditions of the Spaniards, the natives began to appropriate everything they could on leaving the ships. Magellan, becoming alarmed, took a shore party and pursued the natives. They burned houses and boats ashore and killed a number of natives. Magellan returned to his ships, replenished his supplies, and set sail again branding the islands 'Las Islas de las Ladrones', or 'islands of thieves' ¹⁵

The Spanish experience in Guam provides an indication as to what 'natives' could expect from starving sailors. What may have been a misunderstanding as to payment for services rendered in the minds of the Chamorros, the outcome was clear as to who would wield power from then on in the region. Smith continued that Spain eventually sent missionaries and soldiers, "who effectively brought the Marianas under control for the Spanish." ¹⁶ By the mid 1800's Palau, Yap and the Carolines were added to the Marianas as Spanish possessions.

From 1521-1899 the Spanish had 'control' of the area. There were disagreements and few skirmishes with England and Germany over the years, but in general, the region was not in hot dispute. In fact, most of the islands were left alone with the exception of the Marianas, where colonization was total and brutal. For the Chamorro, as the people of the Marianas are known, history has been unkind. Smith wrote that:

Epidemics hit the islands in 1688 and 1700. . .from an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 population before the conquest, there were now less than 5,000 inhabitants. For the next fifty years, the population continued to decline as small pox carried off 40 per cent more of the people. The 1764 census showed that only 1,654 Chamorros remained. An infusion of Spanish and Filipino blood helped save the Chamorro from extermination. In time, the mixed group became the dominant element, although the population never exceeded 5,000 until the twentieth century.¹⁷

Spain was interested in Guam as a mid Pacific supply station for its Manila to

Acapulco silver and gold caravans. Although the lasting effects of Spain can be seen in its influence on language, culture, architecture, one of the main legacies was, of course, religion. The Jesuits did a thorough job of converting the islanders to Christianity. They translated the Bible, established schools which admitted girls as well as boys, taught reading and writing and built churches. In the Marianas Smith noted that "by the end of the Spanish period, every village had a school. The majority of the Spanish priests sent to the Marianas were Basques who taught a rigid medieval Christianity. Along with the indoctrination of the Catholic faith, the curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic, Spanish, math, and handicrafts." ¹⁸

Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae were also infused with the zeal of Jesuit priests. However, Protestant missionaries arrived from Boston in 1852 and a religious tug-of-war began that continues up to the present. The Boston missions were especially successful proselytizers in the Marshall Islands. Palau had a different twist in that the English were the dominant presence there until the Spanish took control in 1885. The British arrival in Palau consisted of the shipwreck of an East India Company vessel on her shores. The captain befriended the High Chief, rebuilt his boat and returned to England with the chief's son, Lebbu. Lebbu died of smallpox in England, but his tale was told by George Keate in *An Account of the Pelew Islands*. Yap was less intensely colonized by the Spanish and was left unmolested for the most part. Another shipwreck, this time the American David O'Keefe, resulted in O'Keefe staying and developing a lively trading post. Remains of His Majesty O'Keefe's residence, as he was known, are still visible in Yap.

Sailors, whalers and pirates frequented the islands and they became known for their drinking, taste in local hospitality, lack of orderliness and general mayhem akin to Lahaina, though on a smaller scale. Micronesia saw the visitation of such notable pirates as Eaton, Cowley, Woodes Roger, and "Foul Weather Jack" Byron. Most of the buccaneers used the islands to replenish supplies after attacks on the Spanish galleons that plied the local waters, so little harm seems to have befallen the islanders at their hands. The islanders though seemed to have held a fearful respect for such high seas characters. Bully Hayes was one of the most feared pirates of

his day. Smith told of how he:

was charged with murder and piracy and bigamy and blockbusting and the foul destruction of his family. His name was whispered at night on lonely atolls to frighten children. Native chiefs prayed to ancient gods that they might be spared visits from this terrible man. He eluded the police and warships of many nations, and after thirty years, died of natural causes; that is he was murdered and thrown to the sharks by his cook, whom he had bullied once too often.¹⁹

Aside from the pirates, the region was a quiet outpost in the Pacific. So quiet a station was it that when the Spanish-American War ended, the governor of Guam welcomed an American warship entering the harbor firing upon him assuming it was merely a salute. The loss of Spain to the U.S. in that war ushered in the next phase of Micronesia's long history of colonization.

GERMAN RULE:

The Germans bought Micronesia from Spain after Spain lost the war with the U.S. in 1899. Although they maintained the Spanish system of administration, they focused primarily on trade and were not concerned with the conversion of souls. Maximal use of the resources available was their focus. Harvesting of resources such as copra, phosphates and fishing were made more efficient. Their motto was "the minimal investment to bring about the greatest profit to the Fatherland."²⁰ Germany included the Marshalls under its control which the Spanish had basically ignored.

The German period was the shortest, had the least cultural impact and was a relatively peaceful rule. Schools were made compulsory for children ages 7-13, and the Germans took an active interest in the health of the islanders, reporting all diseases, restricting alcohol and prostitution. Conservation efforts were made to protect the forests and their wildlife as well as the reefs and their bounty. Most importantly for the locals, property rights were strictly observed making it nearly impossible for foreigners to acquire land. It is still not possible for foreigners to buy land on most islands in Micronesia.

JAPANESE RULE:

Japan entered World War I on the side of the allies and took military possession of the German holdings in 1914. Smith recorded that these claims were officially recognized in 1917 by:

Great Britain, France and Russia. Under a secret agreement, it gained possession of all German islands north of the equator. At the Versailles Peace Conference, the United States was faced with virtual annexation of former German Micronesia by the Japanese. United States efforts at the Conference resulted in the establishment of a category of Class C Mandates to cover Micronesia. Generally, the Class C mandates made the Japanese responsible for looking after the well-being of the inhabitants. Other conditions included freedom of worship, refraining from building fortification and military bases, and submitting an annual report to the League of nations."²¹

The well-being of the inhabitants was not a top priority of the Japanese and it did not take long for fortifications to appear, and military bases thereafter. Johnson wrote that:

the Japanese rule was characterized by a strong colonialist policy. As evidenced later, in the course of subsequent economic development, great numbers of Japanese were brought into the islands to supplement the native workers. They were, in fact, to exploit fully the resources of Micronesia. Little or no effort was made to educate or develop the Micronesians as part of the overall political economic society. However, the military importance of the island was dominant in Japanese thinking.²²

The sequence of governance was; from 1914-1918 military control , from 1918-1922 military control with civilian assistance, from 1922-1935 civilian government and from 1935-1944 military domination. Japan invested heavily in both personnel and equipment and many of the islands soon had more Japanese than indigenous people. Palau became Japan's administrative center and Japanese outnumbered Palauans five to one. Japanese built harbors, roads, schools, hospitals and introduced electricity. Margolis wrote that Japan also introduced the Micronesians to

"a level of economic development they had not seen before and have not seen since." ²³

Of course this economic development came at a great cost to the islanders. The islands fell under the same brutal colonial policies suffered by many other conquered Asian nations. Japanese intentions were to use the islands for economic development to benefit Japan, a place to send surplus Japanese population, and to enculturate local populations through education and propaganda. Japan accomplished these objectives through "control of political affairs by the Japanese and emphasis on Japanese language and customs in the schools. According to Smith they saw these goals as eventually leading to a 'politico-economic' integration into the Japanese Empire and the advancement of the natives by civilizing them' " ²⁴

The study of Japanese language occupied more than three times the school hours of its nearest competitor, math, and dominated educational policy in every way. "The native children feared the teachers, who were harsh disciplinarians. Children were frequently beaten, slapped, or hit over the head with sticks for being lazy or giving incorrect answers to their school work. Severe punishment in the form of beatings and being forced to stand in the sun for several hours were not uncommon for truancy,"²⁵ according to Smith. This came as a shock to the Micronesians who tended to dote on children and never hit anyone on the head. Also, islanders have different life rhythms, which tended to be markedly slower than those of the Japanese. Adults and children were used as slave labor and forced to speak Japanese in public when Japanese nationals were present.

Despite the hardships endured by the islanders, Japan left an indelible mark on Micronesian educational systems. Among the significant contributions noted by Smith were that:

they laid the foundation for a free public school system open to all regardless of religion or position, they introduced the idea of advancement through achievement, rather than family position, they provided a vocational program, especially in agriculture, that has not been equaled to this day, they raised the standard of living, fostered good hygiene and sanitation and "they played an important part in modernizing native society

since this was a period of transition, and conferred upon the Micronesians that adaptability without which they would not be able to survive in modern twentieth century society.²⁶

Questioning whether this is what the islanders wanted for themselves would be a luxury not enjoyed until many decades later.

World War II hit the Micronesian islands hard. The Japanese were present in all the island chains, and as the Americans fought forward, all the island groups saw action of some sort. Yap was heavily bombarded by the Allies, though not invaded. Chuuk also was bypassed, but 45,000 Japanese soldiers were marooned (their) there after their airfields were destroyed and their ships sunk in Chuuk lagoon. Pohnpei was also heavily bombed but not invaded. The Marshalls were invaded by the Allies and saw heavy bombardments as well as fierce land battles.

It was Palau and the Marianas, however, that would suffer the most as the war came to its close. Fighting on Palau and her outlying islands was fierce. Eleven thousand Japanese, 2,000 Americans and hundreds of Palauans were killed. According to Margolis' sources, it was later uncovered that the Japanese had wartime plans to execute the entire population after the war. The older residents of Palau never forgot such treachery and Palau has remained the most independent of all Micronesian islands. Margolis observed that they "had felt the brunt of being a target in a war of someone else's making. They feared becoming a target again."²⁷

In the Marianas, Saipan saw the heaviest fighting of any island in Micronesia; 24,000 Japanese died, 3,000 Americans were lost as well as 11,000 wounded. Hundreds of Saipanese were caught in the cross fire. The Enola Gay would fly from the air base at Tinian in the Marianas, dropping the bomb on Hiroshima beginning the atomic age. At the close of the war Levy recorded that:

of the 50,000 Micronesians, 10% were killed as foreign armies fought back and forth across the islands in a brutal struggle the islanders could only lose. All Japanese military and civilians died in battle, committed suicide, or were repatriated at the end of the war. The prewar infrastructures and economies of Micronesia were obliterated. Bitter memories of the war are still vivid in the minds of the older people, who associate the destruction with the prewar Japanese occupation and

militarization of the area."²⁸

The effects of W.W.II on the collective consciousness of Micronesians cannot be underestimated. Distrust of outsiders and their duplicitous and often diabolical ways beginning with pirates and whalers became more firmly cemented in their minds.

AMERICAN CONTROL:

Before World War II had come to a close, Micronesia's fate was already being decided by foreign powers, albeit benign ones in comparison to past experience. In the Cairo Declaration of December, 1943, Churchill and Roosevelt announced that after the war, Japan would lose all of its possessions taken in 1914 from the Germans. As recorded by Levy, immediately following Japan's surrender, the U.S. Navy wanted to annex Micronesia:

but the Truman administration, sensitive to being branded neocolonialist, opted instead for a United Nations trusteeship, which it received in 1947. . . . The Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) was the last of the 11 trusteeships under the United Nations to attain self-government. It had been the only one designated a "strategic" trust, meaning that the United States could establish military bases and conduct nuclear tests.²⁹

The Trust Territory of the Pacific, or TTPI, was initially administered by the U.S. Navy and was later transferred to the Department of the Interior, which would report directly to the U.N. Security Council. Margolis wrote that this strategic trust meant that the "U.S. was authorized to establish military bases, erect fortification, and employ troops. It was also obligated to foster the development of political institutions toward the goal of self-government, to promote economic social, and educational advancement and to guarantee fundamental freedoms for all inhabitants."³⁰

America gained trusteeship of the islands in varying states of disaster. Levy noted that at the outset of W.W.II, "the population of Micronesia was two thirds Japanese. Micronesians had been reduced to a politically impotent minority within their own homeland."³¹ Rehabilitating the islands would prove a daunting task. The major problems faced by the Navy when they took over were the lack of personnel and the difficult logistics of serving such far flung islands with inhabitants

who spoke at least nine distinct languages. Complicating matters was what Smith termed the utter "lack of unity or desire for unity among the people"³² themselves. Before the arrival of the Spanish, the Micronesians engaged in inter island warfare, and animosities had not been erased by colonization. These were not one people, they did not speak similar languages, they did not like each other in some instances as much as they despised the Western interlopers.

America's main objectives were to maintain a strong military presence in the Pacific, not to help the Micronesians solve their problems. The Chinese revolution, the Korean and Vietnam Wars would all involve heavy use of Micronesian bases. From the beginning, America had conflicting notions of what to do with the region and its people. As the Navy and the Department of the Interior bitterly contested control, Micronesians slowly began to put the pieces of their destroyed world back together. America's policy in Micronesia has been criticized as being "virtually no policy at all through the 1950's. Starting in 1962, the policy became one of massive subsidies that both answered very real needs and created a welfare dependency, while little real progress was made in promoting homegrown economic development" ³³ according to Margolis.

Such neglect did not go unnoticed. In 1961 the United Nations council that was monitoring the U.S. trusteeship visited Micronesia and made an unflattering report that criticized America's lack-luster policies in education, agriculture, sanitation, and health. In response:

President Kennedy appointed a commission headed by economist Anthony M. Solomon to explore a future for Micronesia. The Solomon Report recommended agricultural development, capital improvements, and new health and welfare programs. The economic development proposals, which might have made the islands self-supporting, were never implemented. In 1963 President Kennedy issued the National Security Action Memorandum 145, setting forth as policy 'the movement of Micronesia into a permanent relationship with the United States within our political framework'. United States assistance to the TTPI jumped from \$6.1 million in 1962 to \$17 million in 1963, \$67.3 million in 1971, and 138.7 million in 1979. Despite the flood of money, essential services (water, electricity,

communication, sanitation) remained as bad as ever. Most money went into government salaries rather than into creating an economic infrastructure.³⁴

according to Levy. These massive subsidies were seen as a way of buying Micronesian loyalties in a time when the bid for independence of former colonies was sweeping the world. Although America may have been attempting to stem the flow of independence sentiments, it was a case of too much, too late. The natives were restless and many forms of independence were being discussed in the various islands in Micronesia.

Throughout the 1960's, the islands convened to chart their political destinies for the first time in 500 years. Free Association with the U.S. became the goal of all the islands, except Guam which 'chose' to remain an unincorporated U.S. territory. Free association was something new for the U.S., it effectively gave the U.S. the responsibility of defending the region, while allowing the American military "strategic denial" ---the right to deny access to any other power. In return, the islands received financial aid and other forms of assistance³⁵ according to Margolis. Although the islands were keen to achieve self governance, the talks dragged on from 1969 until 1985.

During this time period numerous policy and leadership changes, both within the TTPI and the U.S., made negotiations all the more difficult. Saipan, Tinian and Rota became the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, or CNMI in 1975, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae formed themselves into the Federated States of Micronesia, or FSM, in 1979, the Marshall Islands became a republic in 1978 and Palau chose the same in 1979. In the case of FSM, the islanders had chosen their government, but it would not be until 1985 that the U.S. House of Representatives would actually vote on the issue. Finally however, the Compact of Free Association was officially born in 1986.

Palau's political situation entered a state of limbo when its constitution forbade entry of nuclear materials, causing an impasse with the American military. Palau had the distinction of having the world's first nuclear free constitution. (Margolis, 1988) The issue of nuclear materials brings one more subject to light. As early as 1946,

the U.S. Navy began testing nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands. Bikini Island was chosen and the islanders were removed 'temporarily', never to return. Margolis wrote that one of the tests:

on March 1, 1954, was Bravo, the 15 megaton blast that was the first U.S. test of a hydrogen bomb. Bravo, exploded over the 242 square miles of Bikini lagoon, held more destructive strength than the combined power of all the weapons fired in all the wars of history up to that time. It opened a mile-wide crater in Bikini Lagoon, vaporized a pair of islets, and sent a cloud of radioactivity wafting aloft.³⁶

Bikini islanders are now scattered throughout the Marshalls, permanent 'guests' on islands that could barely support their own populations. Ebeye, where most of the Bikini Islanders were resettled has the dubious distinction of being one of the most crowded piece of real estate in the world and one of the poorest places in the Pacific. For Bikinians, perhaps worse than poverty was the loss of their island and its lovely large lagoon. It is hard to imagine their sadness. For islanders in particular, love of their precious land in such a vast body of water is profound.

EDUCATION AFTER COLONIZATION:

The current educational system in Micronesia is based on that of the U.S. . After the war, progress in education was slow and there were many obstacles to overcome. The Navy was ill-equipped and almost completely untrained in creating an educational system for children and adults. They had just won a horrendous war and as Smith states, their "directives at the end of the hostilities were concerned with keeping the children out of the way of military operations and personnel"³⁷ . Goals were more basic and had little to do with educational philosophies. The Navy was more concerned with food production, health and hygiene. Many islands had suffered severe food shortages and even starvation towards the end of the war, and immediate necessities took priority. Specific plans for education in the region did not occur until 1947 at a conference in Guam.

From the beginning, once again, the greatest obstacle was logistics. Smith noted that "the geography of the area created fundamental problems in education that no

other educational system in the world faced. Scattered over an area of three million square miles was a student population numbering approximately ten thousand . . . the lack of qualified English speaking teachers, the cultural differences between the islands and the nine district language groups"³⁸ all created seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The issue of language was paramount, as materials and curricula were not available in any of the native languages. Yet the imposition of English as the *lingua franca* raised objections as well. The debate over whether to use English as the language of instruction throughout the Territory would rage for many decades. Some felt that learning English would be valuable for Micronesia's future in a more modern society, and since English could not be learned at home, it should be the school's duty to provide it. Others felt that the imposition of another language, and thus culture, was unacceptable.

The Navy, after much deliberation, chose to preserve as much of the native culture as possible and instruct in the local vernacular. Over forty anthropologists were brought in to study the situation. Much was written and the conclusion was that English would be an impractical medium of instruction as there were not enough speakers to teach it, and that the students would be better off learning to read and write their own language before introducing a foreign one. The use of local teachers speaking the local languages would introduce English as a second language that could then be used inter-culturally. However, with the change in administration to the Department of the Interior, English won out for a time as the language of instruction in the mid-60's. These efforts were doomed from the start. Texts were incomplete, teachers were at times only one lesson ahead of the students and the impracticality of speaking an unknown tongue to a group of children brings clear pictures of chaos to mind.

The lack of qualified teachers was severe in any language and on all islands. In 1947 the Marianas Area Teacher Training School was established. It would later become the University of Guam, the only university serving Micronesia. Teachers would remain scarce, however, and students' attendance was also irregular at best. Islanders were not known for being punctual and family needs took precedence over

schooling in most homes. Girls were also less likely to continue beyond primary school as their educational goals were not seen as necessary since they would marry and have children anyway. To illustrate this point, the figures draw a clear picture. From 1952-1966 most islands had near equal ratios of boys to girls in attendance at the primary level, but upon entering intermediate school, the numbers of girls fell dramatically: Yap 131 boys to 6 girls, Chuuk, 198 boys to 40 girls, Pohnpei, 222 boys to 89 girls in 1963.³⁹ (Smith p.239)

Bit by bit progress was made. Trade schools were opened, adult education classes were conducted throughout the Territory, newspapers were printed and libraries were built. The most successful school of its day was the Jesuit school on Chuuk. Xavier High School opened in 1952 and aimed at providing a liberal education. Smith stated that primary goals were:

to impart knowledge that is useful in the broadest sense of the word, *useful* for this life, for the development of man's highest faculty, and for the accomplishment of man's highest goal, the salvation of his soul . . . the development of the ability to *think* for oneself . . . the ability to *express* one's thoughts clearly and well . . . the training of the students so that he will not only know but will have the character to act reasonably, in accord with God's grace ⁴⁰

And by all accounts it was (and still is) the best college preparatory school in Micronesia. Gifted children from all islands competed keenly for entrance into its strict and demanding halls. Courses in Latin, biology, chemistry and physics were offered. Such opportunities did not exist elsewhere in the islands.

In an effort to bolster the teaching force and enhance student performance, American teachers began to arrive in the mid-60's. With English as the new *lingua franca*, it was easy to justify the presence of more foreigners, always a subject of contention among islanders. The Peace Corps was a large part of this new teaching force, and by 1966 there were almost 700 American volunteers in the islands. It was believed that besides financial aid to the islands, what was needed was what Smith termed an "injection of new vitality . . . the Kennedy spirit" ⁴¹ The volunteers were to act as half of a team teaching plan. Paired with a local teacher, they were to

help with English instruction, civics, hygiene and so on. The large numbers of teachers sent to Micronesia was also seen as a political move to counter the U.N.'s criticism in 1961. "The sending of these volunteers to Micronesia was aimed at making the Territory a showplace for the world and was to 'symbolize the United States' determination to discharge its full responsibilities as trustee' " ⁴² wrote Smith.

Opinions of the Peace Corps ranged from lavish praise to heavy criticism. Many of the young Americans impressed the locals with their willingness to live among them as well as intercede on their behalf with the administration. Most of the volunteers were idealistic graduates from liberal arts colleges and their philosophies of education and preparation for teaching were quite different than those held by the Department of Interior employees. The government employees had been there longer, were trained educators had better salaries and living conditions and held mostly supervisory positions. According to Smith, the arrival of so many young Americans:

created unparalleled problems in housing, transportation, and related areas. The recruitment of American personnel undoubtedly helped the educational system but is also created serious problems. Among the most serious was the quality of the Americans recruited. While the majority did an excellent job, a great many American educators in Micronesia were not of a high quality. The lack of quality personnel in teaching was pointed out in various United Nations reports . . . It was freely admitted . . . that too much haste occurred in recruiting personnel . . . Many educators in Micronesia started without knowledge of the obligations that would rest on them . . . , in fact without much knowledge of the territory itself . . . those willing to come were often pedagogically inferior, and some were unable to get positions elsewhere because of 'personal peculiarities'. ⁴³

These controversies coincided with the awakening of cultural pride among indigenous peoples throughout the world in the 1960's. In Micronesia there was great concern among the elders about the strong American influence and the effect it would have in eroding cultural values. Children were being exposed to a way of life that was not attainable to the average Micronesian. The image of America, as seen in the popular movies being shown frequently, was very enticing

to the youth. Johnson wrote that Micronesians awakening to their own culture felt that "indoctrination of children with an American style education causes unrest when compared with perceived opportunities. Further, this education is detrimental the the retention of native cultural values." ⁴⁴ The Peace Corps withdrew over half of its volunteers by 1971 in the face of local criticism and that of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. According to Smith, the committee instructed the Peace Corps not to undertake a major program such as the one implemented in Micronesia "without prior Congressional approval. The committee, while noting the aims and purpose of the program as admirable, questioned whether the Peace Corps ought to be in Micronesia at all . . . whether the presence of the Peace Corps was consistent with the (Territorial) mandate." ⁴⁵

Other major problems hampered even the most rudimentary implementation of an American system of education. The lack of educational opportunities for most children after the eighth grade, shortage of funds for maintenance, especially following storms, lack of teachers and facilities at all population centers, single classrooms for different grade levels were just a few of the obstacles.⁴⁶ In the Marshall Islands and the eastern Carolines, only one in five students could attend high school in 1971 due to lack of facilities, teachers and books. This, in a nation with a tiny population, which was receiving 70 million U.S. dollars per year in 1971. Something did not add up.

REFORMS AND PROBLEMS:

It is easy to see why Micronesia is a place ripe for educational reform. As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, extreme complexity characterizes an area of many distinct island nations that have been pushed and pulled through history. For a thorough analysis of education in Micronesia since World War II, read *The Maze of Schools: Education in Micronesia, 1951-1964: "The Gibson Years"*, by Peacock. (Peacock, 1990). Micronesia is eagerly entering the future and trying to gather information from other nations in the Pacific to guide its educational direction. America has been a strong presence in Micronesia since W.W.II, so much so that

Micronesia has been referred to as 'the American lake', But education is having a difficult time in the U.S., if one pays attention to the news, and Micronesia is paying attention. It was in the opening remarks made at the Pacific Islands Educational Leadership Summit in 1993, that the Governor of Guam, the Honorable Joseph F. Ada made these remarks:

In the United States, we are seeing what can be termed an educational crisis. Where once the U.S. led the world in such areas as science and math, today, American student performance in many areas has fallen below that of virtually every European industrial nation and Japan. In a nation which has sent people to the moon, there are millions who cannot read. This is not according to my standards but to American standards. . . Millions of Americans cannot identify the Vice President of the United States. . . or how old the nation is. How does this happen? Could it be, in part, that in America, many have lost track of what education means to them, what education is supposed to be, what is relevant about it to the American experience, what importance it might have? If you don't know what you're trying to accomplish, how can you hope to accomplish it? If you don't know where you are going, how can you tell when you've arrived? If this is true, is it any wonder that education seems relatively unimportant to so many? ⁴⁷

Why should Micronesians continue to have faith in the American educational system if it doesn't work for Americans? Micronesia had the dual burden of trying to figure out its unique destiny along with many other Pacific Island nations, while at the same time trying to reform a system whose foundations and credibility were in question.

Some very intriguing discussions took place at that conference in Guam in 1993, and it is interesting to note that Pacific Islanders are not having any easy time in deciding on educational philosophies and policies, just as the American administration had difficulty in Micronesia. The same questions loom large; to modernize or remain traditional, to advocate a vocational or liberal education? The problems of language, logistics and culture that bedeviled American bureaucrats for decades remain. The comments of educators attending the conference expressed a vast array of opinions concerning possible educational directions. The President of the University of Guam, Dr. Wilfred P. Leon Guerrero outlined the topics of the conference as; cultural survival in times of rapid social change, education's role in

regard to economic development in small societies, relationships with Pacific Rim nations and former colonial powers, commonalities and differences among the islanders, exploring the possibilities of a 'Pacific Way' and how to establish links and improve communications among the island participants.⁴⁸

The speaker from Pohnpei, Ewalt Joseph addressed the difficulty of relating to educational programs that are not only foreign, but "that historically have had high failure rates. How should we address these failures? Have they failed because the culture has not known how to run them? Or have they failed because they and the cultures' efforts to survive are incompatible?"⁴⁹ Catalino Cantero, the representative from Kosrae, noted that although their system is based closely on the American system:

one of the problems we have is too many off island consultants coming in and giving conflicting viewpoints towards improving the educational system in the FSM. We go along because the money is attached to this The dilemma that is facing the FSM is, do we slow down tourism to preserve the culture, or do we fully accept the economic changes and growth that tourism brings and march toward the twenty-first century? We have to establish our priorities. The challenge is how to implement the recommendations of this summit.⁵⁰

The honesty of the Kosraen delegate in saying that they go along with reforms because there is money attached is refreshing and surprising in that so few others are willing to admit publicly that policies in emerging democracies are affected by foreign aid.

Most participants at the conference stated the importance of knowing from where they came to determine where they should go. This was especially true of the delegates from Guam and the Marianas. These islands have the most fragile hold on their past. Chamorro is endangered in Guam, and as in Hawai'i, re-introduction of the language is a major focus of local educators. Other islands that were not as heavily colonized and still have strong cultural identities tend to look for assistance from Pacific Rim nations in helping them to join the global community.

Another Kosraen participant was in direct contradiction to the opinion given by his companion of having too many outside consultants. Luey Luey stated instead that

"we need leadership to tell us which way to go. Fortunately we have consultants and assistance from the United States to help us to find the best system for a small society like Kosrae. We believe small is beautiful. We want to maintain that but we're also part of the world. We need to work to make small a part of the world."⁵¹ The minister of education from the Solomon Islands, the Honorable Sam L. Alasia, held the opinion that "the presence of the military in Guam and French Polynesia are security measures that help in policing these spheres of influence."⁵² This is an issue of hot debate among the islands with large military installations that employ many islanders, but severely compromise feelings of independence.

In the Marianas "the curricula reflect the growing economic importance of Japan and the continuing economic and military importance of the the United States . . . Japanese and English are required in secondary public schools. Chamorro, the native language, is not mandatory, a problem the conference has highlighted"⁵³ according to Maria 'Malia' T. Peter. Yapese schools also teach English, Japanese and French while the "indigenous languages have been neglected, and the indigenous people were not consulted when it came to planning the curriculum . . . there are often strong feelings of inferiority about Western culture"⁵⁴ said Tony Tawerlimang. Feelings of inferiority, long imposed by colonizers, are proving hard to shake.

Topics covered in the last decade in the "Micronesian Educator", an annual publication out of the University of Guam⁵⁵, reflect cultures trying to regain lost pride and rid themselves of bad habits acquired from foreigners. Topics in 1990 included; modifying student behavior to encourage oral participation (in Micronesian culture, speaking out is frowned upon unless by a person in a position of authority), vocational training vs. vocational education and the benefits and drawbacks of all day vs. half day kindergarten programs. 1991's volume contained: methodology and culture, computer use to teach math, immigrations impact on Guam and problems with dropouts. In 1993 there were many writings on multi-culturalism in the classroom and how short-wave radio could be used to promote global education. By 1994 the appropriateness of the Stanford Achievement Test was being

questioned. Three articles on sexual abuse appeared in 1994 and 1995 as well as articles on gang activity and drug abuse. For anyone following American educational problems and reform issues, these sound familiar. Pedagogy was addressed as well as philosophy of education and the differences between those in Micronesia and Asia compared to those of the West. Home schooling, gifted students, culture as enrichment or distractor, the Web. Micronesians seem to be studying what the world has to offer, and then choosing to piece together what is best for them.

A closer look at some of the articles brings to light the seriousness of some of the problems facing Micronesian society. Suicide rates are among the highest in the world for teenagers. The idyllic look of the tropical isles hide the fact that some youth feel trapped in highly stratified, traditional villages, while watching the world pass them by. On Guam for instance, there is gang activity even at the elementary school level. There are Chamorro gangs, Filipino gangs, even the Crips and Bloods.⁵⁸ As in the U.S., racial tension is the primary source of gang violence.

Guam is the modern hub of Micronesia and many youth from outlying islands attend school there. Vast increases in the number of students from other islands has occurred since the implementation of the Compact of Free Association. There were only eighteen students attending Guam public schools in 1986, by 1991 there were almost 900. (Shafer, 1991) Most problems are attributed to Chuukese males who experienced severe culture shock upon their arrival in the comparative metropolis of Agana. In 1996 a major report on drug abuse was issued. It highlighted the Pacific Rim 'war on ice' seminar sponsored by the Guam police department in 1998. Categorized in the order of popularity, drugs available on Guam (and thus to any island in the region) were listed as: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, inhalants, ice, analgesics, sedative, stimulants, hallucinogens, cocaine, crack and heroin. Not the perfect picture of a tropical isle.

Drop-outs rates are still a big problem on all islands. As of October 2000, graduation rates from the eighth grade on all the islands of FSM were over 70%, except for Chuuk, which only graduated 67% of its students from middle school. By high school however, the numbers dropped significantly. Kosrae graduates

61% from high school while on Yap the figure is 35%, Pohnpei falls to 28% and Chuuk only graduates 15% of its students.⁵⁷

Another problem is brain and body drain. Many Micronesians go abroad for education and employment. More than 25,000 Micronesians live overseas, that is one in eight citizens. Contrast that to the fact that 44% of all paid workers in Micronesia are expatriates.⁵⁸ The need to focus on manpower training, cultural preservation and academic skills simultaneously is an overwhelming one. Micronesians are once again being relegated to the lowest positions society has to offer. These are issues that are addressed in most educational discussions on reform.

In such discussions, John Dewey is cited often. His ideas are being incorporated in an interesting way on Guam. In an article entitled, "Valuing Traditional Wisdom in the Classroom: Environmental Interpretation of Legends", Hezel wrote that "science is most meaningful to students if it can be connected to their experience, and environmental biology is easily connected to students' cultural experience and traditions."⁵⁹ The example given is of the recitation of a myth in which a famine occurs and tragedy ensues leading to the creation of the breadfruit tree which grows out of the graves of the children who died in the famine. The teacher has the children discuss the story and take notes. Then they apply the story to modern topics such as population, resources and conservation.

John Dewey might have liked Micronesian philosophy in that it does not indulge in the dualisms so detested by him. Scheffter wrote that "the Micronesian world, like most Pacific Asian cultures, especially Indonesian, Malaysian, Filipino, and Japanese, is constructed on bipolar non dual relations between opposites . . . in the Micronesian world view, opposites interact, interconnect, interpenetrate into and through each other."⁶⁰ This may be one of the many reasons why America's Western, democratic notion of schooling has been so ill suited in the region. Micronesians encourage cooperation, not competition. They are taught to respect authority figures and not to question them. Orators are held in the highest esteem, and the idea of raising one's hand and taking a guess is seen as impolite and foolish.

Knowledge of traditional myths and lineage were sources of great power. Power is inherited in Micronesia through bloodlines. The leaders are ancestors of divine, primordial beings who used magic and power to create the world. (Sellman, 1995) These myths are common in Polynesia, Indonesia and Japan as well. Sellman related that, "a person who knows the myths can explain and verify the ancestral lineage, which justifies the socio-politico-economic stratification. The myths justify property and land rights, and who can hold and who can gain access to specialized types of knowledge (agriculture, navigation, canoe building, house building, fishing, making war, making medicine, making magic and so on."⁶¹ Absolutely undemocratic, a perfect mismatch of ideologies, yet perfectly suited for Micronesians who respect cooperation and humility above all else.

Micronesia is having as much difficulty in reforming its educational system as America is in reforming ours. It is no easy task with simple, permanent solutions. Dr. Robert Underwood, the conference convener at the educational summit on Guam made a very astute observation by noting that "alack and alas, classrooms are enormously complex venues for the drama of human interaction. The complexity of that interchange between teacher and student, student and student, teacher and student together, and the society at large, frequently exceeds the most complex intellectual theorizing"⁶² Underwood's sentiment will be repeated in later chapters by educators spanning the globe.

CHAPTER 3

MICRONESIANS EMIGRATE

THE IMPACT OF THE COMPACT:

Prior to 1986, education abroad was the privilege of a few, elite Micronesians. Getting a working visa was even harder. Most in Micronesia had to make do with what was available locally and through the aid of the United States. As the compact went into effect and the U.S. dollars began to dwindle, people began to emigrate in ever larger numbers. Initially many Micronesians went to Guam. Guam had a good economy (due mainly to Japanese tourism) and was relatively close to home so the flights were not too expensive. Studies have been tracking the movement of Micronesians within Micronesia since the 1970's and 80's. (Rubinstein, 1990; Hezel and Levin, 1986) Among their findings were that usually young single men first to moved to Guam or Saipan to find work.

Especially on the move were the young men of Chuuk. From 1988 to 1992 the number of Chuukese on Guam rose from approximately a thousand people to almost four thousand while the number of arrivals from Yap, Kosrae and Pohnpei changed little staying below a thousand people. Micronesians have traditionally moved populations to alleviate the pressures of limited resources on the atolls. Hezel noted that:

Throughout history the delicate balance between population and resources always had to be monitored and maintained. Over the centuries Micronesians have always found it necessary to adjust population levels to the resources available in a place. . . on Satawal . . . a maximum of about 800 [people] seemed to be all that the coral atoll could comfortably support. When the population reached this upper limit, young men were sent off to marry girls from other atolls . . . today the resource in question are not just land and the food that is grown on it, but the jobs with which people can support themselves and their families. The resource toward which more and more Micronesians are turning - - job opportunities at home - - is unable to keep up with the growing population and its rising aspirations. Emigration is the means now being used to redress the imbalance.⁶⁸

Historically Micronesian men were known to eagerly join whalers and tradeships in centuries past to seek adventure in far off lands. So it comes as no surprise to the Micronesian people themselves to see their young men head off to distant shores. Rubinstein wrote that "part of the Micronesian world view is that personal success is measured, to some degree by how far from home one has traveled."⁸⁴ Today it is not only limited resources and over population that drive people out but also the lack of paying jobs in the new cash economies that have emerged in the Pacific Islands since the end of W.W.II. Especially hard hit have been the atolls where the pressures of population and resources are greatly intensified. Rubinstein observed that despite their curiosity for travel, "a central Micronesian identity is the strong cultural attachment to home and land, as it is among many Pacific Islanders and other traditional peoples throughout the world."⁸⁵ They have a 'homing instinct' due to their strong attachments to home and family.

As found in many immigrant populations worldwide the moves have not been without difficulty. Chuukese men on Guam had a reputation for drinking and trouble making. The first arrivals of young men experienced freedom from the watchful eyes of their families that was unprecedented. Without familiar social constraints plus a little cash in their pockets, young Chuukese men were known to get out of control regularly. Eventually, the young men got married and began to start families and set up households that resembled those back in Chuuk and as the years passed, their lives became more settled. As they became established more relatives came to join them and multi generational households appeared which was in keeping with cultural tradition. Unfortunately, the damage had been done and the residents of Guam quickly grew to dislike their Micronesian workers. The Chamorros of Guam do not consider themselves Micronesian (Dobbin, 1996) due to their unique history, and according to Marshall:

the term "Micronesian" is applied to FSM migrants by Chamorros (themselves Micronesian) and others on Guam in a pejorative sense . . . nearly 80 percent of the migrants are from Chuuk, and the "Micronesian" label seems to have been constructed particularly around a stereotype of Chuukese as fearsome folk: violent, prone to drunkenness, likely to damage property

(whether out of willfulness or ignorance), and poor financial risks as well.⁶⁶

Just as things were starting to improve with the stabilization of the migrant communities on Guam, Guam's economy got worse. The yen began to weaken in the late 1980's and business slowed considerably on Guam. That is when Micronesians, especially from Chuuk, Pohnpei and the Marshall Islands began to come to Hawai'i in greater numbers than ever before.

MICRONESIANS COME TO HAWAII:

Hawai'i seemed the next logical choice for Micronesians after Guam. The climate, the food and the people were similar to home. Also the presence of friends and families already residing in Hawai'i made it an attractive location. As in Guam, although work seemed to be the main draw, there have been various reasons for the Micronesians to emigrate besides employment. "Some are seeking better education for their children and health care for their families. Distressed at the poor quality of public services or disgusted by the seemingly endless convolutions of local island politics that hinder any progress, some are reaching out for a better life somewhere else,"⁶⁷ Hezel noted.

With the arrival of so many Micronesians in Hawai'i, we now see problems arising not only in the schools, the catalyst for this research, but also in the medical establishments. Although the media has not singled out Micronesian children in school as a particular problem population, which is why the criticism in class caught me off guard, quite a bit of attention has been given in recent years about the rising costs of taking care of the Micronesians who are arriving in Hawai'i in significant numbers with serious health problems. As discussed in the chapter on history, the nuclear testing done in the Marshall Islands has left them with many health problems that are being tended in Hawai'i. Among the Marshallese there are more instances of "stomach cancer, skin cancer and leukemia."⁶⁸ and heart problems, obesity and diabetes plague the population throughout Micronesia as well. (Peacock, 1983)

Although the United States government has provided funds for caring for the victims of the nuclear tests, Hawai'i's government feels that more money is due here in Hawai'i as Hawai'i has a disproportionate amount of Marshallese compared with other states. This is a very serious problem not only for the Marshallese but also for other Micronesians who have health problems. Proving, for example, that cancer in children was caused by nuclear testing in the region is very difficult. It is left for the families to deal with. From my personal observations, there is a disproportionate amount of illness among the Micronesian population. Certainly a change in diet as well as the introduction of alcohol have played a part in the demise of a relatively healthy population, but sickness in children cannot be so easily dismissed. This is an issue that I feel is very important to address because it also relates to some of the problems children are experiencing in education. Families with health issues from cancer to alcoholism would certainly be less able to focus on a child's educational difficulties which may pale in comparison to other problems.

Unlike some other immigrants to Hawai'i and the mainland U.S., Micronesians are not leaving their homes because of war or oppression. They willingly come for work, medical care or education often with the idea that they will return to their island eventually. Without exception, every adult from Pohnpei that I know misses home and would move back immediately if there were paying jobs back home.

A recent *Honolulu Weekly* article pointed out some very important characteristics of the Micronesians in Hawai'i. One, that there are a lot of them here, but they are not noticed because of their physical similarities to Polynesians. They are scattered throughout the islands and get together primarily for church or to commemorate birthdays or funerals at parks such as Ala Wai or Makiki. Bickel also noted that most of the Micronesians want to return to their birth islands eventually and are quite homesick. The subtitle of the article was "Homesick Islanders: They work, go to school, attend church and hang on tight to their families. Mostly, Hawai'i's thousand of Micronesians long to return home."⁹⁹

I will discuss in the next chapter the differences between immigrant groups and their motivations for leaving their homes, however in all of these studies, we look at

the primary immigrant, the adult. What I find interesting is the child who either came to Hawai'i at a young age or was born in Hawai'i, and does not know and miss her island of origin as keenly as her parents. All of the Ponapean families I know, where both parents are Ponapean, speak Ponapean at home regardless of where the children were born. But there is a definite ease among the children, many of whom thrive in both worlds, in fitting into American culture not evident in their parents. Will these children also want to go back to Pohnpei to spend their twilight years?

It seems that they will have more choices if the migration trends continue. Unlike the adventurers of years past, the new immigrants as they venture ever farther from home in greater numbers are creating a new type of Micronesian kinship system. The trends so far seem to indicate they will be multinational, multicultural and multilingual. Hanlon write in his update:

The exchange of goods and money and the flow of persons back and forth across the "highway" stretching from the home islands to faraway destinations in the United States, sometimes resulting in the return of longtime migrants, are clear indications that migrants do not make a decisive break with their homeland when they move overseas. They still belong to their home islands. Far from cutting their bonds with their homeland, they do what they can to further these ties by promoting cultural events and by encouraging awareness in the young of where they come from. Marshallese tell stories to their young that are probably very much like the tales Bikinians told their youth long after they had been forced to evacuate their island for atomic testing.

Many Micronesian immigrants would like to maintain title to land at home and at least some stake in their home island, just as most Samoans and Tongans did as they scattered through the United States and other countries. To do so, they are compelled to continue the exchanges with their family members at home and to visit from time to time in order to reaffirm kinship bonds. Kinship, after all, is not simply bestowed at birth; it's created over time through shared food, and presence. The process continues today, just as it always did, but now over a distance spanning the Pacific.

The growing number of immigrants are not dropouts or permanent exiles . . . although they are no longer residing in their political states, they remain tied to the peoples and cultures even at a distance. Emigrants are the most distant members of their nation, which has

come to embrace more than the single political jurisdiction in which they were born. They are the international wing of a people distributed from one end of the Pacific to the other.⁷⁰

The census shows that in 1988 10,000 Micronesians arrived in Hawai'i. Because the CFA allows unrestricted work in and travel to the United States, it is hard to find exact numbers of Micronesian immigrants because they are not required to apply for green cards or register with the INS. But the statistics show that there are significant numbers of people arriving in Hawai'i. Hanlon summarized:

The extent of immigration in the last two decades can be measured by comparing the size of the emigrant community in 1980 with that of the present . . . The estimated size of the total emigrant pool from the whole of the Federated States of Micronesia was perhaps 1,500 . . . The most recent (1998) count of FSM citizens who have emigrated to Guam, Saipan, and Hawai'i puts their number at 12,000. With the inclusion of an estimated 4,000 residing in the mainland United States, there are about 16,000 FSM people who have left home to make their living abroad. In less than twenty years, the size of the emigrant pool has grown from a negligible fraction of the FSM population to over 13 percent of all FSM- born people. The Marshalls may have about 5,000 people living in Hawai'i and on the U.S. mainland now, and the Palauan emigrant community has grown to an estimated 6,000 or more. If these estimates, which are partially based on surveys from recent years, are accurate, there are more than 25,000 Micronesians living abroad today. In other words, one out of every eight Micronesians now lives overseas.⁷¹

The numbers back up the impression of the concerned educators I have met that there are a lot of Micronesians arriving in Hawai'i. The Micronesians are in Hawai'i, but they have come quietly. Hawai'i is a fertile job market with good schools compared to those back home, but culturally and socially, their home islands are keenly missed. This is not unusual of immigrants, but what is unusual is the mobility with which the Micronesians can move back and forth between the U.S. and Micronesia. Few immigrants except Puerto Ricans have the options available to the Micronesians, and it affects the way they see their move to Hawai'i. I will discuss this

subject in more depth in a later chapter. What interests me is the children born in Hawai'i to the Micronesians or who arrived here at a young age and do not have such clear loyalties to their island homes. So now a look at the children.

CHAPTER 4

PONAPEAN CULTURE

OVERVIEW:

I will focus on Pohnpei because most of my informants were from there and so I felt my familiarity allowed for more personal information. I have been criticized for trying to define the situation of Micronesian children and problems facing them in American schools since I am not a Micronesian. In readings for course work in Pacific Island studies, a great deal of attention was paid to the work of indigenous anthropologists and 'native' writers. The works of Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Edward Said stand out foremost in my thinking about the appropriateness of viewing and inevitably judging groups of people from the perspective of an outsider. The concept of a benevolent outsider observing without prejudice has been called into question and soundly refuted. *Outsiders can never know a people even with the complete cooperation of the people earned through trust and respect.*

I believe that through my friendship and kinship within the Ponapean community in Hawai'i I have a unique view into their lives. I have been entrusted with this information to try and help the schools understand them. Because my friendship existed before this study was conducted, the primacy of the friendship outweighed my role as an investigator and provided opportunities for observation not available to an outsider. As a fringe participant in the Micronesian community, I relied heavily on my informants, who were also friends, and trust that what they told me was the truth.

In the following pages the statements referring to Ponapean culture will be a general overview, and do not reflect all Ponapeans. Regarding other Micronesian cultures, there are many similarities, yet many differences. The temptation to generalize between the Islands' cultures is easy because at first glance, they resemble each other physically and there are many shared cultural traits. Yap is one group in FSM that has been brilliant at taking what it wants from the West while retaining a vital culture on clean islands. Some other islands in Micronesia are much more Westernized. For more detail on other islands and their particular cultures,

there is much written on all of the islands in Micronesia as they have been a pivotal part of world history for many years. This is meant as an overview of Ponapean family life for those unfamiliar with the culture to illustrate some aspects of Micronesian culture to create a basic understanding of cultural differences that might help educators in Hawai'i connect with the families.

POHNPEI:

Tradition tells of the magical creation of Pohnpei by people with supernatural powers to find who found the island with the aid of an octopus. Upon the reef, with the help of deities, they transported large rocks to create an altar on which they would build an island. Pohnpei means, "upon a stone altar", and the divine origins of its creation are still felt today in the reverence with which Ponapeans view their island. It is literally their holy land. (Hanlon, 1988)

The peopling of the island and the creation of the clans is a complicated one, but very central to the Ponapean character in relation to their location on the island and their place within their various clans. According to my informants, every Ponapean knows his family's history and position in the clan and village. Each clan's region became the five districts of Pohnpei ; Kitti, Modolenihmw, Nett, Sokehs, and U. There is now a sixth area, the capital of Kolonia. There is a healthy and lively competitive spirit among them, exhibited in the many sporting festivals held on the island. In centuries past, this competition was not so healthy and warfare was not unknown (Ashby, 1983). Ponapeans are very proud of their heritage and a good deal of bantering can be heard between members of different municipalities. I am reminded of a Texan or a native of New York City in the loyalties felt among islanders to their home district. A thorough description of the history of Pohnpei is found in David Hanlon's book, *Upon a Stone Alter*, written in 1988.

Hanlon's book explained the social structures of Pohnpei which, more than the other islands in Micronesia, resemble the complex hierarchies throughout Polynesia. Pohnpei was a caste society, birth determined social status. The chief, or Nahnmwarki, is paramount in each district. Society is broken down into a pyramid

below him. There was very little room for upward mobility traditionally except through extraordinary feats of generosity or bravery.

A matrilineal society originally, some customs have changed with the effects of centuries of colonization and the coming of Western religions. There is debate about this, but today, clan lines are passed through the mother, and land through the father. Fathers taught boys about fishing and farming, while the women showed girls how to care for children, cooking and keeping a house. Teaching was done by example and assimilation (Colleta, 1980). Girls were expected to take care of younger siblings from a very young age, a practice that is still seen among recent immigrants to Hawai'i much to the consternation of some teachers. Families were very tightly knit and depended on one another heavily throughout life. Brothers and sisters were very protective of one another and extended families tended to be quite close and worked as cooperative units towards the good of the whole family.

In the book, *An Island Argosy*, Ashby suggested that when researching the "best source of information on traditional culture is an informed Ponapean. It is a very complex subject which volumes have been written."⁷² William R. Bascom described the people of Pohnpei as having:

A deep sense of pride that cannot be expressed openly, a hunger for praise when it is deserved, a retiring modesty, tolerance and patience, together with a quiet personality. The people of Pohnpei have a character, as well as a history and set of traditions, that is their own. An American who comes to Pohnpei from the Marshalls, confident that he 'understands natives' from their previous experience, must either revise their opinions or, as has usually been the case in the past, leave without meeting they Ponapeans on common ground.⁷³

The system of caste is also important to the success of Ponapeans in Hawai'i. This may be helpful in understanding why a Ponapean, compared with other immigrant groups, may not see the American educational ladder of social mobility as central to his/her success. Success on Pohnpei traditionally was measured by productivity. Great harvests or fishing skills were the measure of a man, not his cleverness. Overt cleverness was frowned upon, as was any type of self-aggrandization. Ponapean people are very humble and despise people who

appear boastful. Some of the very qualities most prized and encouraged in an American school are cleverness and self-confidence. There is a fine line between boasting and self-confidence, humility and shyness. Americans tend to tightrope walk this line, while Ponapeans stay on the ground, well away from the rope. Some Ponapean proverbs provided by Ashby illustrate their character well:

No man should consider himself less skilled or beneath another.

What you sow, you reap.

Never judge a person from outer features or outside appearances.

There are many things contained in a man, but he will not let anyone know all of them.

Do not act too high, proud or snobbish. A man can slip and fall.

A clan is like a razor protrusion from a unicorn fish. If you harm one, a school will rip your body apart.

The young yam grows through the old one. A child will act like the parent.⁷⁴

Although these proverbs mirror some of those in the West, there are also many more esoteric proverbs that delineate hierarchy and the different roles among the sexes which do differ from Western philosophy.

In attempting to educate children, a book like the one written by Nat J. Colletta entitled '*American Schools for the Natives of Pohnpei*', explains what to expect when educating a Ponapean child. For example, "individual character is firmly enmeshed in the communal social structure. Conformity is imperative . . . there is little life separate from the group."⁷⁵ Colletta continued:

The role of ridicule and praise in the modification of behavior stands out as one of the more observable Ponapean patterns of social control. To shame (*sarohdi*) or to be shamed (*mahk*) in public is one of the gravest social errors that can transpire . . . a strong social taboo forbids publicly criticizing another individual or openly expressing a dissenting point of view. All expressions

of criticism are transmitted indirectly through a third party.⁷⁶

Colleta related the story of a frustrated American in Pohnpei who couldn't get a storekeeper to help him. He thought the service was bad, but as it turns out, the shopkeeper didn't want to offer him something because the American might not want it and so would have to refuse, thus embarrassing himself and offending the storekeeper, all breaches of Pohnpeian convention. Such behavior could never be anticipated by the American. But we expect children and families to 'know how to act' immediately upon arrival to our shores. The maintenance of social harmony is paramount for a Ponapean. According to Colleta, "mutual respect or confrontation avoidance becomes the primary law of social interaction as well as a definitive Ponapean character trait."⁷⁷ The employment of little white lies is often a tactic used to avoid such confrontations.

Colleta continued in a very succinct and readable text to explain about Ponapean home life, how children are reared and what is expected of them. Baby-sitting is a prominent responsibility for girls and a highly valued skill. One of the other points made in her chapter on traditional education in Pohnpei highlighted the role of older children in raising the younger ones. Colleta noted that:

the play group becomes the primary educational institution for the child . . . the group is marked by a great deal of freedom from parental involvement, as the members of the group guide, reprove and cultivate each other's behavior. It is here that the foundation for shame as the mechanism for social control and the adult character trait of extreme social sensitivity are firmly inculcated. At this stage also the respect and security of rank and place in the social order are first incurred. During this period, too, the fundamental rule of all Ponapean education is laid down: All learning and teaching transpire in real life situations.⁷⁸

In this one paragraph, the reasons for many of the school's complaints about seemingly aberrant Ponapean behavior are laid out; the importance of caring for siblings takes precedence over homework and that the shyness as a result of social sensitivity may result in an apathetic appearance. Children were free to roam to and

fro, eat here and there and not worry about where they slept, they would always be looked after. As Coletta explained, what looked like unfettered freedom to the outside eye, was actually a hatchery of social norms and constraints. Great emphasis was placed on what was acceptable behavior and what was expected of a child at certain ages and abilities.

Another problem the teachers in my classes expressed were the frequency of absences and tardiness. Time in many countries in the world is still not dictated by a clock, and this is true in Micronesia. Leinwand wrote a dissertation on adjustment problems experienced by Micronesian college students in America in 1981. Leinwand remarked on the comparative freedom experienced by children in Micronesia and how unprepared the students were for the more regimented life in the U.S. (Leinwand, 1981) She noted that in the United States, "the most important thing is time. You have to be at school at a certain time, you have to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner at a certain time. Back home you can eat any time you want. You don't have to eat in the morning because its breakfast time. We really don't go by time. We have lots of freedom but here you've to do things before a certain time."⁷⁹ Leinwand continued by saying that "the traditional Micronesian custom of passing knowledge and stories from one generation to the next in an oral fashion has prevented reading from becoming major activity."⁸⁰ Skills that were not given great importance and perhaps not learned by their parents were not being handed down to the children attending schools in America. One of the professors interviewed by Leinwand thought that many Micronesian students did not develop study skills because of the situation in the home where there was no electricity to read by or material to read other than a Bible.⁸¹ Also there were chores to be done. The schools, though compulsory, were attended sporadically at best. Upon adapting to a more challenging school environment such as Guam or an American school, a student's study habits "cannot just suddenly transform overnight . . . for students who have never had to sit routinely and study for several hours at a time, there is a tendency to close the books"⁸² according to Leinwand. During an interview with a Ponapean family we talked about the use of a desk.

The mother replied that they had never used one, so why do their kids need it? The amount of hours needed for homework in America make studying on the floor unusual to an American's sensibilities. If there is adequate lighting, it could be done. However it is just one more difference that underscores the gap separating what the parents experienced in school and what their children are facing.

As in Hawai'i's schools, Micronesian college students in America were chastised for tardiness, absenteeism and shyness in class. One professor noted that Micronesian students lacked the drive of other foreign students. I will discuss this in a later chapter on immigration and motivation, but all of these criticisms are becoming familiar. Leinwand stated that "the faculty seemed to feel that the students do not exhibit the drive that American or other foreign students do, they are not interested in maintaining a competitive edge over their fellow students . . . the Micronesian students are (not) especially goal oriented and they are not particularly concerned about whether or not they complete projects they may have started; they do not feel any guilt if they do not accomplish a goal."⁸³

The professor went on to question the Micronesian student's desire for upward mobility and wondered whether the students "really do want to get an advanced degree, a prestige job, or more money . . . the Micronesian students do not care if they flunk out of school; if they were to return to Micronesian with just one term of college, it would still be considered a wonderful achievement since having been to the U.S. is important in itself"⁸⁴

Another professor interviewed by Leinwand felt that the Micronesian students were unable to deal with the great amount of freedom they have upon leaving their parents and home environment saying that "the Micronesian students tend to isolate themselves by living together and . . . not enough American culture is assimilated."⁸⁵ I find this very true of the Ponapean community in Hawai'i and again this is typical of immigrant populations to want to stay together.

Several students in Leinwand's study commented on what they considered was the aggressiveness of most Americans. In the U.S. , they were discovering, one must constantly ask questions to get what one wants or to achieve one's ends. One

student warned that "if you go to the United States, you have to have a big mouth to live. You have to talk because if you don't, you will have lots of problems. You might be quiet, but when you go to the United States, make sure you have a big mouth. Like if you don't understand something, ask. Don't be afraid. Talk. Who cares? Find out something."⁸⁶ The ability to question seems mundane for an American, but can be excruciating for a Micronesian. Leinwand wrote:

For many of the Micronesian students, their lack of facility with the English language augmented their own natural shyness and many told me that their reluctance to ask questions in class stemmed from embarrassment over their language skills. The student seemed to be afraid that if they spoke, neither the instructor nor the other students would be able to understand them, and further, they might then be asked to repeat the question, thus causing even more embarrassment. Several students were certain that the American students in class would laugh at their accents or broken English.⁸⁷

This is a sentiment that I have heard many times, the reluctance to use broken English and be publicly humiliated is very common among the Micronesians. The most fundamental element for migrants is the acquisition of the host language for basic survival. The difficulty in navigating a new homeland by any immigrant group is intensified by a culture that is unwilling to risk failure by use of incorrect language.

CHAPTER 5

A CASE STUDY AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION:

I chose an elementary school for my case study that I will refer to as PS-1. This school had a substantial population of immigrants, especially from Micronesia. It is also a Title I school, which is to say that it has a substantial population of low income families which qualifies the school for special funding in programs to assist with 'at risk' children. I interviewed some of the educators who had close contact with the immigrant children, either as language instructors or in the after school programs. In addition to the interviews, I was able to assist as a volunteer and observer in one after school program designed to help struggling children with their homework. Many of the children in the program were immigrants that represented a wide swath of Asia and the Pacific. The study group I chose to observe was predominantly Micronesian.

When I called the elementary school initially and spoke with the principal, I identified my research and my relation to the Micronesian community and my concern for the Micronesian children at the school, she was extremely forthcoming. She was very animated about the difficulties that the school was having in getting the parents involved in their children's education. She asked me if I spoke Micronesian and could I please come down and help interpret, today! I told her that, unfortunately, I don't speak any of the languages, but would be happy to ask around to see if any one was available to help her. Her attitude of extreme interest and desperation was mirrored by almost all of the teachers I spoke with subsequently. They were all very cooperative and generous with their time.

INTERVIEW ONE: Casey, Project Coordinator for the Program at PS-1⁸⁸

In my first meeting with Casey I explained that the frustration I had heard in my classes from fellow educators had led me to believe that the schools were failing the Micronesian children by not reaching out to them effectively due to ignorance. My

encounter with Casey gave me a new view of the situation. I was given her name by the PS-1 principal because Casey runs a 'Program' that is designed to help immigrant children succeed in school. It is funded by a four year grant through the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs. Its mission is to develop and implement a special alternative instructional program for limited English proficient (LEP) students.

In explaining the Program, Casey said that "the first major goal is the children, to offer them supplemental support. Because of Felix and because of OCR (Office of Civil Rights) and all of these things,"⁸⁹ schools must succeed in educating all children or face consequences. Schools with a high population of non-native English speakers face great challenges in these times of testing and accountability. The Project is a before and after school tutoring program provided free to supplement ESL for students who are having difficulty or falling behind in their studies. The grant was given because PS-1 qualified as a Title 1 school, as well as having almost 30% of its student body being non-native English speakers. Casey described why the Project was able to get funding:

(Felix and OCR) have come into our schools and mandated certain things . . . one of these things is all children should learn, with the Bush initiative. Before that, with Clinton, was, you know, literacy. "Read to me, read out loud". All of these things came out of that administration. Before that with Reagan, it was drugs . . . The focus primarily has been on educating our children. In the last twenty years, education has seen a lot of litigation on the behalf of our challenged children. Whether it's physically challenged, mentally challenged, linguistically challenged, culturally challenged . . . so this grant opened up and we decided to pursue it.⁹⁰

Their original proposal was rejected, as it focused on literacy, with ESL being one component of that goal. The second proposal focused on ESL and was granted. The program offers in service training for teachers, as well as translation and tutoring services. The goal was to keep the teachers in the classroom teaching, while the Project's staff would offer before and after school tutoring programs to help with basic skills, such as reading, homework and spelling. Reading out loud is a very prominent feature, according to Casey, "one of the literacy program's biggest

initiatives (at PS-1) is that when they go home, they're supposed to be read to for twenty-five minutes, but they're not . . . we do twenty minutes of reading out loud."⁹¹ Sometimes, depending on the age and ability of the child, the child reads. The teacher does the reading if the child is not reading ready. The goal is to make reading fun, and to hear native speaker's tone and inflection.

Casey explained that the Project supplemented ESL and other programs. She has brought in ten federal work-study students, in compliance with boundaries set by the federal grant. She also provided four part-time teachers as well as ten additional college freshman to assist in the program. That is more than twenty additional people to help the children, often times at a one on one ratio. When explaining the program, Casey stated:

Our program is not formulated to go into the ESL classroom . . . we do not give ESL class, which is already supplemental services, we give direct educational supplemental services . . . we are considered a PDI, we're a project development initiative . . . we are supposed to come in, let the school know that this works, and find a way within the school to say, "ok, how are we going to take this and visualize it". We've brought in twenty new bodies that are not DOE funded. . .when we're gone, how is the school going to maintain? Maintenance is a big deal. . this is asking the school to buy in . . . asking the DOE to buy in; if they want to re-write the grant.⁹²

I told Casey that I thought the program sounded wonderful. For many of the Micronesian children I know, homework is problematic since the parents cannot help due to language barriers. The Project seemed to perfectly fill this need. It is free, it is at school and because the Project staff works in tandem with the PS-1 staff, help can be student specific. Unlike ESL and other supplemental programs, the Project is not a federal mandate. Herein lies the catch. Casey explained:

We're a pure voluntary program . . . the LEP's, they are the number one goal . . . part of that is also having them buy in; their parents, their family, their community, to actually see what free is. Everything's free. They pay for nothing, even supplies we provide. . . last year, was every other day. . . (now), they get every day service, Monday through Friday, free after school tutorial, homework . . . (as for the) parents, all we ask them to do

is come to our parent workshop. That's it."⁹³

When I asked if the Micronesian families came, she replied, "very rarely, if any, it's been very hard . . . it hasn't made a large impact on the Micronesian community."⁹⁴ She went on to say that they had one Chuukese volunteer from Woleai who had translated the brochures and information packets into all the Micronesian languages and provided informants at the meetings. Still no one came to the meetings to sign up for the program, which was a great disappointment to the Project staff. Many of the children who did sign up eventually dropped out. Casey would make a phone call, ask if the child would like to come back, and if not, she would not call again. She explained that cajoling was not part of the program. The families who wanted to participate were welcome, and those who were unresponsive were left alone.

Although Casey expressed regret that so many of the Micronesian children that she felt could have benefitted from the program and whose teachers had recommended as needing extra help did not attend, she said that she understood. She comes from a family of nine children, and she admits that her parents rarely participated in any school activities. "A lot of it has to do with your values and your commitment to education and its necessity in your life and your children's lives. I understand"⁹⁵ she said.

She gave the example of one Micronesian 5th grader who loved the program and was improving greatly in her school work, but she was responsible for taking care of a younger cousin. Casey let her bring the youngster while she studied, but he proved so distracting that Casey called the mother and asked if the girl could attend without the child as she was really enjoying from the program. The result was that the girl does not attend the Project anymore. Casey commented:

She loses out, she'll go home and do all her homework by herself, no problem. She'll try really hard, but she really benefitted from being with us because they (the students) made very serious mistakes in their homework or they didn't translate it correctly, so here we are, we're helping them. She can be sitting in class . . . and going "yeah, ok, I know what to do", and then they go home and go, "argh, I don't know what to do!" So that's what we've been, we've been that translating voice. But other than that, once we help them, either visually or

auditorially, they go to town, no problem.⁹⁶

Casey observed that the Asian parents tend to sign the consent forms and send the children no matter what. Because the workshop proved to be difficult for working parents to attend, the Project relaxed the requirements to only needing a signed consent form, with or without attending a workshop. She felt that it was unfair to penalize the children if the parents were unable or unwilling to attend.

I asked her about the Micronesian families, and if she had any theories as to why so many of them did not participate in their children's education. Her answer surprised me, she said:

I think for them, one (reason) is the shame. I believe in Polynesia and most Pacific Islands, that's what we place in our children. I always tell my daughter that "the only way for Mommy to make sure that you understand that it's wrong, is to let you know that it's shame. You're going to shame yourself, Mommy and the whole family if you do this."⁹⁷

Casey is a Hawaiian woman from a large family on one of the outer islands. She went on to say that all Polynesian families do this. "Shame on you, you don't speak English. Shame on you, you can't read."⁹⁸ Relating this to the Micronesian experience, Casey said that "if they're shamed already in their own community, to come out and be a part of a larger community, shame."⁹⁹ She believed that as immigrants, the Micronesians feel shame because they don't look like the rest of the community and haven't immersed themselves in the culture yet. They have not been acculturated. Casey confessed that she was ashamed to be Hawaiian until she came to college. She calls her coming to college on O'ahu an escape. An escape she couldn't have made without the dedication of a few teachers. She sees herself giving this gift back to children who are less advantaged now. Her goal is to inspire them. But she admits that the schools can give mixed messages:

(There are) two little mind sets in the school. One is, "stop giving them false hope". The other message is "every child can learn, every kid has potential". So if you have got that bouncing against each other, every time a kid goes from one classroom to another classroom or from one grade level to another, no wonder the kid is so confused.¹⁰⁰

For Casey personally, school was her escape. It was where she got to be recognized as an individual. For minority children, she believes that school "is where they are an individual, that is where they succeed, that is where they know that that is truly the world."¹⁰¹ She was so impressed with the children who willingly and eagerly come to her program everyday. Most of the children were Asian immigrants, with a few Tongans and Samoans, though their numbers at PS-1 are small. There is a sizable population of Micronesian children in need of just such help who did not participate in the program. Why they don't participate while the other ethnic groups do is the subject of some debate. Casey believed that:

for the Samoans and the Tongans, teachers have a long period of time dealing with their families, maybe they know they have someone who can translate for them. But primarily for the Micronesian families, from what I understand, is that the parents fail to come at all. In fact, even for testing and parent conferences (they) do not. They 'll say "yes, yes, yes", it's a cultural thing, but not show up. It's a very Hawaiian thing too. "I'll be there, I'll be there", but don't come. A reason for that is 'cause of shame.¹⁰²

Colleta wrote about the little white lies that save face, this is another example that is taken to mean apathy by the teachers. Casey knows that the Tongan and Samoan children come and do well because all it takes is a phone call to mom, and the children are going to be punished if they misbehave or don't show up. She says, "I really want to work with Micronesian parents because I believe that they have a hold on their children that is unreal."¹⁰³ In this respect she is right as far as my knowledge of Pohnpeian families goes. The parent's word is law and there is no room for dissent or bargaining. Casey wanted to harness that power to create good students. The problem is how to connect with the parents who have proven to be so difficult to reach. When Casey does make a phone call to parents about a missing student, she tells them:

You have made a commitment with us that your child was going to come to our program for the service and that the service is good. We've seen your child blossom in the classroom." I see this beauty that comes

out and shines from them when they're there. The children don't realize they're working. Some of them come in, "ahh, I don't want to do my homework", after awhile we don't have that.¹⁰⁴

The children became enthusiastic and looked forward to doing special projects and their attitudes become very positive, according to Casey. She said, "the focus for us is to engage them into really thinking and searching and feeling that education is for them."¹⁰⁵ I was really impressed by Casey and her positive attitude about reaching the children, as she had once been an 'at risk' child herself. When I asked Casey about the importance of the program, she reminisced about her own childhood and the one or two teachers who had paid extra attention to her and helped her with her reading. Without these caring individuals, she felt that she would not have continued her education, and would probably be back on her island with a bunch of children like most of her friends. Not to say that having children is bad, the point is whether there is a choice. If somebody makes the choice to raise a family over having a career, that is good. But if that same person never has the opportunity to choose a career because of a lack of education, that is a shame.

I left the interview with a completely different view of the school, at least in relation to the Project. I came into my research with a bias against the schools because of the extremely negative attitudes I had encountered in my UH classes from some teachers toward the Micronesians. Here I had met someone who was completely dedicated to the very Micronesian children that I was hearing so many complaints about, and it now seemed that it was the parents of the struggling children who were dropping the ball. This notion would be further bolstered by my next interview.

INTERVIEW TWO: An ESL Teacher at PS-1¹⁰⁶

I met with two ESL teachers at PS-1, however one of them was late, so I include the voice of just the one teacher, Sue has been teaching ESL for many years. She was very gracious to take time out of her busy day to talk with me. We started

by getting the general picture of the student body at PS-1. It is an unusual school demographically. There are high income families from the nearby high rise buildings and there are low income families from the low rise walk-ups that also surround PS-1. For this reason, the immigrant children tend to fall into two sharply divided groups. The Asian immigrants mostly live in the high rises apartments, and the Pacific Island children, mostly Micronesian, are coming from the poorer homes. As I mentioned earlier, PS-1 is a Title I school, and therefore there is a sizable lower income population in attendance.

Sue prefaced our interview with the disclaimer that her statements would be greatly generalized. Since I would question her in general about the Micronesian population, and since we discussed the differences between them and other immigrant populations, she was careful to point out that, of course, these were just generalities as there would always be exceptions to the rule. Many Micronesian children attending PS-1 were thriving, so in no way is there a shadow over the entire Micronesian immigrant community. But there were enough children falling far behind in their studies to warrant some special concern among educators toward the Micronesian children arriving at PS-1.

I recounted to her my meeting with Casey and the purpose of the Project. Sue expressed regret that the Micronesian children by and large were not taking advantage of the services offered by the Project, whereas the Asian children were attending regularly. Sue felt that one reason for this may be that many of the Micronesian children seemed to have baby-sitting duties or other commitments at home that superseded any obligations to schooling. She elaborated:

with the Asians, generally, their priority is the kid's education. I don't think it's that way (for the Micronesians), from what I've seen and felt throughout the years, it's not. I mean there's so many children, their parents throw the homework away or their parents go to bed and can't help them with their homework or the parents aren't home. For whatever reason, it's not a priority. The Micronesians come with the idea that, well, education is the school's job. "I send my child to school, that's where he or she does their thing, they come home and that's it. I don't have to do anymore." . . . It's not in their experience, even recently, so they don't look at it

as their job to do anything at all at home in regards to school work. Whereas the Asian is quite the opposite, on the contrary, they go to the *juku*, all that after school stuff. The parents send them to Kumon. The parents are constantly "did you do your homework? Let me check your homework." That's the mother's job in Asian countries.¹⁰⁷

From my experiences both in Japan and within the Micronesian community, Sue is exactly right. Sue complained that when the children come to ESL class unprepared, they offer excuses such as, "I had to watch the baby while my mother played volleyball." Or the mother was sleeping and they had to watch the younger ones. Sue was fairly irritated by now. "What is that? They're used as baby-sitters . . . the mother keeps having her babies and the older ones take care of the younger ones. They can't be the children, they have to be little mothers already at nine or ten."¹⁰⁸

Again she contrasts this attitude to that of the Asian mothers, whose job is, as Sue described, to monitor their children's education. From my conversations with other Micronesians, the attitudes about children and their duties at home are vastly different than what might be expected of an American or Asian child. It seems that for Micronesians, responsibilities to the family and the community are paramount. For many families, schooling is not their primary concern. Most expect to return to their islands eventually where education is not the key to success.

As our conversation had been about Micronesians in general, I tried to hone in on the Ponapeans. When I asked Sue about the Ponapean students in particular, I got an answer that I would never have anticipated. Sue recalled a comment I had made earlier about the Ponapeans and their pride in their island. She said that they don't see that in the children. In fact she sees the opposite:

They don't know what island they're from. They don't. The Marshallese, any of them, any of them! Pohnpei, Chuuk, Palauan, they won't be able to tell you unless we, we have to look it up and keep reminding them and reminding them and then they'll kind of get it. So by the 4th or 5th grade you'll have ones who kind of know what language they speak, but there's plenty of them who absolutely don't know. They know they're Micronesian, that's as far as they can go. Another part of that is they

will rarely, rarely be able to give you a translation for a word in their language. We get that they're sort of ashamed to use their language, they hardly ever (speak it), when of course the Asians are always rattling off in Chinese, Japanese, Korean or whatever. They will rarely speak their language. When we come to, for example, corn or rice, "how do you say rice, or corn in your language?" They're not able to tell, or can't remember. It's hard to believe that there's no corn or rice. Or even a simple hello, goodbye, thank you, they won't say, or will ask, "what is that?"¹⁰⁸

I suggested to her that maybe one of the reasons the children are ashamed to speak any language is because many of their parents are also ashamed to speak English as well. I related what one informant had told me about how they are shy to speak broken English to Americans, that it is considered disrespectful in their culture to use a language sloppily. In Pohnpei, people who demand respect are addressed in a very formal, honorific language, and since teachers and such are seen as having a high social status, to speak in a broken manner would be disrespectful, in the minds of a Ponapean. Sue said that she found that hard to believe. She said that the Japanese also have an honorific language, but the parents try anyway for the sake of their children. For the Asians the "value of education overrides everything else. 'I want to find out how my kid is doing, I want to talk about my kid', and so screw the 'my English isn't perfect' thing. They make an appointment and they'll come."¹¹⁰ The cultural misunderstandings are profound. To compare what is important to Japanese and to Ponapeans is to compare apples and oranges. As far as I know from my relations with the Ponapeans and from what the informants tell me, respect is the most important attribute in their culture, it is the grease that lubricates all social interactions. To discount the Micronesians sense of respect and humility, seen in a cultural context, as lack of care for their children is unfair.

I suggested that the difference in attitudes between the Micronesian and some of the other immigrant families toward education might have to do with their reasons for coming to Hawai'i in the first place. Many of the recent Micronesian families are here for work opportunities and have the option of going back home, where an education is not needed to feed a family. This is very different from the situation of immigrants

from poorer countries like the Philippines and Vietnam. Sue retorted that the Japanese also plan on going back to Japan, but upon returning, they enter a society that is highly educated and cannot afford to let their children's education slip while abroad. Again, she missed the point that the cultural values of the people were different. I repeated that many of the Ponapeans I knew did indeed plan on returning to their island someday, as they were landowners, and Hawai'i was just a pit stop on the road of life. Sue pondered this for a minute and said that she hadn't looked at it that way and found it interesting.

Ultimately, however, Sue and the other ESL teacher were frustrated and had many more questions than answers about the Micronesian community and their failure to meet the demands of an American education. As they pondered the problem, Sue dropped an unexpected bomb:

These children are all having such trouble. . . (what) one observer . . . brought to the table, was that she was concerned, or had heard that there was a lot of intermarriage. She was wondering if that was one problem why these the children were constantly having trouble. Maybe there was too much . . . I mean, the islands are so small.¹¹¹

What she seemed to be implying was that through incest, perhaps inevitable on small islands, the Micronesians were producing dolts. When I told one informant this, I expected her to be livid. But she readily concurred, saying that the Marshallese were known to be quite sexually active and to have relations with their siblings. This is a polite paraphrase of her exact words. As for the Ponapeans, according to the informant, on both the mother's and father's side of the family, there is no intermarriage allowed and the rules for this are very strict, much more so than we know in the West. I chalked up the opinions to intra island bias and decided that I did not want to follow this dubious line of thinking at all in my research. One Pacific Islander who was a student teacher at PS-1 (and whose interview appears later in this paper) said that she felt that such attitudes were just a horrible excuse to discriminate against the Micronesians. The idea that the children are slow due to

intermarriage reminds me of Appalachia and the prejudices that people have about any group that is different and therefore somehow threatening.

Wrapping up our interview, Sue pointed to a huge binder, her children's files. She has all the children's histories recorded there and most of the Micronesian pages are full of no shows and cancelations. What concerned her the most is that as the children continue to fail, they were put in special education classes, which then set the track for their entire educational career. For children who just needed extra help with their English, this saddened the teachers.

Also, for the children in special education whose parents continue to ignore the schools requests for meetings, the school is required by law to track the parents down. This is very frustrating for the teachers. Sue said that she and her staff have done everything possible to try and reach the parents of her students. She especially wanted them to attend the ESL conference held at the beginning of every school year. They offer snacks and prizes for the children to try and entice the families into coming. At the conference, benefits are explained such as free health care available for the families, tuition waivers for summer fun and other services. She also hoped to explain about her expectations of study skills, to tell them where they could get the school supplies, give reading lists and explain about library cards. All of these services are offered for the benefit of the families. "All free, free, free, and they don't come"¹¹² Sue lamented. The situation had gotten so dire, that the head of the ESL programs in Hawai'i, had suggested that since such workshops cannot be made mandatory for the parents by law, that the teachers instead take it upon themselves to visit the families individually. Sue's response was "Great! We have two hundred children. We're supposed to meet two hundred different places? That's asking a little bit of the impossible. We have a life! Get off it! What do I have to do here?"¹¹³

When I offered to try, or get the informant to try, and persuade some of the women whose children are having difficulty in school to attend next year's conference, Sue sounded grateful:

One thing is to somehow get through to these the

children . . . "if you want to make something better of yourself . . . you have to ignore what's going on (at home)" and . . . they had the DARE for drugs and alcohol . . . if somehow they can enlighten just the children, "you don't want to follow the same path as your parents". Although that's kind of a weird awful thing to say, not that you preach that . . . I think we're doing as much as we can do. I mean there's always more I'm sure, but we don't know what's going on at home, and that's the part that needs the help."¹¹⁴

I think she was on the same track as Casey. The challenge to these educators is to reach these children and help them excel in school, whether they are immigrant children coming from troubled homes or just big families where they are one of many. They don't want to judge them, they just want to be able to help the children, regardless of the parents and their attention to the children or perceived lack thereof. Sue says, "these teachers, their hearts are in it . . . they see these the children everyday, they never give up on them, no one does. But it's very frustrating."¹¹⁵

A recent article in the Honolulu Weekly reiterated the difficulties faced by Micronesian students in an American classroom. One of the high school students from Chuuk interviewed said that he felt that some of the teachers don't think highly of the Micronesian students "because they are less willing to volunteer answers . . . tend to be more humble . . . kids do not sit in front and volunteer answers in class"¹¹⁶ The tendency for boys to be quiet in class reflects their desire to be men, who traditionally don't talk unless they have something really important to say publicly. "The male students who are eager to answer questions are not just seen as kiss-ups to the teacher, they are seen as effeminate in the eyes of Micronesian boys"¹¹⁷ he continued. A 'wish to remain anonymous' ESL teacher cited in the article also mirrored the findings in my interview of the ESL teacher at PS-1. Although the teacher at PS-1 did not refer to skin color, the other comments are familiar. The ESL teacher noticed that "students from East Asia often look down upon Micronesians because of their darker skin color . . . and the Marshallese look down on the Chuukese. Because most evening and weekends are taken up with family and church obligations, Micronesians students don't have as much time for homework or social activities with non family peers. School itself becomes their

social time . . . reliability and punctuality are problems for many of the students . . . while alcohol is a problem for a number of high school boys, Micronesian student are less likely than others to use illegal drugs.”¹¹⁸ The sentiments of the people I spoke with at PS-1 and in the Project are reflected in other schools and by other teachers around O’ahu. The student projects presented in my classes in Educational Foundations also raised the same concerns. The children could not keep up in class, lacked basic skills, ignored homework, were often absent and the parents very difficult if not impossible to reach for conferencing.

INTERVIEW THREE: Sara, the Teacher’s Aide¹¹⁹

Sara was a graduate student at UH, and was an assistant teacher at PS-1. She helped with the students who were having trouble with reading, which was almost all of the LEP students. She was educated in Western Samoa through high school, and has been continuing her education here in Hawai’i. She brought some valuable insight to the situation.

Sara said that most of the children she worked with were Marshallese. She had seen a film in college about the Marshall Islands that depicted the youth as lazy, pool playing drunkards that resulted from the massive aid received from the United States. Sara didn’t like to use the word lazy, as the Samoans had been thus labeled, but she did feel that since the Marshallese didn’t have to work anymore to survive, many of the youngsters didn’t. I told her that I had heard that about Pohnpei as well. The traditional farming and fishing life of a man was quite arduous, and as foreign subsidies by way of canned goods became plentiful, the traditional ways of life were abandoned by many of the young. Serious health problems in recent years can be attributed to the radical change in diet as well. Sara found this troubling, as her experiences in Western Samoa were very different.

At PS-1, Sara had one child in particular that she tutored for a year and grew quite fond of, but who was having a great deal of difficulty. Sara said of her:

I think what was wrong with her was . . . the teacher was telling me, that sometimes she doesn’t come to school ‘cause she always has problems with her family. . . I

don't know what it is . . . I was working with her for a year, she's a really nice girl, but it's just that, I don't know, she catches on really slow. . . She improved when I was working with her. . . I don't know, something to do with home. She wasn't able to do her homework, nobody helps her out at home and stuff like that.¹²⁰

When I asked Sara if there was a difference between the way that the Samoans viewed school versus what she could discern about the Micronesians, she had a surprising reply:

When you really think about it . . . how many Micronesians do you know are out there writing books, you know, authors who, for example, you know in 'Literature of the Pacific'? How many do you see writing? How many do you see are going off to Cornell, you know, Oxford? . . . We have some Samoans who have graduated from Oxford University, Cornell University, from Yale, from Harvard. How many do you see? That's how you can tell the success of the people from these islands. That's how you can tell which island values education.¹²¹

When I suggested that maybe the influence of the American school system was different than that of other colonizers in other parts of the Pacific, Sara rebuffed this idea. She said:

American Samoa was under the U.S., how come they have people graduating from Harvard? There's a different attitude. . . I think it all begins from that time when they didn't know what to do anymore. Things just given to them. That's my philosophy about American Samoa, if they don't get off on their butts and start working for their own country and stop depending for the U.S., they're gonna end up like that.¹²²

Although I am sure that some Micronesians have attended Ivy League schools, the impression is clearly that they have not, while immigrant students from Africa and Asia are fairly numerous. I asked Sara if there was a big difference between the two Samoa's, to which she replied that there was a big difference. She described Western Samoa as being independent and having a strong work ethic with good leadership. She felt that the influence of good leaders was vital. In contrast, she felt

that American Samoa had a corrupt government. She said the good leadership of Western Samoa is represented in the community in Hawai'i, which she felt was very important in keeping the people together and strong in their identity. I told her that the Micronesians, as far as I knew and from what some informants tell me, have very little sense of community, formally. There is no organization, no leaders, no infrastructure like there is back home where the community is highly stratified and organized and everyone knows their place and there is always someone to go to when there is trouble. We agreed that good leadership would probably help in the situation of the Micronesians here in Hawai'i.

Society in Pohnpei, as most Pacific Islands, places great importance on the community. I wondered aloud to Sara if it was difficult for Pacific Islanders to fit into an American school system that puts such great emphasis on the development of the individual character. She said it was very difficult for her. As for the sense of communality versus individuality, she stated:

All of the islands are like that. They're used to working as a group, 'cause it all starts from the community. It's not individual. It's more of a community based thing. As for myself, I didn't start doing things on my own until I moved here. It was so hard. I didn't know how to take hold of my own decisions.¹²³

She recalled being devastated when her friends started drifting off on their own. This experience is so different than that of an American entering college who looks forward to separation from all that is familiar and begins to forge an independent life. How much more difficult this would be for children to adjust from a communal society to that of an American school. The culture shock would be intense.

The culture shock extends to the parents as well. Sara described what they might be feeling:

They're in a different society where there's no more law, community or cultural law. They feel like they don't have to live the law culturally . . . even if they do, over here, it's kind of weird if you see people from the islands living their cultures over here.¹²⁴

She said that immigrants are expected to fit in here, to dress American and act

American. She compares the differences between Samoan children raised here and back in Samoa. She said the biggest difference was in regards to respect and its place within Samoan culture and knowledge of the language. Sara went on to say that in Samoa, respect is held in the highest esteem, regardless of social or educational status. This is mirrored in the Micronesian community. Being relative newcomers to Hawai'i, many of them are bringing their cultures relatively intact and don't have many contacts here to explain the differences between Micronesian cultural values and what is important to Americans.

Because basic American educational assumptions such as the value of the individual and the importance of questioning are an anathema to Micronesians, it is easy to see where basic misunderstandings can grow and fester over the years until teachers attitudes towards the children slip into a subtle form of condescension. Such feelings would certainly be understood on a subliminal level by Micronesian children who are taught from infancy to pick up on minute social cues. Sara observed this attitude among the teachers toward the Micronesian children:

I can sense it. They think they're dumb. I'm serious. I work with them, they put them in a different group. . . it brings them down 'cause everyone else is doing something higher, and they're here reading this really easy 1st grade book. It puts them down. I sense the way they say things, really slow. And they complain, "I've been working with this student so long, they never improve."¹²⁵

Sara recalled how in Samoa the children would be separated into A,B,C and D groups, with the A's being the top students, and the D group at the bottom. She knew that the D students were ashamed to be there and she worked very hard to stay in the A group.

To me, it didn't improve them at all because of the fact that the children over there (D group) are the same as them. But when they start mixing them up, I think there's improvement because you compete. "I gotta raise myself". It's not because they're dumb (the Micronesians) or anything, it's just because that's not their first language.¹²⁶

Sara thought that it was not the students inability, but the teachers ineffective methods of reaching them that caused many of the Micronesian students to fail. "If they don't see any success in their student, that lies with them because what makes them a better teacher is when they see their students excel."¹²⁷ How to approach the student with appropriate methods is a tool that a good teacher should be able to employ. Sara again referred to the language difficulty, and that especially among islanders who are reticent to speak to elders in their own language for fear of offending would hardly be likely to ask their American teacher anything or raise their hand in class knowing that their language would sound funny. The fear of public humiliation and shame that was mentioned by Casey, the informant and Sara is a powerful social control that is very difficult to overcome.

In Sara's school in Western Samoa, the teacher dictated and the children took notes. This is also the preferred method back in Pohnpei according to my informants. But in the U.S. this is not what is expected of children. Children should be eager to answer, even if wrong. The effort is appreciated. A questioning mind is the pinnacle of Western philosophy and science. These characteristics could not be juxtaposed against a more opposite mind-set than that of many Pacific Islanders including Pohnpei and Samoa.

Sara contrasted the exceptional Asian immigrant students who value education over everything else. Her grandfather was Chinese, and back in Samoa the Chinese are famous for their business acumen, as they are the world over. This emphasis on education has been a successful strategy for them. But for islanders, according to Sara and my informants, invariably the most important trait inculcated into children is the importance of respect. Respect is necessary to do well in school, in the home and in society regardless of one's status in the community. The respect that Ponapeans, Hawaiians or Samoans feel that they must give to elders or respected members of the community, which teachers historically were, is often misinterpreted as idiocy, indolence or apathy by American educators who are unfamiliar with their cultures.

I enjoyed my interview with Sara. Her experience at PS-1 and insights as a

Pacific Islander were very valuable to me. She put into perspective what it felt like as an outsider to enter into the American educational system, which was hard enough as an adult, yet must be so much more so for children. Children are malleable, and so most of the Ponapean children catch up with their classmates and do well in school. The ability of their parents to adapt seems much less than that of their children, which is true of immigrants everywhere.

In addition to the school interviews, I have interviewed two Micronesian families with children at P S-1 that have been very revealing. The families came for different reasons. One family, which I shall refer to as the S family, came for educational opportunity and their children excel in school. The second, which I shall call the W family, came for other reasons and have had more difficulty assimilating.

INTERVIEW FOUR: The W Family¹²⁸

I was particularly interested in their situation as they moved to Honolulu when the children were young. The oldest boy was in the second grade, the middle child was in kindergarten and the youngest was a baby. Mrs. W cannot speak English so I brought along an interpreter who had arranged the meeting. We had a big informal group discussion. Some of the most important information came after the interview when the informant told me what was really being said by Mrs. W and the children in Ponapean.

To clarify, Mrs. W can speak English if necessary. She understands when I speak to her, but I have never heard her utter even a single phrase in English in the five or six years that I have known her. In the interview, I tried to find out more about Mrs. W, why she came to Hawai'i with her children and what she thinks about our schools. As we sat around and I turned the tape recorder on, instantly all became silent and they just stared at me. I looked around and quipped, "how uncomfortable", which got them all laughing. I can only imagine how much more difficult it would be to conduct such an interview without having close personal contacts and the use of a trusted interpreter.

I started out by asking what grades the children were in when they came to

Hawai'i and how long they were in ESL classes at PS-1. The oldest said he was in ESL for about two years, until 5th grade, and the younger two attended for much less time. The youngest was a baby when she came and I was surprised to find out that she had attended ESL also. The ESL teachers at PS-1 explained that any child who spoke or heard a foreign language at home would attend ESL as a matter of course. The children said that they benefitted from the ESL classes and liked the teachers.

When I asked the children what was the difference between schools in Pohnpei and schools in Hawai'i one replied, "the doors (in Pohnpei) weren't colored." We all laughed at that because it was such an unexpected observation, but from a child's point of view, it must have stood out vividly. The children continued to reminisce about the schools in Pohnpei, "there weren't like numbers (on the doors), it wasn't organized . . . plus you only had to bring, like, one pencil . . . it's more like memorizing."¹²⁹ When asked about homework, he said there was none back home, but that the homework here was really hard. The interpreter concurred, asking, "Why do they have so much homework like this . . . why don't they just teach you at school and send you home already?"¹³⁰ Her criticism reflected her own experiences in Pohnpei where the children, even through high school, had much less homework than do her young children today and the general consensus was that it was the school's job to educate, and when children returned home, there were chores to be done.

Everyone continued to chatter in Ponapean, and so I asked the informant and Mrs. W why so many Ponapeans were hesitant to speak English in front of Americans. The interpreter explained that they were ashamed of their English ability. She continued:

I can talk over here because it's just us . . . but if we're in front of everybody, I just shut up already. . . Now I talk, I don't care it's wrong, but before I come, you know, the first time I came here, I cannot talk. Somebody might laugh at my English. I think, some parents, that's why they don't come (to conferences at school), they don't really know how to speak . . . maybe we're too proud you know.¹³¹

Mrs. W said that she really likes to go to the parent teacher conferences because she is interested in what her children are doing and how they're getting along, but she regrets that she doesn't really understand what is being said. She must rely on the children to be informants, which is a little like having the fox watch the hen house if the teacher is critiquing the children. "Now she doesn't want to go anymore because she doesn't know what's going on,"¹³² the interpreter translated. The interpreter and Mrs. W mentioned how much harder American schools are, the children have pre algebra in the 6th grade, where in Pohnpei they had it in the 11th grade. Even for the interpreter, whose English was good, the children's homework became difficult to correct after the 2nd or 3rd grade, and for Mrs. W, it was all but impossible.

I noticed during the interview that the children were studying on the floor. When asked about it, the interpreter replied, "we did it, maybe our the children can do it, why not?"¹³³ I saw this beautiful big desk in the children's room. Perched carefully and covered with a cloth on the desk was the father's musical instrument. I pointed to it and I asked why the children weren't using the desk. Everyone laughed and made a few comments, but no one answered me in English. Later the informant told me that one of the children said it was because the instrument made beautiful music to drink *sakau* by, and that was more important than the children's homework. A sad but telling comment. *Sakau* is the Ponapean word for kava. It is consumed regularly and in large quantities as far as I can tell within the local Ponapean community in Hawai'i.

Continuing our conversation, I then asked Mrs. W what the family's reasons were for moving to Hawai'i. "Maybe for education", was her initial reply. The interpreter added, "I think she really wants her the children to come here."¹³⁴ The two women remembered how hard it was to go to school back in Pohnpei, and for this reason, an American education was desirable. The interpreter described how she would get to school back in Pohnpei:

When I used to take her to school (the young Mrs. W)
... oh, we wake up like six or five o'clock in the morning
... we use kerosene, the kind of thing that Samoan
people use when they dance (torches), and we walk at

night (in the dark) all the way from the mountain, down the road . . . We walk in the road, it's like miles and miles away from school. By the time you go to school you don't want to learn anymore, you're too tired.¹³⁵

Mrs. W came to Hawai'i for her children's education because she wanted what she perceived as a better, easier life for her children. The informant later told me that Mrs. W really came to Hawai'i to run away from her husband. He followed her here, and has stayed with them until now. They have some rather serious marital difficulties, it seems, and are doing the best they can, but the situation takes its toll on the children. The ESL teachers at PS-1 were quite concerned about the W children. They sensed that there was disruption at home. When I asked the eldest how his grades were, he said that he got solid B's. I am very proud of him because he struggled in grade school and he has done all his studying on his own. When I asked him what was his motivation, college or whatever, he just gave a sidelong glance at his mother. I took this to mean that he wanted to please his mother, but judging by the look on his face, it may have been more about keeping peace at home. It seemed a heavy burden for such a young lad.

As I explained to everyone why I was asking so many questions, that the teachers were concerned about some of the Micronesian the children, I asked the older boy if he felt that the teachers were singling out the Micronesian students in any way. He said "no". I then asked if the teachers knew what a Micronesian was, and he laughed, "yes, they should know because it's like mostly Micronesians always in ISS (in school suspension), they see them raking the leaves and stuff."¹³⁶ I asked him if that bothered him and he said no, but that the teachers were surprised to see him being so diligent. I then asked him if any of his teachers were Micronesian. Everyone looked surprised at this. I asked if he would like a Micronesian teacher. "No, that would be bad." As most of his teachers have been local Japanese, he said, "Japanese, they're smarter, you know, they teach better."¹³⁷ At this point my jaw literally dropped. But everyone concurred with this sentiment.

The boy went on about Asians and their superior brain power. "One, I think Korean, kid he came, he didn't know English, (after) two quarters, after the third

quarter, he got straight A's. They're really smart, study more. He had like a huge bag and like huge glasses."¹³⁸ Everyone laughed at the image of the bookish Asian student. The interpreter added that in her generation, in Pohnpei, having an American teacher was the most desirable. "Us, like our generation, we think *haoles*, if you have white skin, you're smart."¹³⁹ When I told her that this was preposterous, she just shrugged her shoulders. That was the way it was.

As the interview began to wind down we talked and laughed. I ordered a couple of pizzas, my small offering for taking up so much of their time. I told the oldest boy to call me anytime if he had questions regarding his homework. He said he could handle his homework pretty much on his own, and I believed him. He is very bright and tenacious. On the way home the informant filled me in on some of the conversation that had gone untranslated. She is very fond of Mrs. W, and was worried about her situation with the husband, which is volatile at times. There is little anyone can do about that. We worry about the children as well, but they continue to do well in school.

INTERVIEW FIVE: The S Family¹⁴⁰

My second interview was with the S family. Although most recent emigrants from Micronesia are looking for work, (Levin 1999) prior to the Compact of Free Association, a young adult would have to earn a scholarship to attend school abroad. The S. family is in this category. Mr. S attended college in the United States, settled in Hawai'i and all his children have been born in Honolulu. He has very high expectations for his children and their education. His wife, Mrs. S, although not a college graduate also is very supportive of her children's education and is looked up to as a model Micronesian parent for her involvement in her children's schooling and their success.

I came to interview the S family, armed with the information from my interviews at PS-1. Although they were sorely lacking in knowledge of Micronesia, and the cultures therein, the teachers seemed so sincere and depressed, that I was wondering about the role of some of the Micronesian parents regarding their

children's education. Mrs. S only succeeded in adding fuel to the fire. She is a highly opinionated woman, and being a teetotaler, is harsh in her criticism of some of the Micronesians in Hawai'i. She was aware of the situation of the W family and she was quite critical. Mrs. S told me that Mrs. W wants to help the children with their homework, or at least supervise them to make sure that they get it done, but that when the husband comes home from work she must accompany him to drink *sakau*.

Mrs. S. continued to explain that Mr. W. was so jealous that he never left Mrs. W unattended or lets her go places alone. She must go with him and sit silently at his side while they drink *sakau*, which is almost a daily occurrence. Mrs. S. added that it also affects people in that they get lazy and sleep a lot, and don't pay enough attention to the children and their studies. The case of Mrs. W made Mrs. S upset because she knows that Mrs. W came here for her children's future and her belief in education as a way to better their lives. Mrs. S says that everyone knows that "nowadays, even in Pohnpei, if you're not educated, you're nothing."¹⁴¹ I asked her to explain further and she said that in order to get any kind of job back home, you must have a good education. If your family is poor or without connections, the only way to succeed outside of a traditional lifestyle of fishing or farming is through education. So a good education would benefit the children whether they stayed in Hawai'i or went back to Pohnpei, according to Mrs. S.

Although the case of the W. family may be an extreme one and jealousy is not limited to Micronesians, according to Mrs. S and other informants, there does seem to be an inordinate amount of drinking among the Micronesian expatriate community in Hawai'i which may be similar to the situation in Guam in the 1980's when the first migrants experienced a degree of freedom from the social constraints that are much more strict at home. The Ponapeans often combine *sakau* and beer, a practice that is unusual in the eyes of some other Pacific Islanders and still unusual even in Pohnpei. Mrs. S felt that combining the two contributes to some of the social disarray of the families here. It certainly increases the monetary costs of supporting the *sakau* habit. I asked her about the Ponapean community here and how it was affected by drinking. She answered:

what community? In Pohnpei, I don't know. But over here, I think it's really affecting (the community) because they don't have any [sakau] . . . if you drink fifty dollars each time, 'cause it's five bags for ten dollars a bag. They're addicted, I think so. They think what? Their the children are on welfare. They're taking their kid's money and drinking *sakau* and not helping them with their homework and everything, I really don't know. . . they're just using their the children for welfare, honestly.¹⁴²

She had also heard that in Pohnpei they were starting to see problems associated with *sakau* as well:

I think it really cause problems to people. In my family it really caused problems. 'Cause people start stealing some other people's *sakau* . . . 'cause they want to *sakau* and they don't have any and they're too lazy too to do it. 'Cause when you *sakau* you don't want to wake up in the morning.¹⁴³

The informant's statement about being "too lazy to do it" refers to the actual farming and harvesting of *sakau* in Pohnpei. From what I understand, it is very difficult and laborious work. Traditionally in Pohnpei, men gained great prestige by raising good *sakau* trees. *Sakau* was a very important part of Ponapean culture. This is still true today, only today it is also a source of income and sorrow. The social costs of drinking in violence and suicide in Micronesia are very high. Mrs. S added that back home people will talk about you if you become a drunk or abuse your wife. In Pohnpei, public shame is to be avoided at all cost. Someone in the family would surely give you 'spankings' before you could shame the family.

Mrs. S. continued that the families to which she was referring were good people and that "they're nice in their own way. . . but I don't think they're nice when it come to their the children. I don't like the way they treat them. . . they need help. They all love their children."¹⁴⁴ Mrs. S said that back home there were more people to help care for the children so that if a parent was a heavy drinker, there were always other family members there for the care of the children.

Again these problems are not unique to any ethnic group or immigrant population and members of the dominant culture in America exhibit many of the same problems. These problems seem to be exacerbated in the Micronesian

community for several reasons. The Micronesians seem to be a particularly insular group. Whether it is because the islands are so small and they are used to identifying fiercely with a small community or for other reasons, it has been particularly difficult for educators to reach their student's families for even the most basic consultations. Some families don't have phones or won't answer them due to language barriers. One of my informants told me that unless an invitation to attend a meeting or conference was given in person, it was not taken as a serious request. The letters sent home in the various languages go unread and so on. Mrs. S hinted that some of the families did not want to be found, as there may have been some hidden marriages where public assistance would be canceled if 'authorities' knew who lived with whom. Perhaps full disclosure and participation in the community are not options for some families which makes the school's job even more difficult.

Mrs. S attributed her children's success to the S family's strict rules for homework and bedtime and high expectations for report cards. As mentioned before, the S family does not drink. The drinking of *sakau* is a major social activity for Ponapeans in Hawai'i. The S children are not being dragged around at all hours, according to Mrs. S which is very hard on children who have to get up early. The S children are punished if they fail to produce good grades. Sometimes they have privileges taken away, but often they are punished physically, having their legs or bottoms spanked. The children have a great fear of this and the parents believe in corporal punishment and do not hesitate to use it.

Mrs. S and I began to brainstorm about ways of circumventing some of the problems that she identified. She knew almost all of the Ponapean women whose children are at PS-1. She also knew who's children were succeeding and whose were failing and why. This is where it became apparent that having a community member actively participate with the school and the teachers would be helpful. Mrs. S advised that the school would "need one parent from each island who cares, so she can come down and kind of like explain what's going on."¹⁴⁵ We thought that the best time to identify people as Micronesian and identify their island would be at the beginning of the school year when children registered. At that time the school

could use a Micronesian aide to recruit willing parents to act as go between for the various islands and the school. It does no good according to Mrs. S to have a Palauan trying to explain things to a non-English speaking Marshallese mother. The languages are completely different and the cultures, though related are also distinct.

I thought her idea was a good one, but actually getting people to volunteer might be more difficult than we anticipate. Or it may be easier than we fear. When asked to help Mrs. S agreed without hesitation. Her children were some of the highest achieving children at PS-1 of any ethnic group, not just Micronesians, yet she was never solicited to help families from Micronesia who were having more difficulty. We will never know until we try. I will discuss in a later chapter ideas for community involvement that would make such strategies the norm rather than an experimental suggestion.

CHAPTER 6

THE PROJECT: A SEMESTER AT PS-1

INTRODUCTION:

I spent three afternoons a week at PS-1 elementary school assisting with the the Project teachers in two classes, the third and fifth grades. The Project was an after school program that children participated in on a voluntary basis. The children were recommended by their teachers to the the Project director Casey or by Sue, the ESL teacher, if they were having trouble keeping up with their work. In the third grade class all of the children were immigrants, and in the fifth grade class all but one were immigrants. In addition to the ESL classes offered at PS-1, these children needed special attention and help with their homework. The parents must sign the children up for the Project and agree to have the children attend on a regular basis. Unlike A+ or other after school programs, the Project's focus is on academics. The children are basically getting free after school tutoring, which sounds great in theory, but has a few problems in reality.

Most of the children were quite tired when they came after school. These are children who struggle all day in school not only with a foreign language, but also with the social situations presented in an American school. So they come dragging into class for the most part and getting them to do their work was not easy, not atypical of children worldwide. Yet come they did and once they settled down they did get their work done. The children did their homework and the teachers assisted them with their problems. The children all worked individually until the last half hour in which we played math or English games as a group.

THE TEACHERS:

I assisted various teachers and tutors in two different classes, grade 3 and grade 5, and they couldn't have been more different. The third grade teacher, Miss B was also a Teachers Assistant in the third graders' classroom, so she was familiar with the children and their curriculum. She was very strict with the children,

threatening and administering lots of punishment. If someone was unruly, she took away their recess privilege, which seemed counter productive to me. But her methods were effective and the children respected her and made gradual improvements over time.

I was a bit put off my first day in the class as a volunteer when Miss B. introduced me to the children. They were at four tables in groups of three or four, there were usually about a dozen children in her class daily. However, two boys were off in a corner alone at their desks. Miss B told me which table of children to assist but not to help the lone boys, as one was "bad" and the other was "really bad" and that they were lazy and just wanted me to do their work for them. This was declared in a loud, matter of fact voice for all to hear. As no one else seemed to notice the remarks, I assumed that it was the way she usually talked about them and they were used to it. Knowing what I do about the acute sensitivity towards public criticism which is humiliating for Micronesians, I was surprised ^{non} the less.

Over the course of the months, I noticed that her gruff style and strictness paid off. Her class improved greatly over the months, the children knew what was expected of them and they generally cooperated. I saw progress especially with a few of the boys who were rambunctious, to say the least. The teacher also had a great affection for the children, she just didn't let it show too much and so they had respect for and a bit of healthy fear of her. The tutoring worked for most of the children in the grade three class, except for two boys who left the Project because of attendance problems.

The fifth grade class was another situation entirely. There were fewer children in the fifth grade class, but it was completely out of control. They had gone through three teachers in one semester. When I arrived it was to assist the third teacher, who wasn't a teacher at all and had never been in a classroom from the look of it. She let the children use her cell phone, they slept on their desks, expected her to provide snacks and used profane language. After coming from the tightly run ship of the third grade class, the fifth grade class was a shock. As I was there as an assistant, it wasn't my place to change things, but I did ask the boys to modify their language

and I attempted to help the children who weren't sleeping with their work while the 'teacher' listened to soft Baroque music in a thinly veiled attempt to put us all to sleep. This class was a disaster. I felt sorry for the fifth graders who needed help, were offered it through the Project and didn't get it.

THE STUDENTS:

Because I spent most of my semester with the third grade class, I got to know those children much more than the unfortunate fifth graders. The third grade class painted a colorful picture of Pacific migration. Most of the children were Micronesian, which is why I chose PS-1 and the Project in the first place. I wanted to see the interaction of the Micronesian children with their teachers. There were children from Palau, Guam, Pohnpei, Kosrae and the Marshall Islands. I will focus on these children, although there were also students from Japan, China, Korea, Tonga and the Philippines.

Among the Micronesian children, one stood out in particular. He was a terrible rascal, but very bright and he seemed to benefit greatly from the stern and consistent guidance of Miss B. One Micronesian boy left the program because of unexcused absences. He hated school but loved to draw. I would let him draw his math problems. He would draw a number of little animals, then they would have accidents, thus he would subtract. One of the tutors, upon seeing his drawings, snatched it away and crumpled his picture up telling him to get to work. I explained that he was drawing his math, not just doodling, but it was too late. The tutor wanted him to do math the way he would be expected to in class and on the assessment exams no doubt, but he lost his interest and did no more work that day.

One boy was in special education already and did no work whatsoever. He seemed exhausted and slept sitting up. One day one of the tutors called his name loudly, waking him up so that the whole class couldn't help but notice. The children laughed at him when he woke with a start. I later glanced at him, he was at one of the individual desks for "bad boys" and saw big silent tears falling down his cheeks. He also left the program because of attendance problems and unwillingness to do any

homework. Again the humiliation, though perhaps unintended, was intense by Micronesian standards.

The Micronesian girls seemed to fare much better. They all did their work well, were obedient and had few behavioral problems. They were enthusiastic learners and were proud of their improvements. The children got along well once they settled down and I saw great improvement in their study habits over the six months that I participated in the Project.

The opinions expressed during the interview with Sue, the ESL teacher at PS-1, were born out in the after school Project. The difference in study habits between the Pacific Island children and those from Asian countries was marked. The Asian children, although at times struggled more with the English language, were diligent students who had sound study habits. They would sit at their desks and get to work. It was interesting to see these cultural trends juxtaposed. It is little wonder that the teachers find the Micronesian students more frustrating than those children coming from educational systems in Korea or Japan. As pointed out in the interview with Mrs. W, many Micronesian parents did not have to study for any length of time in their school days, and so are not concerned when their children don't do hours and hours of studying.

There were many more Micronesian children who were recommended to the program who did not participate, whereas almost all of the Asian immigrant children invited to participate in the program came. According to the ESL staff, most of the Japanese and Korean parents responded positively to the program when it was offered and took advantage of the perceived benefits offered to their children. Sue said that many of the Micronesian parents couldn't be reached, or when reached made agreements that were later broken. Exactly how many children were recommended but unable to attend is unknown, but according to the ESL teachers, the numbers were significant.

Sadly, the two children who were in most need of the program due to their high risk of failure both left the program due to poor attendance. Both of the "bad boys" were regularly criticized and humiliated in front of their peers, and I wondered if that

affected their attendance. Kinloch made reference to the fact that in New Zealand many Samoan immigrants would dropped out of school rather than return to face a teacher that they felt had humiliated them. (Kinloch, 1978) I believe that both boys could have benefited greatly from the after school tutoring. The lack of commitment from their families towards their education may be a factor, but people's lives are notoriously complicated and I must withhold judgment without knowing their families' situation. I do know from some of my informants that many of the Micronesian children have responsibilities at home that many American children don't have. Girls in particular are required to baby-sit siblings and help with various household chores. In comparison an Asian child might go home and be expected to nothing but homework, that is their chore.

CONCLUSION: The 'Problem' Defined

I hope to have shown that the 'problem' of the Micronesians in Hawai'i's schools is different when viewed from the perspective of the teachers in the schools and the Micronesian families. As mentioned earlier in the paper, many Ponapeans and other Micronesians are doing very well in school. By the same token, there are some educators who seem to have a good knowledge of Pacific Island immigrants and the unique challenges that face them. In regards to the general situation in Hawai'i's schools however, I conclude that the problem is, like so many problems in the world, a simple lack of communication and understanding between people. On the part of the schools, I have found that the general lack of knowledge of Pacific Islanders in general, and Micronesia and its complex cultural differences in particular, apparent.

Time will bridge the gaps that now exist between the schools and the new groups of Micronesian children attending them. I will compare the experiences in Hawai'i with those of other immigrant children to try to find concrete solutions and advice that have worked elsewhere and may be applicable at PS-1. After studying the perceived problem of Micronesian children adjusting to the American school by looking at the schools and some immigrant family situations, it seems that the

problems faced by Micronesian children are not intransigent. Like many other groups that have come to America, some members succeed while others struggle. What does seem to make the situation of the Micronesians more difficult for educators to grasp is the differences among the Micronesians themselves. The complexity of the societies and languages are perhaps new to educators used to dealing with immigrant groups that are more cohesive in language and culture, as in the case of the Vietnamese. Trying to find one helpful parent or volunteer is hard enough from one ethnic group, let alone trying to recruit the number, ten to twenty distinct languages according to Hezel (Hezel August 1996, 3.) needed to make each Micronesian island group feel well represented.

It also seems that indeed, the emphasis that some Micronesian immigrants place on their children's schooling does seem to be generally less when compared with the other groups of immigrants in schools today, primarily East Asians. Yet there are other elements of their culture that are very important to them that might be overlooked by the casual observer when trying to compare them to other immigrant groups. I have witnessed through my interactions among Ponapeans an extraordinary level of cooperation, and not just among family members. When someone is in need of a car, or a plane ticket, or a baby-sitter, the need is always met. I don't think I have ever observed a more generous group of people than the Ponapeans I am proud to call friends and family. This is highly evident in the Ponapean society in Hawai'i.

For many Micronesians in Hawai'i, America is not their land of choice. Their home island is still preferable and they intend to go back home some day. I will also discuss this in a later chapter, however, it may now be said that all immigrants do not come to America for the same reasons, and different values, whether for education or for communal generosity are not better or worse than each other, they are just different.

Looking for ways to bridge the cultural gap is a great challenge for educators. The situation of the Micronesians historically and their reasons for coming to Hawai'i *en masse* in recent years are an important part of my thesis. But also important are

the comparisons of the Micronesian experience to other immigrant groups. I will attempt to weave together their stories and hopefully come up with some ideas to help the teachers in their day to day struggles as educators. They have asked for help and I hope that in some small way the information presented in this study can be of use.

CHAPTER 7

COMPARING MICRONESIANS IN HAWAII WITH OTHER IMMIGRANTS

INTRODUCTION:

It is a daunting task to try to compare immigrant experiences. Fear of generalizations abound as well as apprehension of criticism from members of the immigrant groups themselves, whom I may be seen as misrepresenting. I will try my best to qualify that the situations that I cite are taken from literature that has tried to collect data and then present trends. There will always be exceptions in the way people behave in a new environment and how and why they move with their families. However, if there are broad characteristics of an immigrant group, it may be helpful to identify them and analyze how these characteristics may help or heed a group's success in a new cultural environment.

THE MICRONESIANS IN GUAM:

The first large wave of immigrants in Micronesia were people from FSM, particularly Chuuk, moving to Guam and Saipan. (Hezel, 1986 and Levin, 1999) The islands were relatively close, the cultures similar and returning home less expensive than a move to Hawai'i or the mainland United States. Some Micronesians moved to Guam for educational purposes no doubt, but it seems that the majority of emigrants to Guam were single young men looking for work. Hezel wrote in 1988, just a few years after the signing of the Compact, that:

There is no mystery at all as to what is driving Micronesians in such great numbers to Guam today. They are emigrating to find there the jobs that they are unable to procure on their own home islands . . . due to the radical cutbacks in US Federal Program funds for the Trust Territory in preparation for the onset of its new political status. The level of US assistance had risen from \$54 million in 1970 to a high of \$138 million in 1979 before dropping off sharply at the beginning of this decade.¹⁴⁶

As the funds from the United States began to dwindle in Micronesia in keeping with the plan of the Compact of Free Association, uneducated young men found well paying jobs on Guam where the economy was flourishing due to a great increase of tourists from Japan, flush with strong yen against a weak dollar. (Levin, 1999) The ensuing construction boom on Guam to meet tourist demands created 11,000 new jobs from 1984-1988. Until the Compact was signed, it was relatively difficult for Micronesians outside of Guam to get work permits, but during the economic boom the Compact opened up work prospects and the young men came in droves. Hezel wrote that "(s)ince the Compact contained a provision granting Micronesians an open door into the United States to reside and work, they could look for the jobs that weren't available back home."¹⁴⁷

To add fuel to the fire, in the 1960s and 70s, college students returned to their islands as work was still available but by the 1980's, those jobs were gone and the market was shrinking, due again the ever lessening aide from the United States. (Hezel, 2001) The islands of Micronesia were supposed to gradually wean themselves of American financial aid, but this did not happen as quickly as had been hoped. Young people were left with few prospects, educated or not. Many were eager to go to Guam to hunt for jobs. The new wave of immigrants to Guam in the late 1980's differed from past groups of immigrants in several ways. Until the signing of the Compact, it was very difficult for Micronesians to work or study abroad. A very few of the lucky or elite were able to study abroad or find well paying work. This new group was generally made up of single young men.

The freedom afforded by the signing of the compact coincided with another major change in Micronesian society. Even though most men could still feed their families, it became more difficult as the islands became more of a cash economy instead of barter as had been the case for centuries. It became more difficult for a family to survive unless some of its members held wage paying work. This would also alter the power structures among family members. Hezel saw that "the shape of the Micronesian family, which had been evolving for years, began to undergo momentous changes during the 1960s as the family's resource base swung away

from local produce from land and sea to cash."¹⁴⁸ The traditional respect paid to the farmer and fisherman would erode as money became necessary and family members less dependent upon one another for food and resources.

Other forces such as the church, which advocated a couple as an inseparable union, the Western media and education all emphasized the nuclear family as the norm. Hezel noted that:

without the structural change that was effected by the cash economy, it is doubtful that these other forces would have have any significant impact on the organization of the family. The transformation within the Micronesian family constitutes a major social upheaval. With the nuclearization of the family, there have been enormous changes in the roles of family members, resulting in a great deal of confusion. As the lineages have withdrawn from its traditionally heavy childbearing responsibilities, the burden has fallen to the parents to pick up much of the slack . . . The confusion of roles can bring about heightened tensions between parents and their children, yet the broad circle of older relatives who once stood ready to intervene to relieve the occasional flare-up and inevitable friction are no longer prepared to do so. Consequently the tension often festers and intensifies in time.¹⁴⁹

The break up in family structure is mirrored not only on the islands, but also in the expatriate communities in Guam and Hawai'i. As situations became more tense in the villages due to social upheaval, the Compact offered an escape that was too good to pass up.

On Guam, it appears that most young men were looking for cash, not an education. As mentioned before, the lucky few who had been educated overseas were returning to economies that did not offer adequate employment. During the period between 1979-1982 FSM lost 1700 jobs, while 1800 high school and college graduates entered the labor force. (Hezel,1988) The few plum jobs available were usually given to well connected college graduates according to my informants, job placements were highly political and it did not really matter what you could do as much as who you knew. This is not uncommon anywhere in the world but is more devastating in a small island economy where the job openings are so few. Young people were not as keen to get an education as to get some money in

their pockets that would enable them to buy the commodities made available and appealing in the new cash economies and to send some money home for the family.

At first glance it may seem that a move from Chuuk to Guam would be culturally benign, both being islands within Micronesia when compared to a move to the United States. However, this seems to be far from what occurred. Many Micronesians experienced culture shock upon arriving on Guam. Moreover, the Chuukese, the Ponapeans, the Marshallese and the Palauans all had different sets of cultural adjustment to contend with. As stated in the chapter on history, even though the islands appear close geographically, they are culturally and linguistically distinct. The Chamorros of Guam were not too happy with what they saw as yet another invasion of their island. After the initial construction boom receded, the economy slipped and Guam was left with large costs in social services and general discontent with their new immigrant communities. (Dobbin, 1996)

As mentioned before, young Chuukese males in particular were singled out for their bad behavior. The Chuukese reputation became so bad that some Chuukese would pretend to be Ponapean or Marshallese in order to avoid discrimination when looking for housing. Hezel described the young Chuukese making the transition to life in Guam as facing "huge cultural adjustments and changes in lifestyle without the resources that they could call on when they were back home . . . they live under new pressures and yet without the close supervision to which they have been accustomed."¹⁵⁰ Soon, the young working men realized that their host culture was not as tolerant of their behavior as people back home had been and that expectations regarding hygiene and property care had to be learned.

Another reason for emigrating within Micronesia was the paucity of land on some of the islands. While Pohnpei is a high volcanic island with rich resources on land and from the sea, Chuuk and the Marshall islands are mostly atolls, with very limited land to inhabit or cultivate. History shows that Micronesians have depopulated themselves over the centuries to keep atoll populations stable.

Micronesians were a mobile people as evidenced through their great sea

journeys thousands of years ago, a tradition which has continued throughout recent centuries. Histories of chiefs and men traversing the seas in conquest and revenge are plentiful in the varied islands' oral histories. Hezel recorded that:

Social change was not unknown in the islands . . . there had always been some change as one island group came into contact with another in the course of canoe voyages, this process accelerated with the islands' first contact with the West during the so-called European Age of Discovery in the early sixteenth century . . . during the nineteenth century, after a two hundred -year lull in European voyages to the area, contact with the the West intensified greatly owing to commercial voyages of Chinese traders, whale ships and copra vessels.¹⁵¹

Western scholars may disregard oral histories as just myth and legend, but the is no refuting the willingness of Micronesian men to hop onto a whaling ship and sail the globe. But these brave men always intended to return home, and the same was true of the young emigrants to Guam, the proximity of the islands allowed them to visit their homes often. Hezel observed that:

Emigration is no easier for Micronesians than it is for any other people. Despite their well known fondness for travel - a trait that was documented as far back as the mid-19th century when islanders signed on whale ships as dockhands much as they sign on as crew members of freighters today-- they always left home with the anticipation of returning. Like other Pacific Islanders, Micronesians have always had strong "homing instinct" due to their strong attachments to land and family. Only in very recent years have other forces begun to operate as an effective counterweight to these ties.¹⁵²

That counterweight would come in the forms of ever widening circles of emigrants. As the Micronesians left Guam's shrinking economy in search of better opportunities in Hawai'i and the mainland U.S., their ability to travel freely back and forth became lessened due to the much higher cost of traveling to Micronesia from abroad. Hanlon observed that "there are signs that the communities are becoming well established by the amount of money flowing back to the islands from their relatives overseas. Remittances are the life blood of many Pacific Islanders who rely on their foreign residing relatives for help. In 1994 the money going into FSM was

estimated at more than a million dollars."¹⁵³ The Micronesians are joining the diaspora of other seasoned Pacific Island travelers like the Tongans and Samoans who have long established communities worldwide while retaining their island customs and language.

SAMOANS IN HAWAII :

I have chosen to look at the experiences of other Pacific Islanders migrants in recent years. While the Micronesians moved to Guam and Hawai'i in significant numbers, there was already a well established population of Samoans in New Zealand and Hawai'i. One of the studies I refer to was conducted in 1976, a time when there were few Micronesians abroad. Although there was more literature on Hispanic immigrants in the United States, or on Vietnamese refugees, I felt that Pacific Islanders would share a closer cultural base from which to draw comparisons when moving to a Western culture.

The Samoans in Hawai'i are a well known community if not for their visibility alone. Known as being rather large, boisterous people, a group of Samoans can be hard to miss. On the other hand, Micronesians are "invisible malihini" in comparison, as referred to in the title of the *Honolulu Weekly*. (Bickle, 2002) The perceptions of Samoan immigrants and their children's school performance both in Hawai'i and New Zealand illustrate some important similarities between their experiences as immigrants and those of the Micronesians.

Samoans left their island homes for distant shores for many of the same reasons that spurred the Micronesian exodus to Hawai'i. In 1971, then Governor of American Samoa, John Haydon, wrote that "Hawai'i is the safety valve for one of the world's fastest growing populations . . . American Samoans are multiplying very rapidly and are crowding one another off their limited land space . . . Since they are American nationals, they can migrate freely to the U.S. . Their first stop is Hawai'i and many of them elect to stay there because they find relatives, friends, coconut palms and breadfruit trees in Hawai'i."¹⁵⁴

Lack of land, job opportunities and higher education as well as a sense of

adventure brought Samoans in large numbers to both Hawai'i and New Zealand. Hawai'i and New Zealand offer an interesting parallel in that both of these island nations have an indigenous population, i.e., the native Hawai'ians and the Maori, who have their own histories with colonization and grievances about the failure of a Western education to adequately serve their children. That is another topic of research but will be referred to again in a later chapter on immigration in relation to ethnic histories.

In Hawai'i, Samoan children went through many of the same struggles that all immigrant children experience in a new culture. Language was the first obvious obstacle that children face. Luckily children tend to learn languages quickly. As Dewey recommended, strike while the iron is hot! Although there are many similarities between Micronesian immigrant children and Samoan, there are also some differences. Samoan children tend to be loud, gregarious and aggressive at times. (Young, 1974) This would be in marked contrast to the typical Micronesian child who tends to be quiet when in unfamiliar situations and unaggressive.

There were more similarities, however, than differences when comparing the two cultures' different styles of communication, especially the use of non-verbal communication. A booklet published by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, Center for Health Education in 1993 entitled *The Challenge for Educators; Samoan Culture within the American Educator System* described communication styles of Samoans as being different from those of Americans and that can cause misunderstandings. These differences are similar to those experienced by the Micronesians in Hawai'i. For example, Samoan children tend to: not speak up in class, may answer "yes" to all questions regardless of comprehension, avoid eye contact with adults and may appear apathetic if confronted or corrected in public. (Bouseau, 1993) I observed many of the same behaviors and criticisms at PS-1. The children were accused of being uninterested and unresponsive, and perhaps a more thorough knowledge of body language could be helpful in reading some children.

The booklet continued to relate other aspects of Samoan culture that might come

into conflict in an American school. One example was fate vs. problem solving. Problem solving, the corner stone of Western education may not be as central to a Pacific Islander who may view a situation as fate, one that should be endured and interference with fate might actually be dangerous and anger some spiritual forces.(Bouseau, 1993) When a Samoan does decide to tackle a challenge, unlike their American counterparts, they do not go to a specialist or an authority but instead "views problems as group concerns requiring the development of a consensus. This consensus is achieved through the established hierarchy . . . using rigidly defined traditional methods. Once a decision is made, it is accepted by the group."¹⁵⁵ Children are not part of this hierarchy and are not only discouraged from decision making but may be punished for attempting to do so. This is vastly different from American children who are encouraged to problem solve from an early age.

The Samoan way of dealing with problem solving is found throughout Pacific Island cultures, including Micronesia where children are expected to keep quiet and each person has a place in a hierarchy that is well defined. The caste system as mentioned before in Pohnpei is a very rigid hierarchy and there is a definite right and wrong way to approach a problem. Not going through the proper channels can result in some serious *faux pax* that may go unnoticed by an American, but would be an affront to a Pacific Islander. For example, addressing English speaking children before elders would be considered very rude by a Samoan (Metge and Kinloch,1978) whereas an American might think he is trying to be helpful and flattering the family by acknowledging their bright English speaking child.

A Samoan's sense of communal harmony may differ from that of an American. The booklet describes that "the accumulation of material goods has no purpose beyond that of having more to give away, and thus acquire prestige."¹⁵⁶ This is quite similar to the traditional Ponapean village in its homage to the chief. Prestige was bestowed on the men giving away the most, not hoarding the most. The idea of communal property is common throughout Pacific Island cultures. This can cause problems in a American school where the idea of individual ownership is

firmly entrenched down to each pencil and eraser being labeled. "(P)roperty is often borrowed by a Pacific Islander without the permission of the owner. In the American culture this is perceived as theft."¹⁵⁷ This occurred at PS-1 when some children were accused of stealing pencils and paper from other students, only to promptly return the items with a bewildered look on their faces. It can easily be imagined where borrowing and theft misunderstandings, especially among older students, could be a problem and if not handled with great care public humiliation could leave the student feeling unfairly punished.

Towards overcoming cultural differences and misunderstandings the booklet offers some very sound advice that is similar to some suggestions given by New Zealanders trying to better educate Samoan immigrants. Some suggestions in the American pamphlet were:

- a. To weave Pacific Island studies into the curriculum without trivializing it into song, dance and luaus.
- b. Separate Asian and Pacific cultures when planning curriculum and activities as they are very different.
- c. Avoid stereotypes such as Samoans in athletics.
- d. Encourage and support teachers to be creative and open to culturally appropriate to new ways of teaching Pacific Islanders who tend to be right brain, kinetic and preferring a hands on approach.¹⁵⁸

Schools with high populations of Pacific Island children should benefit greatly from the advice.

Some of the advice given in the booklet for teachers of Pacific Island children was to be aware that the children may borrow without asking and view the entire classroom as communal property. Samoans may be quiet in the classroom and hesitate to volunteer answers or ask for help or they may answer all questions with a simple yes and avoid eye contact. If mistakes are confronted or publicly discussed they may withdraw into passivity.

Samoan and Pacific Island children will have trouble in classes that stress individuality, competition and abstract learning patterns that are unclear or open ended. The child will do better in a strict environment that has clear goals and shows

the big picture rather than isolated learning projects. Also teachers with large populations of Pacific Islanders should make sure to set their goals high, be consistent and clear about rules and property. The teacher can try to make that classroom like an extended family and avoid open competition among the children. Especially when disciplining children the advice is to “(b)e firm! Pacific Islander students are raised very strictly. Do not pamper or coddle them. They won’t know how to respond to it and will not respect you. Be strong and aggressive in establishing control, but communicate caring in your approach”¹⁵⁹ according to Bouseau. I find this especially helpful advice to an American teacher who may very well try and coddle a child who looks confused or frightened. This would be consistent with American culture where in most of the last century the teacher has steadily retreated from the image of a stern taskmaster and has become more of a surrogate mother, especially in the younger grades.

Lastly the booklet talks about public shame and humiliation, which is a theme that is touched on many times in my study, and so I believe it to be central in dealing with Pacific Island children in general, whether Samoan or Micronesian. The booklet notes that shame on an individual reflects on the entire family and can be very humiliating and traumatic. Casey made reference to this in her Hawai`ian family and how she raised her daughter. What Americans view as simply making a mistake (after all everyone makes mistakes!) is viewed as devastating in other cultures when done publicly. Being chastised by a teacher or failing to meet school standards would comprise causes of shame. The booklet cautions that a publicly criticized student may drop out of school altogether rather than return having lost face. Correcting a child in class must be done with finesse and in a positive manner. Shamed children will pretend to understand rather than risk being shamed again in class by asking more questions. To avoid this takes some doing and if a child has real behavioral problems it is advisable among the Samoans to go through a sibling for advice on how to approach the family in order to avoid shaming the family as well. This was echoed in Colleta’s advice not to directly chastise, but always use a third party when criticism is necessary.

When a teacher does visit a family for discussion, simple things like removing the shoes, not walking over peoples legs or sitting above an elder show respect. Casual socialization should take place before getting to the subject at hand. The booklet advises to be prepared to listen, and when talking, talk slowly enough to avoid the perception of lecturing. The involvement of the community is vital to long term success. Including the families and showing knowledge and respect for their customs is a good start. Long term success will be reached through small short term successes such as involving volunteers and family members in the education of their children and if possible, using them as mentors at the schools. This is precisely what was advocated since Dewey's day and is once again by a researcher in New Zealand.

SAMOANS IN NEW ZEALAND:

The Samoan immigrant population in New Zealand makes for an interesting comparison to the Micronesian immigrant in Hawai'i. New Zealand is a much smaller country than the United States and is geographically isolated. The education of immigrants there has been more focused because the field is narrower. Besides the dominant European culture, referred to as *Pakeha* in Maori, are the indigenous Maori. The only other sizable population until the recent influx of Hong Kong Chinese has been other Pacific Islanders who are part of the Commonwealth and have free access to New Zealand's jobs and schools. The open immigration policy closely resembles that of the Micronesian nations to the U.S.

Strained communication with immigrant families is nothing new. The educators in Hawai'i have some good source material to help them understand not only the cultures of people arriving in their schools but also how they have been accommodated elsewhere. Some of the same difficulties in communication observed in Los Angeles surfaced among the Samoans in New Zealand, resulting in the publication of a handy little tome entitled *Talking Past Each Other; Problems of Cross Cultural communication* written by Joan Metge and Patricia Kinloch in 1978. This book concisely sums up what Western educators should expect when

dealing with Pacific Island cultures in general. I discussed some of the situations in the book with one of my Micronesian informants, and almost without exception, the cultural traits described by Kinloch and Metge also reflect a Micronesian world view. The difficulties in communicating with the Samoans in New Zealand were almost identical to the situations described by American educators dealing with both the Samoan immigrants in past decades and the present situation with the Micronesians.

Many of the studies of Samoan immigrant populations in New Zealand (and Hawai'i) were done in the 1970's when the first large groups of immigrants arrived and put their children into public schooling. The situation is ideal for comparison with the Micronesians in Hawai'i as it is these first years that are the most difficult. Many Samoans and their children have gone on to be very successful in their new countries, but in the beginning educators had the same problems with the newly arrived Samoan students as we find described by the teachers in Hawai'i when encountering the Micronesians. Undoubtedly time will ease the transition in Hawai'i as well, but the more we know, the easier it will be on the teachers, the students and their families.

Complaints made by educators in New Zealand by now sound very familiar. The children were often tardy or absent, homework went undone, children were unresponsive in class, parents rarely got involved in their children's education or in school activities. Typical instances of miscommunication were children unwilling to directly address adults or look them in the eye, reticence in the class and single word responses. *Talking Past Each Other* goes into more depth than the American guide "The Challenge for Educators" did, and I feel that some of the points are of use, as they explain more of the cultural foundation for the behaviors teachers may find so bothersome. What I find enlightening also, is that many of the cultural norms in the Pacific are also observed throughout much of Southeast Asia and part of East Asia as well.

In beginning their book, *Talking Past Each Other!*?, the authors gave this very simple but astute observation:

Where members of different cultural groups do come together in formal and informal situations,

misunderstandings and tensions arise even where there is the greatest goodwill on both sides, misunderstandings which the parties themselves find it hard to explain. On the basis of our experience working with Maoris and Samoans in their dealings with *Pakehas*, we . . . have become convinced that a good deal of miscommunication occurs between members of these groups because the parties interpret each others' words and actions in terms of their own understandings, assuming that these are shared when in fact they are not - - in other words, because of cultural differences that are not recognized because we all take our own culture very largely for granted and do not question its general applicability.¹⁶⁰

The authors continued to define the differences between the majority, or *Pakeha*, culture and those of the Maori and Samoan culture, which are often intertwined in their report. Highlighted again is the use of nonverbal communication which is very highly developed among the Samoans and Maori. When these nonverbal signs go unnoticed the Polynesians think they are being ignored, and the *Pakeha* think the Polynesians are being unresponsive or difficult. The Pacific Islander thinks the *Pakeha* seem deaf to their obvious gestures and tend to talk too much while saying too little. The Polynesians eventually tune them out because it is hard to distinguish between the important messages hidden among the many superfluous words. (Metge and Kinloch, 1978)

Understanding different uses of the eyes is crucial to avoid misunderstandings. While the *Pakeha* teach their children to look directly at superiors as a sign of respect and that they are paying attention, the Samoans and Maoris consider a direct gaze to be confrontational and exclusionary. "So they rest their gaze elsewhere, slightly to one side, on the floor, ceiling or distant horizon, or they even close their eyes altogether. In this way they 'soften' whatever is said and make it easier to concentrate. Unfortunately behavior intended to avoid offense is often 'read' by *Pakehas* with other ideas as rudeness or shiftiness."¹⁶¹

Also in conflict is when to stand and when to sit. *Pakeha* culture expects people to rise when a person of importance enters a room or to let distinguished guest sit first. "These practices are directly at odds with the Samoan rules of respectful behavior

which require them to keep physically lower than a superior. . . Samoan children are hopelessly confused when the respectful behavior that has become second nature to them is punished at school as being disrespectful."¹⁶² To remain physically lower means not seating a guest first, but last and not rising when an important person enters a room. If a child won't stand when a teacher or principal enters a room, thinking he is doing the right thing, it would be very confusing to say the least when he is seen as disrespectful.

Another interesting point made in the book is that of the use of negatives or double negatives when asking questions. It is very typical for a Westerner to ask such questions, isn't it? This is very confusing for not only Polynesians, but many learners of English as a second language. The use of negative questions is an endless source of confusion. Although very natural to a native speaker of English, it often is misunderstood by Pacific Islanders. Samoans and Maori are also more comfortable with prolonged silences, which would drive most teachers to distraction. "Less troubled by silence in the course of a conversation than *Pakehas*, Samoans in particular expect to be accorded a pause to collect their thoughts before answering questions about needs and desires: They are caught off balance by *Pakehas* who impatiently repeat the question or, concluding they are 'slow' in the sense of stupid, answer or make decisions for them."¹⁶³ Also Polynesians can use silence as a form of disagreement. So if there is a school meeting and something is discussed, the fact that the Samoans and Maori did not verbally disagree is assumed to be acquiescence. So when disagreements arise later, the Samoans protest that they never agreed to anything, while the *Pakeha* are sure they did!

Important for educators when dealing with the students parents is the etiquette involved in meeting and greeting. Kinloch and Metge gave examples:

Maoris and Samoans frequently complain that they went along to meetings about pre-school and school activities, eager to be involved, and 'nobody spoke to us, so we didn't go back'. This may or may not have been literally true; what they really mean is that no one welcomed them, so they felt left out, cold shouldered, not wanted. This response has to be understood in the context of the great emphasis that both groups place on

rituals of greeting involving verbal formulae, direct personal contact and the provision of food.¹⁶⁴

Pakeha on the contrary may dismiss formal introductions as a waste time, and assuming that all guests are equal and not wanting to appear patronizing may not make special efforts to welcome the Polynesians in attendance.

The last sentence states "provision of food" and its importance cannot be understated. Polynesians and Micronesians bring out food and drinks for their guests unsolicited. It is understood that to ask would elicit the required humble refusal, so food is literally laid out before a guest. The *Pakeha* and American habit of asking if a guest would like anything to eat or drink is considered polite in those cultures because the host does not want to force the guest yet has confidence that if the guest is hungry or thirsty, they will accept the offer. Polynesians serve their guests and eat after. It is considered rude to eat or drink in front of a guest who is not also enjoying. Here again, the Americans and New Zealanders feel that dispensing with formality and treating everyone as equals is polite, and the more informal one is, the more intimate and complimentary.

Another aspect of Polynesian culture that I find also among the Micronesians, is what the Maori refer to as *whakama* and the Samoans as *musu*. The authors defined the emotion:

Whakama is used by Maoris to describe both a 'state of mind' (more accurately a state of feeling) and the behavior associated with it. This behavior involves varying degrees of withdrawal, beginning with downcast eyes, monosyllabic answers and minimal response, passing through a form characterized by a shuttered look, stony silence and unresponsive immobility, to running away and 'hiding' (*whakapeke*).¹⁶⁵

A loose translation into English would be shyness, embarrassment or shame. But the levels of subtlety, amount of words and shades of meaning given for the Samoan *musu* indicate that it is a more central and well defined state among the Polynesians than the *Pakeha*, who take it simply as sulking. Although the causes of this emotion are varied the authors noted that:

(t)he common denominator seems to be 'feeling at a

disadvantage, being in a lower position morally or socially', . . he or she is trying to get a message across to those around him - - to 'speak' by not speaking. Exactly what the message is is not immediately apparent and it must be carefully interpreted in order to select the right treatment.¹⁰⁶

What *Pakeha* see as temper, moodiness or insolence, is seen by Polynesians as a legitimate form of protest or show of emotion and is respected as such. The Maori see a child in a state of *whakama* and decide how to handle it, usually by just leaving the child alone for awhile. The Kinloch and Metge noted that:

For Maoris, social isolation, whether inflicted by self or others, is a punishment. When those around him consider that the time is ripe, they take steps to bring the victim back into social circulation: by a loving touch, an offer of food or a cup of tea, an invitation to join in some activity, a word of praise or reassurance. The one treatment guaranteed not to succeed is the one Pakehas usually try in ignorance and frustration: trying to *talk* them out of it, whether by jollyng or scolding¹⁰⁷

This is what an American educator might do, as it is what is natural in a Western society. I would try to talk to the child, to reason with them and lift their spirits which is usually not too difficult to do, as the child relishes the attention. Ignoring a child who looked miserable would go against Western cultural norms. I have found this emotional state among Micronesian children often and found it very frustrating to understand. Being allowed to ignore the child and advised to let her wallow in her funky state is very freeing.

Finally, Kinloch and Metge made note of the fact that "*Pakeha* educationalists have been struck by the limited extent to which Polynesian parents communicate verbally with their children and their practice of delegating the care of younger children to their older siblings. They have interpreted these patterns rather negatively."¹⁰⁸ This is again the same criticism leveled against the Micronesians in Hawai'i. What the New Zealand authors point out repeatedly are the cultural nuances that are not detected. The intimate interpersonal understandings between Polynesians tell volumes unread by outside observers. Also the rich oral traditions often passed down by grandparents that enrich the children's' imaginations, connects them with

their past and exposes them to languages and world views not available in New Zealand schools.

Some suggestions offered by the New Zealand authors were for educators to put more; “emphasis on learning rather than teaching, concentrating on practical rather than theoretical skills during childhood (which goes with the idea that learning is a continuing process carried on into adulthood), learning by example, practice and experiment, a stress on the achievement of physical and social independence and autonomy at an early age, and a reinforcement through rewards and punishments”¹⁶⁹ The emphasis placed on active lifelong learning within the community parallels the philosophies of John Dewey and as we shall see in later chapters, it is just that approach that seems to suit most children all over the world simply because it is the most natural and is patterned after millennium of human experience. We learn best when the information has a purpose, is interesting to do and is done with people we like to be with.

Another study from New Zealand that was useful in comparison was the doctoral thesis by Patricia Kinloch, one of the authors of *Talking Past Each Other*, when she was a graduate student at Victoria University of Wellington in 1976. Her subject was Samoan children in New Zealand's public schools. Although her students were in high school, the information is pertinent to my study. As was my experience, her study came about because there was a perceived problem with the immigrant children in school. Kinloch began her thesis by wondering if the adjustment problems were just a simple barrier of language or if other factors were at play. (Kinloch, 1976)

The ability to observe in a school is a gift for a researcher. As noted before, I was very lucky to have to cooperation of PS-1. Kinloch had a similar situation in which she was welcomed by the students and the faculty. Barrington, who studied the Maori experience in Ogbu's seminal work on minorities and immigrants, *Minority Status and Schooling* (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991) noted that observations made in a school “as having the greatest potential for producing increased understanding of the school factors involved in underachievement because finding

out what actually happens in classrooms, how people actually treat each other and what they actually think about each other is best revealed by observing them in real classrooms and in real schools."¹⁷⁰

Kinloch makes note of the fact that the school she studied was very cooperative and willing to initiate positive change to facilitate the education of Samoan immigrant children. Kinloch wondered how much more severe the problems would be in a school that did not have as much support from the teachers and administration. I believe this also relates to Hawai'i's schools, in that everyone who talked with me was sincere in helping the children and had a basic knowledge of Pacific Island culture, I wonder also how much more difficult it would be for Micronesian immigrants in Arkansas, where there is a sizable community of Marshallese.

Many of Kinloch's findings in New Zealand were similar to those cited by educators in Hawai'i. That is many of the complaints were familiar. Students were frequently absent, tardy and hesitant to work alone. Their academic achievements were generally poor. (Kinloch, 1976) While the Samoan students in Kinloch's study were often disciplined for getting into trouble, I did not find this to be true, generally of the Micronesian children, but I was studying elementary age students, and I have heard through my informants that at the middle school and high school level, Micronesian youth are well known for doing detentions and having high rates of absenteeism.

Kinloch reported the opinions of the students and teachers in New Zealand. One teacher, when asked why the Samoan students had such poor attendance records felt that it could be caused by "insecurity, lack of stable relationships with one teacher, fear of authority and their general apathy caused by thinking the adult world is not interested in them."¹⁷¹ I found this rather enlightening when compared to the common belief that absence or tardiness were due to laziness and apathy.

Another keen insight came from the Samoan students' confusion over being punished, in their opinion, unfairly. In Samoan culture, to admit an error is punishment enough since it involves public humiliation, the worst form of shame. So the Samoan students resented being given a detention after having already

admitted a mistake, thus feeling unduly punished. A Samoan child expected to either admit his error or be punished, not both.

Kinloch observed the difficulty Samoan children had in reconciling the new Western educational system in New Zealand with their experiences back home. In Samoa children would learn by doing and their knowledge would have practical applications. Common sense would be respected and encouraged. One of Kinloch's teacher informants rightly noted that although Western culture 'pays lip service' to such ideals and characteristics, the schools none the less suppress such behavior. A child is expected to sit and be dictated to in most schools. This confused the immigrant child. He tried to conform, but received mixed messages and eventually gave up. Kinloch noted the sentiment of one of the teachers at the school in New Zealand:

All of us who have experienced the arrival of a Samoan child in this school have noted the deterioration of his behavior. He begins by attempting to learn the system and fit in enthusiastically. He goes to . . . classes regularly and although shy tends to be open and forthcoming. But as soon as he becomes aware of our inconsistency - - a sense of frustration develops . . . Once the Samoan child discovers that he is in opposition to the system, once he perceives of himself as bad, he reacts by becoming depressed, rude, silent, violent and if he is pushed far enough he runs away.¹⁷²

In analyzing her data, Kinloch found in her interviews with the teachers in New Zealand that "most of the frustration and annoyance felt by the teachers was directed towards the children rather than towards inadequacies in themselves when they were dealing with the children."¹⁷³ Kinloch's data helped her determine which students were succeeding, and why. In this way, she could help the teachers identify successful behaviors and encourage them. Focusing on curriculum and pedagogy were the solutions sought by Kinloch, not blame.

One trait that Kinloch found among the children who were succeeding was that they were competent in Samoan before their arrival in New Zealand. Children learning to read and write in their native tongue seemed to be critical in learning a new language. But language was not the only factor. Her findings showed that it

was not language or cultural barriers that inhibit immigrant children from succeeding in school. But rather it is the way in which Western schools treated immigrant culture and language that affected not only the child but the entire community. I will discuss social capital in a later chapter, but the feeling of powerlessness and inability to take effective action on behalf of themselves and their children is a common obstacle in immigrant and minority communities. To further alienate the situation, like the Micronesians in Hawai'i, some parents of Samoan children regarded themselves as "visitors to New Zealand, who hope one day to return to their family in Samoa,"¹⁷⁴ but at the same time their children are expected to do well in New Zealand. This is the problem faced by most immigrants. How to balance two worlds without losing both.

Kinloch's findings led to the conclusion offered in the chapter entitled 'Toward Bi-Cultural Competence'. She first noted that "the importance for migrants to acquire competence in the language of the host culture is well recognized by researchers and policy makers is not at issue. The issue here is the relationship between language and culture."¹⁷⁵ Kinloch asserted that a person cannot be fluent in a language without being competent in that culture as well. The success stories were those children who become successful at bridging the language and culture of their family and their new adopted homeland. Kinloch divided the Samoan students in her study into four groups. Those who exhibited:

- a. loss of competence in any culture.
- b. loss of competence in culture of origin, acceptance of culture of adoption.
- c. retention of competence in culture of origin.
- d. bi-cultural competence.¹⁷⁶

She gave examples of each situation with student behaviors observed at the school. Loss of competence in any culture usually resulted in a trouble maker, as he is exhibited inappropriate behavior in both cultures. Such a child would often demonstrate *musu* behavior and become totally withdrawn. Kinloch further described a person in the state of *musu* as having a:

'deadpan' look and will say nothing except an

occasional monosyllable. It is impossible to get any reaction from a person in this state of mind. It is a baffling experience to deal with and people not used to it eventually tend to become infuriated which only makes matters worse. *Musu* is almost always due to one of four causes: pure fright in the presence of authorities or strangers, a sense of shame, a sense of guilt or a feeling of injustice. . . . when a person gets into this frame of mind, it is best to call someone who he trusts and can speak his language, to find out the cause of the problem . . . the worst possible thing to do is to shout or hector the person.¹⁷⁷

Kinloch went on to say that *musu* was quite common among almost all of the Samoan student immigrants in varying degrees upon arriving in a new culture. It might be diagnosed as culture shock or depression, but the worst thing to do would be to send him to the school counselor.

As far as the second situation where a child would adopt the new culture and lose the old, Kinloch notes that *most children fell into this category of complete adoption of the host culture and language*. This is not ideal and can lead to incompetence in any culture and thus a state of *musu*. The third situation involving the retention of competence in the culture of origin is more rare among children who are usually quick to absorb the new.

The last category of bi cultural competence is described by Kinloch as:

the ability to express and interpret the ideas of both the original culture and the adoptive culture appropriately. The receptiveness to the adoptive culture is based on curiosity and does not necessitate the rejection of the original culture. *Instead the ideas to the two cultures are juxtaposed, their similarity and difference noted and more or less understood. . . . A child who fits into category four is most recognizable for his willingness to talk about his culture and to ask questions which relate to a developing understanding of his adoptive culture. He is prepared to commit improprieties to discover the consequences, and he can be heard praising and criticizing both Samoan language and custom, and the English language and New Zealand culture. Bi-lingual competence seems to coincide with bicultural competence.*¹⁷⁸

Kinloch encouraged bicultural competence rather than favoring one culture at the

expense of another. She noted that the success of an educational program designed to meet the needs of immigrant children would hinge on the accurate identification of the children in need. Correct knowledge of the child's culture of origin, its traditions and a comparison to the culture and traditions of the new country would need to be intensive. Compulsory teaching of traditional cultures and cross culture comparisons would be needed to avoid trivializing important information and leaving it to extra curricular activities or school clubs. Kinloch's observed that "language competence and cultural competence seem to be interdependent; one does not seem to progress successfully without the other."¹⁷⁹ In order to educate all children in communities with large immigrant populations, it would be necessary, not counterproductive, to encourage people to actively promote their language and culture of origin.

Recommendations from the community, both European and Polynesians, during a forum for public debate in 1974 regarding multiethnic education, stressed the need for tolerance of and encouragement for minority culture and language. Also pivotal would be the continuing consultation between Pacific Islanders and the people implementing school policy. The group advised was the creation of educational advisory boards to be staffed by Islanders to provide a safe haven for Pacific Islanders to come for a variety of services. There should also be Pacific Island counselors in or available to the schools who would act as go between when children ran into difficulty. This would alleviate the well know shyness of communicating in English by immigrant children and avoid the embarrassment of trying to explain their feelings to an unknown person. (Metge and Kinloch, 1978)

Despite the struggles of the first generations of Samoans, we can see great success among the Samoan population. Albert Wendt has emerged as an important literary figure not only in New Zealand and Samoa but worldwide. He has written eloquently about the experiences of being caught between the two worlds of his parents island home in Samoa, and his home in New Zealand. In the United States, the Samoans have removed themselves from some of the negative stereotypes associated with them earlier in their process of assimilation.

As mentioned by Sara, the Samoan volunteer an PS-1, the establishment of Samoan culture through elders was paramount in the success of the Western Samoans in particular. Many Samoans have found great success in professional sports, and now Duane Johnson, better known as 'The Rock', is perhaps the first Samoan superstar. Even though several generations have passed since the arrival of the large numbers of Samoans in Hawai'i, we see many Samoans comfortable in two worlds and two languages. Many of the Micronesians are not there yet, but the future looks more hopeful.

CHAPTER 8

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN AMERICA

INTRODUCTION:

America is not new to immigrants or to the problems of educating them. Indeed our country was populated by immigrants and the common school was conceived to create unity among a disparate population. Why then has our educational system failed so many of our minorities and immigrant children?

OGBU'S THEORY:

There have been many theories over many decades and almost as many solutions, yet there are no easy answers to the complex questions of educating children from many backgrounds with different needs in America. Immigrant children and minorities have historically been most difficult to educate in traditional public schools for a variety of obvious and not so obvious reasons. Language and cultural differences are some of the more obvious reasons, but there are also more elusive causes of educational failure among certain segments of America's schoolchildren.

John Ogbu offers an explanation in the book *Minority Status and Schooling; A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*. Ogbu posits a fascinating theory as to why certain immigrant groups and minorities become successful, by mainstream societal standards, and why other groups seemed stuck in the quagmire of failure. He defines two broad distinctions between the typical at risk groups of immigrants and minorities. The first group are what he terms voluntary immigrants. Those who came to the United States for a better life, of their volition and who pass on the idea of an American dream to their children. That dream being that any person, through education and hard work can succeed in this country. Examples of this would be the first settlers from Europe who came to escape religious persecution and the Chinese. More recent examples are people from the Indian sub-continent, Eastern Europeans and Filipinos continue to come in large

numbers. The second group are what Ogbu terms involuntary minorities, which can include immigrants as well as American born minorities. He writes:

Minority groups have been incorporated into their various societies either voluntarily or involuntarily. Those who have incorporated voluntarily are immigrants. *Immigrant minorities* have generally moved to their present societies with the belief that the move would lead to more economic well-being, better overall opportunities or greater political freedom. These expectations continue to influence the way they perceive and respond to treatment by members of the dominant group and by the institutions controlled by members of the dominant group . . . In contrast, nonimmigrant minorities, whom I designate *involuntary minorities*, are people who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest or colonization. They usually resent the loss of their former freedom, and they perceive the social, political and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression.¹⁹⁰

Ogbu then cites numerous case studies to reinforce the theory. From Africa to Japan, the Caribbean to New Zealand he shows how historical circumstances affect people's future expectations. The past, present and future are interconnected, even though many people, especially those seen as oppressors or former agents of oppression don't want to see it that way. The evidence Ogbu and others in the book present is persuasive. In most cases, besides having a homeland to return to or alternative destinations for migration options if all else fails, voluntary immigrants have a psychological advantage as well. He states:

The immigrants have a positive dual frame of reference which allows them to develop or maintain an optimistic view of their future possibilities. This frame of reference entails comparing their present situation with their own former situation or with that of their peers "back home." When they make this comparison they find a great deal of evidence that enables them to believe that they have more and better opportunities in their host society for themselves or for their children and because of this positive dual frame of reference with respect to status mobility, the immigrants think that even if they are allowed only marginal jobs they are better off in their host society than they would be in their homeland . . . They tend to interpret their exclusion from better jobs and other positions as attributable to the fact that they

are "foreigners," or that they do not speak the language of their host society well, or because they were educated elsewhere. From these perceptions and interpretations, there emerges among the immigrants a folk theory of getting ahead in the host society in which education plays a central role . . . they assume that their children, armed with U.S. credentials, would be competitive in the American job market. They respect U.S. laws safeguarding individual rights¹⁸¹

It is equally important that the language and culture of origin are intact. Voluntary immigrants usually have a positive attitude about who they are as people. Ogbu writes that "(t)hey bring with them a sense of who they are which they had before emigrating, and they seem to retain this social identity at least during the first generation, even though they are learning the language and culture of the mainstream of their host society . . . "[they] hold onto their positive sense of cultural identity, even superiority [which] protects them to some extent from the impact of majority groups pressures to assimilate."¹⁸² This attitude of superiority in the face of opposition cannot be underestimated. A case in point would be the Chinese building the railroads. They came for opportunity but faced severe discrimination. They have survived in the United States by keeping not only their language and culture alive, but by believing that they were better than what their task masters led them to believe.

Voluntary immigrants see their situation as temporary. They believe in the American dream. Through hard work and education, anyone can succeed. The parents are willing to sacrifice, swallow their pride and work at menial jobs in order for their children to reap the benefits of their labor and have a better life than they would have in their homeland. They *trust* in the American dream. Ogbu continues by saying that "(t)he nature of the contents of their cultural model lead the immigrants to adopt pragmatic or instrumental attitudes and strategies that are quite conducive to school success. The immigrants' dual status mobility frame of reference, folk theory of success, and survival strategies lead them to emphasize education for their children."¹⁸³ Pivotal to their experience is that the United States, with all its problems and prejudices, is still preferable to what they left.

The other situation Ogbu discusses is that of involuntary minorities. Qualification for membership, a history "slavery, conquest or colonization" is to define strife. Most of the people in this group do not have a homeland to return to if all else fails, and their culture and languages have not survived intact. The positive framework enjoyed by the voluntary immigrants of coming for a better life are not only completely absent, but opposite. Because these minorities are what Ogbu describes as "caste like" minorities, their hopes for the future are much more bleak than those of the voluntary minorities. Ogbu continues:

involuntary minorities interpret the economic, social and political barriers against them differently. Because they do not have a "homeland" with which to compare their present situation, involuntary minorities do not interpret their menial jobs and low wages as 'better' than the situation of others like them in a foreign country. . . . thus [they] have a negative dual frame of reference with respect to status mobility. Unlike immigrants, they do not see their situation as temporary; on the contrary, they tend to interpret the discrimination against them as permanent and institutionalized . . . involuntary minorities often express the wish that they could get ahead through education and ability as members of the dominant group do, but they know they cannot . . . they develop a folk theory of getting ahead which differs from that of the members of the dominant group . . . their folk theory tends to stress collective effort as providing the best chances for overcoming the opportunity barriers . . . Because involuntary minorities do not believe that the societal rule for self advancement for them, as they do for members of the dominant group, they usually try to change the rules.¹⁸⁴

The survival strategies of the two groups are opposite. The voluntary group may keep their language and culture intact at home but try to assimilate as much as possible to the dominant culture in society at work and in school. It is integral to their perceived method of success to assimilate. That is their plan and it is wholeheartedly pursued. There is a clear line between the old ways and the new, that was then and this is now. Ogbu describes the experience of an involuntary minority as not only without a positive dual frame of reference, but quite the contrary. For the involuntary immigrant, life before slavery and conquest was better in the

collective consciousness. The trauma experienced by first peoples, descendants of slavery and displaced victims of war cannot be underestimated. In order to deal with the psychological upheaval, involuntary immigrants developed what Ogbu refers to as a *secondary cultural system*. Such a system serves to protect and bind the strands of language and culture that are left after history has done its worst. Ogbu argues that a secondary cultural system:

is one in which the cultural differences arose *after* the group has become an involuntary minority. . . . involuntary minorities tend to develop certain beliefs and practices, including particular way of communication or speaking as a coping mechanism under subordination. These beliefs and practices may be new creations or reinterpretation of old ones Involuntary minorities perceive their cultural frame of reference not merely as different from but as in opposition to the cultural frame of reference of their dominant group "oppressors". . . . The cultural and language differences emerging under this condition also serve as a boundary-maintaining mechanism. For this reason, involuntary minorities do not, unlike the immigrants, interpret the language and cultural difference they encounter in school and society as barriers they have to overcome. Rather, they interpret these differences as *symbols of identity to be maintained*. The cultural frame of reference gives the minorities both a sense of collective or social identity and a sense of self worth.¹⁸⁵

The pressures of maintaining a culture of opposition, as in black American youth, yet wanting to achieve the American dream despite the odds stacked against them leads to high achieving black students having to hide their academic success behind sports, or risk being labeled as a collaborator. Terms such as 'oreo' and 'banana' refer to black and Asian minorities accused acting white (being colored on the outside and white inside). To have to hide success in order to fit into one's ethnic group, yet yearn to succeed in the mainstream would be exhausting. No wonder relatively few people succeed from the involuntary group and why schools have such difficulty in succeeding with at risk children when success for them equals cultural betrayal.

Ogbu presented many cases of students, all considered at risk because of their

status as minorities or children of immigrants. Ogbu brilliantly dissected the phrase, at risk. Often it is used as an all encompassing phrase that separates children by definition without allowing the nuances of history to shade the definition. If one reads Ogbu, who takes into account the vagaries of history, the reasons for differences between various people's struggles and successes become more clear by becoming more complex. The different rates of success are irrefutable and the arguments plausible. Interesting comparisons between educational failures among the Hispanic natives of California who have historically occupied that land and the successes of the Hispanic arrivals from war torn Central America are compelling. But there are exceptions, and exceptions lead to other interesting avenues of thought.

A REBUTTAL TO OGBU:

Although Ogbu has raised seminal questions about the nature of minorities and immigrants in relation to their unique histories, questions as to the completeness of the theory have been raised. I found some of the most compelling challenges to Ogbu in a book by Sonia Nieto entitled *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. Nieto writes that "unless we look at at individual cases as well as at entire groups, we fall into rather facile but not always accurate explanation of failure. These can lead to stereotypes and inappropriate educational expectations."¹⁸⁶ Nieto looked beyond the broad definitions used in the analysis and case studies in Ogbu's study, and looked for solutions based not only on his theories, which are important, but also on some important exceptions.

Although Nieto agrees with Ogbu on many points, such as the weakness of the in folk theory of success, which Nieto describes as "(a) traditional argument to explain differences in academic achievement is that it will take students who are not doing well in school a generation or two to climb the ladder of success, just as it took all other immigrants to do so. This argument is a specious one because the educational and historical experiences of African American, American Indians, Asian American, and Latinos are markedly different from those of other ethnic groups."¹⁸⁷

She also finds some holes in Ogbu's theory. For example in defining who is a voluntary immigrant Nieto writes that "(the) distinction is not always easy to make, because those who appear on the surface to be voluntary immigrants may not be so at all",¹⁸⁹ and as such, some voluntary immigrant groups have not been as successful as predicted. A group of immigrants that I term 'non voluntary voluntary immigrants' would be Vietnamese refugees and the people of Bikini. Nieto goes on to say that Ogbu's "theories have been criticized as being incomplete, ahistorical, and inflexible in allowing for individual differences . . . Ogbu's theory may result in placing an inordinate responsibility on students and families without taking into account conditions outside their control that also affect learning . . . In addition Ogbu's theories do not explain the long struggle of African American people for educational equality and the tremendous faith so many "involuntary minority" communities have had in the promise of education."¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, many of the children of voluntary minorities reject the folk theory of success believed in by their parents. Education and hard work were not of great benefit to their parents, so they do not invest completely in the American dream. Nieto refers to factors that lie outside of the control of the families such as the system of education itself. Nieto asks, "What causes students to resist education and otherwise engage in behaviors that might ultimately jeopardize their chances of learning? There is no simple answer to this question, but one probable response is a school climate that rejects students' identities."¹⁹¹ Nieto wisely goes back to the assimilationist origins of schooling. Horace Mann, in devising the common school system, aimed towards assimilation. If America was to succeed as a democracy, its *citizens must be united in language and culture. This was not considered insensitive* in Mann's day, but no one could have foreseen the diverse society we live in today. There is no historical precedent in the world where vastly differing cultural groups live together as a single, free nation. There are no blueprints, it is a work in progress.

As pointed out by Kinloch, it is not a question of replacing English as the official language of instruction or commerce. It is a matter of recognition and respect. The inclusion of intensive highly academic language and cultural curriculum from the

earliest grades is not at odds with excellence and should not be seen as a challenge. Nieto observes that “(a)lthough almost all of us have an immigrant past, very few of us know or even acknowledge it. But because schools have traditionally perceived their role as that of an assimilating agent, the isolation and rejection that accompany immigration have simply been left at the school house door. The rich experiences of millions of our students, and of their parents, grandparents, and neighbors, have been lost. Rather than using students’ experiences as a foundation, curriculum and pedagogy have been based on the myth of a painless and smooth assimilation.”¹⁹¹ Reading Ogbu, or just a perusal of the nightly news gives ample evidence that assimilation in America has been anything but a painless experience for many people.

Many children have been forced to leave their ethnicity and language at home or face punitive action. Hawai‘i, with its plethora of language and culture, has perhaps a more liberal view of interweaving culture and language in the school. But within living memory are the Hawai‘ians who received corporal punishment for speaking Hawai‘ian at school. In many places, such as California, where the bilingual educational debate is raging, a child must in effect leave her culture at home. There is little overlapping between home and school. Nieto writes that, “(n)o child should have to make the painful choice between family and school, which inevitably becomes the choice between belonging or succeeding. The costs of such a choice are too high, from becoming a “cultural schizophrenic” to developing doubts about one’s worth and dignity.”¹⁹² This is the exact conclusion reached by Kinloch in her dissertation 30 years ago. Children who became confused about their identity would fail in both cultures and fall into a state of *musu*. The children who successfully became bi-cultural and bi-lingual were in a win win situation. It is toward this goal that educators must aim.

Nieto blames, rather than the child and their families as we have seen in other instances, the educational system itself. If we cannot change society, which is of course reflected in the schools, we as thoughtful educators can certainly change the one thing we can control, our classroom. How do educators develop a pedagogy

in step with the population of students in their classroom? Besides the obvious historical inequities Nieto notes that “underachievement . . . is also the result of the interaction between teachers, students, and their families. When teachers respect and affirm the identities and experiences of students and their families, they also change the nature of the interaction they have with them.”¹⁹³ It may seem so small as to be trivial, but it must begin with one teacher in one class, and then a few classes in the school and then a few schools in the district to change the way we treat all children. The critical mass necessary must come from the basic unit of the teachers in the classroom who deal directly with these children.

By providing educational environments that encourage all students to learn, teachers can counteract the negative influences of society, such as the ones defined by Ogbu. Nieto believes that “(i)n the final analysis, multicultural education needs to confront issues of power and privilege in society. This means challenging racism and other biases as well as the structures, policies, and practices of schools.”¹⁹⁴ This may seem like a lot to ask teachers, but teachers are on the front lines, face to face with the children others see as statistics of America’s failure to educate children in a competitive world. In Nieto’s words, “(w)hen teachers and schools believe their students are capable learners and they create appropriate learning environments for them, young people are given a clear and positive message about their worth and abilities.”¹⁹⁵ This takes dedicated schools, teachers, community members and adequate funding. But it starts with dedication to educating all children.

Empowering teachers and students does not mean ‘dumbing down curriculum’ as seen in earlier liberal and much criticized attempts. Nieto cautions that any changes made in the class must include not only equity and excellence, but also must give children “an apprenticeship in the opportunity to become critical and productive members of a democratic society.”¹⁹⁶ Success stories of caste like minorities were achieved by cultural nurturing in partnership with academic excellence. Deborah Meier’s ‘essential schools’ in New York City were an example of a committed body of students, parents and educators that succeeded in producing excellence in some of the most chronically failing schools in the country.

Nieto's research has produced similar conclusions, that "rather than family background, it was the conditions established by the schools that explained the difference" in student commitment and achievement. Nieto continues to note that most important is not the physical structures of the school, but what the teachers "believe students deserve and are capable of learning."¹⁹⁷ Deserve is an interesting choice of words by Nieto, for there may be a nascent belief that especially for immigrant populations who are sometimes seen as a burden on the community, whatever the children get is enough.

There has been one set of schools that has consistently succeeded in educating the most disadvantaged as well as advantaged children, the Catholic schools. It may seem that no system could be less liberal and ill-suited to serve a multicultural student body but that may be precisely why it works. Nieto writes that the "Catholic schools, because of restricted resources, tend to offer all students a less differentiated curriculum, less tracking, and more academic classes. They also have clear, uncomplicated missions and strong social contracts. What may at first glance appear to be incongruous in terms of cultural compatibility is explained by school structures that imply high expectation for all students."¹⁹⁸ Latin is still taught, as well as rigorous instruction in science and mathematics. By not pandering to what they may perceive as at risk and therefore unable children, the nun is able to achieve what public schools have failed to give, an excellent education. Tuition and religious instruction may be problematic for some, but for the students who do attend, they often get a great education along with a dose of religion and morality.

Nieto concludes that although the schools can be a catalyst for change, they do not exist in a vacuum. The support of the family, the neighborhood, the district and the state expand in concentric circles to encompass not only the community, but hopefully the entire country as well. Nieto summarizes that "(w)e need to understand school achievement as a combination of *personal, cultural, familial, interactive, political and societal* issues, and this means understanding the *sociopolitical context* in which education takes place."¹⁹⁹ This may sound like a lot to expect of educators, but the future is partially the hands of educators. As Nieto

wrote, the challenge is to create educational opportunities for all children to be “critical and productive” adults. The school cannot be expected to solve societies problems, but to engage society by creating the best educational atmosphere for all children regardless of circumstance. In the forward to their book *Tinkering Toward Utopia*, Tyack and Cuban warn that “Americans have thought it easier to instruct the young than to coerce the adult . . . Repeatedly, Americans have followed a common pattern in devising educational prescriptions for specific social or economic ills. Once they had discovered a problem, they labeled it and taught a course on the subject.”²⁰⁰

Multiculturalism is a case in point. It is a buzzword in education, often discussed in theory, but seldom put into practice for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is the complexity of the subject. Is multicultural education going to be the same in every community? Will the focus be the same? Are there certain basic elements of ethnic studies that all American children must study, and then be offered electives? In the case of the Micronesians in Hawai'i's schools, the problem is not so much that they want their culture and language taught in school, it is a much more basic need of identifying people and their needs. As in Kinloch's study in New Zealand, what is needed is to identify students as they enter the school system and have a system in place where there is a culturally viable person available for questions and consultation. By culturally viable I mean someone who, at best would speak the language, and minimally would understand the culture of the family and the student arriving from whichever island they call home. Someone who at least would know the differences between the special needs of a Marshallese family and the perhaps different needs of a Chuukese family. In most cases the families may be fine and not need special services, but it would still be comforting to know that the school provided cultural liaisons. In the case of the families with special needs, as with the children in the Project at PS-1, the help would be critical. Help in understanding basic expectations and school practices could derail much of the confusion and frustration now expressed by teachers and administrators.

THE MICRONESIANS IN OGBU'S WORLD:

Nieto and her colleagues noted some exceptions to Ogbu's theory on minority status. I find that another exception seems to be the Micronesians themselves. Is the reason that so many Micronesian children are struggling in Hawai'i's schools because they are involuntary immigrants? What about the children who are doing well, are their families coming for different reasons from different backgrounds, and therefore more like voluntary immigrants? Do they buy into the folk theory of success in America or are they an exception to the rule described by Nieto? When thinking of the Micronesian children at the school I studied and within the people I know personally, I wondered where the Ponapeans, for instance, would fit in. Micronesians would not be considered involuntary immigrants, in that they did not occupy Hawai'i originally, that distinction goes to the Hawai'ians who would be classified as an involuntary minority according to Ogbu. But the Micronesian islands were occupied involuntarily in varying degrees at varying locations throughout history. The Spanish and Germans forced their way into Micronesian life and affected culture and religion but it was the occupation by Japan that was the impetus for some island populations to exhibit resistance strategies shown by involuntary minorities in Ogbu's studies. Other Micronesians came from caste like societies where there was little if any chance for upward mobility. One's birth into a family clan determined one's status in life. How these circumstances affected the education of Micronesians both at home and abroad would make a fascinating addition to Ogbu's other case studies.

Yet, the Micronesians in Hawai'i today, by and large, are here of their own choice. They come for many of the same reasons as other voluntary immigrants and exhibit some of the qualities of that group by hoping for a better life here through education and employment. Yet again, it is easy to generalize among the Micronesians, but it would be misleading. The Yapese and Palauan people are coming from very different economic, political and cultural situations than are the descendants of Bikini islanders now living on Ebeye or the Chuukese atoll dwellers. Would people from Bikini feel that they had a choice? Would the suffering and

depopulation experienced on all the islands due to introduced disease and war be welcomed in a trade for the chance to have their children attend PS-1?

Also complicating Ogbu's theory of success regarding Micronesians are their motivations for being in America. Almost without exception, all of my informants, although they like Hawai'i and some of the material benefits of an American life, look back fondly on the island of their birth and definitely plan on returning in old age to spend their twilight years in peace. From Yap to Bikini, people empowered or dispossessed, the Micronesians long for home. For the Ponapeans who come from an island of great natural wealth and abundance, life was much easier back home. They do not see Hawai'i as being better than their homeland and so social mobility, climbing the ladder of success, is not seen as an end all. If they don't make it here, they can always go back home and enjoy a decent life. I noticed this in the more relaxed attitude of my informants regarding higher educational goals. I rarely heard parents berating their children to be doctors or lawyers. It seems that just being in the United States, getting an American education regardless of its quality and having cash was good enough. When they eventually return home, an education wouldn't matter as jobs don't exist in large numbers, so why bother?

In review, thinking on multicultural education and the special challenges it poses has been mulled over for many decades. Ideas offered by people from different backgrounds that reflect myriad voices has helped enrich the debate. Ogbu's theories are very informative, but Nieto has a point as well. The brilliant works of Edward Said and Linda Tuhiwai Smith add color to the prism through which we view the world. People do not fit into neat categories, no matter how brilliant the categories may be. Where the Micronesians fit into these theories is difficult because each island has had different experiences with colonization and war. Nieto's point is perfectly illustrated in the Micronesian community. That people's past affects their present is undeniable, the challenge comes in figuring out how to put all the pieces together so that the present situation, i.e., the Micronesian children attending school in Hawai'i, get the benefit of a well informed educational staff that can meet their needs. We need to know the students. Who are they? Where have they

come from? What makes them unique? Answering these questions is a necessary step in serving this particular community of children and their families. Including them, encouraging pride and demanding excellence is the goal.

CHAPTER 9

ANALYSIS

It is easy to point fingers at the weakest members of society and blame them for failure, the failure of their children to succeed in school or their parents to steadily climb the ladder of American success into well paying jobs. If studied, it becomes clear that there are factors at play other than just being a minority, experiencing language barriers or attending poorly funded understaffed schools. The schools are not the only institution in America that is falling apart. Tyack and Cuban observe that, "(f)rom subways to mental hospitals to national parks to schools, the public sphere had become degraded. It can by no means be taken for granted that people take pride in what they hold in common."²⁰¹ America is changing as a society, and schools feel the changes acutely.

The concept of social capital is something that the average citizen does not think about or define, but feels intuitively when in social situations. Whether we feel comfortable in a social situation or not refers to our level of social capital in that situation. Putnam defines it thus, "(w)hereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals - - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is that "social capital" calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital."²⁰² This was the reason for the establishment of the common school, to unite disparate groups of people to create a strong democracy. Those without it are like wallflowers at a dance, they can observe but not participate.

Looking at America today, the author of the book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putman painstakingly documents the breakdown of American civil society that is becoming increasingly isolated rather than united. From membership in PTA's to

bridge clubs, the fabric of social life, networking, is becoming dangerously frayed which results in a less engaged, more suspicious community and nation. Putnam continues. "A society characterized by generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society"²⁰³ All people, starting in early childhood, learn the rules of reciprocity and social connectedness. The notion of 'I scratch your back you scratch mine' is not uniquely human, and evolution must have found it a powerful tool in shaping more complex societies. It defines us as social creatures and delineates the concept of us and them. We groom members of our clan, not outsiders. The ability of humans to reach out and cross the social boundaries, intermarry and inhabit the planet is powerful proof that our use of social capital to increase our assets and well being is critical.

The distinction between in group bonding and exo group reaching is described by Putnam thus, "(of) all the dimensions along which forms of social capital vary, perhaps the most important is the distinction between bridging (or inclusive) and bonding (or exclusive)."²⁰⁴ Bonding groups are inward looking, such as church groups, while bridging groups are looking outward, such as youth service and the civil rights movement. Schools can be agents of both. Although some elite schools are designed as bonding institutions, the public school system as designed by Horace Mann was definitely meant to be a bridging mechanism. Putnam wrote:

During most of the past century, discussion of the purposes of public schools has stressed comprehensive social and political goods more than narrow, instrumental ends. In Horace Mann's time, the common school crusaders believed that the main function of schooling was to produce literate, moral citizens capable of fulfilling the millennial hope of making the United States God's country. As immigrants from incredibly diverse cultures filled the land, citizens discussed how public schools could shape a new people from newcomers from distant shores, and immigrants developed their own concepts and practice of cultural democracy in education. Political philosophers like John Dewey enormously enriched understanding of the links between democracy and education. In the two decades following the Brown decision in 1954, Americans ardently discussed how public schooling could promote racial and economic justice.²⁰⁵

The idea of shaping a new society by mixing people arriving from distant shores is a noble one. What the country's founders did not anticipate was the influx of non European culture that would stretch the vision to its present breaking point. To include all voices in the vision is a daunting task. Excluded from this vision initially were the involuntary minorities, of course, and to right social wrongs it is imperative that the social bonds that can serve as bridges between communities are not severed. They must be lovingly spliced and reinforced. Without the mechanisms for connecting people in such a large nation, the erosion will continue. Putman makes a clever analogy. "Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological super glue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40."²⁰⁶ We need both. Like minded people need their super glue as people tend to socialize in small, like minded circles. And we need WD-40 now more than ever as many national institutions, including the school system, creak to a halt.

Unfortunately the bonding mechanisms in America seem to outweigh the bridging ones at this point. It is folly to think that all Americans enter the game on a level playing field and that simply through effort will succeed. The dominant culture has a decided advantage, and it seems that the power enjoyed by a small group of historically advantaged people, endowed with incredible social capital control much of the decision making in this country by intense networking within their social groups. The exclusion of so many people in the decision making processes trickle down and affect everyone, even the children. Putnam states that "(c)hild development is powerfully shaped by social capital. A considerable body of research dating back at least fifty years has demonstrated that trust, networks and norms of reciprocity with a child's family, school, peer group and larger community have wide-ranging effects on the child's opportunities and choices, and hence on his behavior and development . . . Social capital keeps bad things from happening to good kids."²⁰⁷ Disempowered people need ways to empower themselves. Ogbu wrote that in the case of caste like minorities group effort changed the system of oppression. People also need to invest in changing the institutions that control our

schools. But it is not easy. Joseph Murphy writes in his book, *Restructuring Schools*, that "the bureaucratic infrastructure of schools has come under severe criticism . . . schools are so covered with bureaucratic sediment that initiative, creativity, and professional judgment have all been paralyzed."²⁰⁸ Indeed paralysis and helplessness describe not only the plight of the educators dealing with some Micronesians but also other innovative educators who find their best intentions and efforts thwarted by 'the system'. Teachers often begin their career with great ideals. The high rate of teachers quitting in the first five years of their career is telling. These are the frays of social reciprocity described by Putnam and others. Teachers who stay in communities can help create strong social bonds between the school and the community, high turnover rates benefit no one.

Educators can be crucial in enhancing the level of reciprocity in the community, we are after all responsible for a family's most precious commodity, their child. Building trust between the families and the schools would improve the community and the society at large. Again, the suggestion of having cultural liaisons available at the school when newly arrived immigrants register their children would be key in avoiding future problems. And if problems do persist, the presence of a culturally safe person would be more effective than a stranger in negotiating conflict. Putnam wondered:

Why does the density of social connectedness in a state seem to have such a marked effect on how well its students perform in school? The honest answer is that we are not yet entirely sure, but we have some important clues. First, when civic engagement in a community affairs is generally high, teachers report higher levels of parent support and lower levels of student misbehavior . . . The correlation between community infrastructure, on the one hand, and student and parental engagement in schools, on the other hand, is very substantial even after taking into account other economic, social, and educational factors, like poverty, racial composition, family structure, educational spending, class size, and so on.²⁰⁹

Putnam found that social conditions such as poverty and lack of parental education were dwarfed by stable homes and communities. We certainly cannot be

expected to stabilize families in the school, but we can be a stabilizing force in the community. The schools and the neighborhoods in which they exist need to be adequately empowered to make sure that the children are receiving the best education possible.

Is this a pipe dream? I can easily envision Micronesian children who are experiencing difficulty improving greatly if they were to encounter a familiar face who could help them overcome the initial obstacles and cultural quagmires. How frightening for a six year old, who has been told all her life not to speak to or look at an adult in the eye, not to stand in front of a seated elder to be asked to stand in class, look directly at a seated teacher and give an answer to a question she is not sure of which may result in an incorrect answer. While not traumatic for most American children, this could be devastating for a Micronesian. No wonder so many children don't ask for help and so many parents are uninvolved. One of Ogbu's case studies in New Zealand found that the creation of the "*whanuas*, (small "schools within schools". . . provide students with greater opportunities for close interaction and the growth of a 'caring family feeling' "²¹⁰ A gentle guiding hand to smooth over the rough patches would be very helpful for many a newcomer.

In Hawai'i we are fortunate in that we have a population with a wide variety of cultural backgrounds so Micronesian children are not faced with an all Caucasian student body like a child might who moved to Iowa. Yet, we don't see many Pacific Island teachers and administrators in Hawai'i's public schools. Hawai'i's schools are the territory of a largely ethnic local Japanese population, with Chinese and Caucasians as well, but very heavily Japanese. How does a predominately Japanese staff with their unique cultural background affect children of Pacific Island cultures? This would also make an interesting study. From my investigation at the school, many of the staff were locals of Asian heritage, and it was apparent that they were more sympathetic to the immigrant children from Korea, Japan and China because the type of study habits and parental involvement are familiar, and thus more comfortable. Teachers should be empowered to try to reach out to culturally unfamiliar children with the aid of a culturally appropriate liaison. Tyack and Cuban

note that “(c)hange where it counts the most - - in the daily interactions of teachers and students - - is the hardest to achieve and the most important . . . [it is] difficult and essential, above all for the educationally dispossessed.”²¹¹ Teachers have enough to do and their responsibilities are at times overwhelming. To ask them to take on more by helping the children with special needs may seem overbearing, but with support from the school and the community, it is possible. It has been done. Fullan noted that:

Teachers are privileged and burdened with the responsibility of helping all students become inner and outer learners who will connect to wider and wider circles of society. Teachers cannot do it alone. At this stage, they have to do it despite the system. But this is how breakthroughs occur. And they will find allies. If teachers don't force the issue nobody will be able to. They dynamically complex patterns between the micro world of making a difference in the lives of particular students, and the macro world evolution of learning societies is the real arena of teacherdom.²¹²

Schools must ask the community to help. People are busy and will not volunteer unless they know they are needed. If the school asks a Micronesian mother to come and help translate, the worst that can happen is for her to refuse. But if, as insinuated by some of my informants, the mothers or relatives said yes, how wonderful for the school. The Micronesians I spoke with would be eager to help, and they would feel good to be contributing and considered an asset. They are proud people and would like their reputation in the community to be a positive one, rather than to be seen as a burden or failures. Besides asking the parents of islanders for help, some other suggestions would be to:

- a. Provide workshops for the teachers during in service days that could be attended by Micronesian parents and interpreters to answer questions the teachers may have and help explain the most important cultural differences.
- b. When children register for school, it should be noted which island group the child comes from and ask the parent or guardian if they would be willing to help if there were language difficulties with other members from the same island

- c. Identify the families of Micronesians who's children have been successful and solicit helpful advice from them on how to best approach families that are struggling.
- d. Ask other Micronesians who have resided in Hawai'i if they would help out as a cultural liaisons if there were particular difficulties with a child family from their island.
- e. Have contact people from each island who can be used as interpreters or phone calls.
- f. Have workshops set up for newcomers that are run by Islanders to help explain what is expected in an American school.
- g. Encourage families to undertake projects as groups and group conferences.
- h. Incorporate Dewey's philosophies into the curriculum to encourage hands on, experiential and holistic learning.
- i. Clearly explain ownership and boundaries within the classroom.
- j. Use a third party when a child must be reprimanded so that he/she does not 'lose face'.

This may seem like an inordinate amount of work for the schools and the families, especially when pondering that each of these activities must be done in a different language for each island group. But the choice is to either try and risk failure, or continue to fail many Micronesian children as we have failed children in the past and seem to continue to fail children today. Murphy wrote that:

The rapidly changing demographic picture in schools (and in society in general) has been amply documented: schools are increasingly populated by less advantaged youth, children of color, students in need of an array of non-educational services, youngsters from homes where English is not the primary language, and pupils from families in which both parents work or from single parent homes. These at risk students, for whom schools have historically been the least successful, will soon constitute fully one third of the student population.²¹³

Murphy wrote that in 1991, the figures are higher now as the population continues to shift away from a white majority and become more diverse across the country. Can we afford to fail a third of our children, maybe soon half? Of course not. If not for humanitarian reasons, which seem to be low on the 'to do' list, then certainly for political ones. America cannot survive as a democracy without educated citizens.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

It may seem when compared to the educational problems nationally and social and political problems globally, that the situation of the Micronesian immigrant children at PS-1 is a very small concern. Nationally the debate over standards and school vouchers is reflected in Governor Lingle new educational proposals to decentralize Hawai'i's school system and fund more magnet, charter and 'schools within schools' in addition to supporting parental choice including vouchers. All of these are highly politicized and indeed Tyack and Cuban assert that "educational reforms are intrinsically political in origin."²¹⁴ Political and historical in nature, there will always be differing views of what is considered right and applicable.

How does this effect the children of PS-1? Although the Micronesians may belong to one of the most sparsely populated, non cohesive and politically powerless nations in the world does not mean that they should be once again made the pawns of history. If we cannot take care of the least powerful members of our society, then can we call ourselves civilized? Hawai'i could be a leader in national if not world ethnic innovations educationally. Hawai'i has always prided itself on its ethnic harmony, but we need to take it a step further and pride ourselves in our commitment to educating all children to the highest standards. Whether the child attends the most elite private school or a country public school should not matter.

The musings of educational philosophers in recent years often reflect on ever smaller and more interconnected world. They advise embracing the differences between people and using the diversity to improve societies by encouraging expression among the wide variety of cultures within them. In the foreword on the future of multiculturalism in Taylor's 1994 book, *Multiculturalism*, Gutman writes that "the goal . . . is not to bring us back to an eventual "difference blind" social space but on the contrary, to maintain and cherish distinctness, not just now but forever."²¹⁵ This is an evolution from Mann's time when immigrants were expected to assimilate into an American ideal citizen with an ethnically neutral Eurocentric model

in mind. Through modern eyes, such notions are hubris and are unacceptable. The goals of education have broadened since Mann's day and continue to evolve. Rather than just a functioning adult civil society to help build a fledgling country, we are now called upon to help connect a fledgling multicultural world. Fullan asserts that:

The ultimate aim of education is to produce a learning society, indeed a learning globe. The key to learning is the teacher who must combine continuous inner and outer learning. Moral purpose and change agency - - caring and competence - - are intimate partners. Neither equity nor excellence by themselves get us anywhere. They must feed on each other. Finally, teachers more than most people are in a privileged position to pursue the meaning of life through the merging of microcosm and macrocosm.²¹⁶

The elimination of the dualities despised by Dewey and the continuing connectedness of the world are worthy, if evasive goals. But there is light at the end of the tunnel, as seen through a web.

Advances in technology and the internet have altered the balance of power and access to information forever. It is an exciting time to be an educator, but difficult as well. The equilibrium between micro and macro, local and global concerns is becoming becoming more difficult to maintain as the global keeps arriving in your classroom in the form of little frightened people and glowing orbs of instantaneous access line the walls. Fullan observes that, "(m)acrocosm is the learning society and the learning world. Microcosm is Monday morning. Teachers above all in society must have a foot in both 'cosmos' because they cannot be effective in one without being plugged into the other. Aside from religion, teaching and learning is as close to the meaning of life as one can get . . . the role of education is a search for worldwide understanding and more complex and deeper connections and interdependencies."²¹⁷ The Micronesian child ironically comes from some of the smallest places on the planet and finds himself in a school in Honolulu, where his problems are considered insignificant by most people. The Micronesian finds himself the micro-est of the micro, (pun intended). This is precisely the point. All people deserve an excellent and equitable education in America, where this is our

stated goal, even the smallest among us. And oddly enough, being small turns out to be beautiful. The successes of Dewey and Meier and others can be largely attributed to smallness. Small schools serve at risk children particularly well in that by knowing every child, the staff seldom lets any fall through the cracks that gape in large schools of thousands.

We are still left to wonder why some teachers succeed, others fail and why some schools do better than others. Teachers and schools that succeed, as seen in the analysis done by Putnam, are connected in a web of supportive associations. Fullan writes that "(s)ystems change when enough kindred spirits coalesce in the same change direction"²¹⁸ Grass roots efforts that spur the indigenous, or first people's movements as well as others, are becoming easier with the help of the web. Critical mass is an unshakable force in human evolution. Each community matters, each person each child, and when enough like minded people get together, societies change.

That is why the Micronesian child's success matters. Everyone's does. They deserve better than to be failed over and over again until they are put in remedial classes, never to rejoin their peers and be stigmatized as 'dummies'. If we cannot teach Pacific Island children in Hawai'i, then where? In his contribution to the philosophies of multicultural education, K. Anthony Appiah, a black gay male, when considering if he would prefer living in the closet today, as opposed to having no closet in past decades, or being a free black man in today's society with all its pitfalls to living in the days of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, reflected that ""(we) make up ourselves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we do not determine the options among which we choose."²¹⁹ He then continued, "but I would like not to have to choose. I would like other options."²²⁰

That is exactly what we need, other options. Obviously our tool kit is incomplete. It is not the fault of anyone, the teacher, the children, the parents. It just is the way it is. In one of the case studies done in support of the theories of Ogbu in Nigeria, Bohannan noted that "(t)he folk systems [or cultural models] are *never* right or wrong. They exist."²²¹ But that does not mean situations that are unacceptable cannot

improve. Are we so afraid of asking each other for help that we let our children slip and fall into an educational abyss? We must begin to use our WD-40 liberally and build bridges tirelessly. It is the job of educators to think creatively about problems. Dewey showed us the way and we know that small, dedicated schools work. Society is reluctant to pay, and it borders on the criminal. Habermas wrote that:

If one takes a cross national perspective, one discovers that certain societies are adapting far more successfully to the requirements of the information age than others. Moreover, the societies that appear to be adapting most successfully are those that have historically placed a very high value on learning, and regard it as a lifelong process. Not coincidentally, they are also societies that invest heavily in mothers and children, that have a highly educated work force, and whose social institutions ensure that learning takes place across all social classes, and across the full life span.²²²

American children deserve better. The world does not have the luxury to ponder our dilemmas much longer as we did in Mann or Dewey's day. The pressures on the planet's resources alone will require the best minds from all countries to solve. War, sickness, injustice and poverty will be exacerbated by loss of clean water and land. We have created these messes and leave it to the children to fix, yet we won't commit to educating them to do so. We will need all people in the world to cooperate, even from the smallest, most 'Micro' places in the world. The Ponapeans have an expression, *engin kehlap*, which translates as "the power of collective souls" or, "the spirit of our ancestors is in us". I find it interesting to note that when looking at Micronesia, the colonizers who named the area saw only small islands. The Micronesians, however, saw a vast rich sea. It is all a matter of perspective. Do we push off from the safety of known shores as the ancestors of present day Micronesians once did to explore the unknown? This is the challenge facing educators in Hawai'i today. *Imua!*

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