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## CHAPTER 2

# THE OTHER OTHER

## Micronesians in a Hawai'i High School<sup>1</sup>

Steven Talmy

### ABSTRACT

This paper describes how a group of Micronesian students is faring at one Hawai'i high school. It argues that their position in the school as "the other Other" derives from educators' and mostly East and Southeast Asian classmates' lack of understanding about the area. Following a brief discussion of US policy regarding Micronesia, and formal education in the region, students' general struggles with the high school curriculum and instruction are described. Micronesian students' relationships with their teachers and classmates is also considered. The paper concludes with recommendations that educators might employ in an effort to effectively work with this population.

### INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, public schools in the United States have seen dramatic increases in the number of English as a second language (ESL) learners in their classrooms. In the academic year 1999-2000, 4.4 million kindergarten-12th grade (K-12) public school students were classified as "limited English proficient" (LEP) (Kindler, 2002). In the state of Hawai'i, the

*Asian and Pacific American Education: Learning, Socialization, and Identity*, 19-49  
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number of LEP students has increased 108% since 1989 to nearly 16,000 students, approximately 9% of the 2002-2003 public school enrollment (Office of the Superintendent, 2003). In Hawai'i, most LEP students are of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. Since the late 1990s, one of the fastest growing LEP sub-populations has been children from Micronesia (Clarke, 1999; Heine, 2002).

Unfortunately, there is little published research concerning Micronesian students who are enrolled in the U.S. compulsory public education system. This means that schools will likely continue to struggle in their efforts to accommodate these students, that educators will continue to misunderstand them, and that the students themselves will continue to endure difficulties such as those detailed below.

This paper is intended to contribute to the scant literature on Micronesian students in U.S. schools by describing how a sizeable Micronesian population is faring at Tradewinds High School,<sup>2</sup> a public high school in Hawai'i. These data are drawn from over 600 hours of observation in 15 different classrooms at Tradewinds, 150 hours of recorded classroom interaction, several dozen formal and informal interviews with teachers and students, plus the collection of site documents from a two and a half year critical ethnography in the high school's ESL program. I state at the outset that the larger study this paper is drawn from is concerned with the cultural production of ESL at Tradewinds, not with Micronesian students, specifically; this paper has not been conceived as, nor is it intended to be, some sort of "definitive" overview of Micronesian formal education or Micronesian students (if this were even possible). Rather, it is an account of how one group of students is doing at one high school at a specific time and place. A significant tension in a paper such as this is that although more reports are needed for teachers charged with the education of this particular student population, there is an ever-present risk of formulating an essentialist, Orientalizing discourse (Said, 1978) about them. Thus, while this paper is intended to provide insights that will contribute to more effective educational approaches for Micronesian students (and perhaps other similarly marginalized Asian and Pacific Islander groups) in U.S. schools, these insights are locally derived, not universal, and pertain to the circumstances of students at one Hawai'i high school in the early twenty-first century.

The paper is organized as follows: first, I present some information about U.S. policy concerning Micronesia and a brief history of formal education there. I then describe some of the "routes" Micronesian students may take before reaching a school such as Tradewinds. Following this, I detail the status of Micronesians as what I am calling "the other Other" in the high school ESL program, examining in particular curriculum and instruction, Micronesian students' general academic perfor-

mance, as well as relations between them and their teachers and mostly East and Southeast Asian classmates. I conclude with some recommendations that may lead to more effective curriculum and pedagogical practice for Micronesian students in U.S. schools.

## ROOTS AND ROUTES OF MIGRATION FROM COLONIAL MICRONESIA

Few educators, administrators, or non-Micronesian students at Tradewinds appeared to have much understanding of the reasons concerning the arrival of Micronesian students into the high school's classrooms, many of which derive from the U.S.'s neocolonial relationship with Micronesia. This lack of understanding resulted in uninformed "explanations" regarding Micronesians' motives and goals for coming to Hawai'i, which ranged from the blithely superficial to the patently racist. In this section, I provide a thumbnail sketch of some of this background information, dealing in particular with the Compacts of Free Association, a set of policies that has profoundly shaped present-day circumstances in Micronesia, as well as governed the movement of Micronesians to the U.S. I follow this discussion with a brief history of formal schooling in the region, before providing an idea of contemporary educational circumstances there.

### The Compacts of Free Association

The Compacts of Free Association are a set of treaties "of mutually beneficial strategic alliances" (Heine, 2002, p. 4) the U.S. has with three countries in Micronesia (the former strategic Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands): the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Republic of Palau (ROP), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), which is comprised of four island states: Chuuk (formerly Truk), Pohnpei (formerly Ponape), Kosrae, and Yap.<sup>3</sup> By virtue of their agreements with the U.S., RMI, ROP, and FSM are also called the Freely Associated States (FAS). Essentially, the Compacts permit the U.S. to maintain a substantial military presence in the FAS; in return, the FAS receives financial and other forms of assistance. Citizens of the FAS are allowed visa-free entry into the U.S. and its territories, where they are classified as "eligible non-citizens" and so may live and work as any "resident alien" (Heine, 2002). Many citizens of the FAS have thus come to Hawai'i seeking improved educational opportunity, employment, and health care (see, e.g., Levin, 1999). Smith, Türk Smith, & Twaddle (1998) note that the reception of FAS citizens in

Guam, where many have also migrated, has been chilly as local Chamorros perceive them as competing for scarce jobs and overburdening an already fragile infrastructure. The reception has been similar in Hawai'i, with reports in local media describing overwhelmed schools and health care facilities, and budgets stretched thin by additional outlays for education, health, and social services. In fact, to offset such costs, the 2003 renegotiation of the Compacts with FSM and RMI included a provision for \$30 million in annual "Compact impact aid" for Hawai'i, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa (Pacific Islands Report, 2003), which will go a long way to counterbalance the reported \$100 million that Hawai'i alone spent on services for Micronesians between 1999-2003 (Viotti, 2003a, 2003b).

Apparently forgotten amidst the alarmist concerns about the burdens Micronesians place on U.S. localities is that the U.S. has fostered the conditions for Micronesian immigration in the first place. This is not only in terms of the provision in the Compacts for Micronesian immigration, of course, but the U.S.'s long tenure in the FAS, which has led to environmental devastation—the *Pikinni* and *newtak* atolls in the Marshall Islands, for example, were the site of 67 atomic and thermonuclear weapons tests by the U.S. between 1946-1958—and what Petersen (1989) calls "crushing" economic and political dependency (also see Hanlon, 1998; Underwood, 2003).

If there was some hope that the renewal of the Compacts with FSM and RMI in 2003 (called "Compact II," the provisions for which extend to 2023) might alleviate dependency, it diminished once negotiations were complete. Robert A. Underwood, a former U.S. congressman representing Guam, recently questioned US commitment to promoting Micronesian economic and political self-sufficiency, proclaiming that the renegotiated Compacts are in fact "less free" and "more compact" than their predecessors (Underwood, 2003). He suggests this is due to renewed US interest in the region following the attacks of September 11, 2001. The intense concern about "homeland security" has, in the words of a recent briefing paper about the Compacts, essentially extended the U.S. "defense perimeter" to the island boundaries of the FAS themselves, making "the entire North Central Pacific Ocean . . . a buffer zone for the U.S." (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, 2003). As Bickel (2002, p. 3) concludes: due to the Compacts, "the economies of Micronesia's island nations are likely to decline further. This decline is likely to increase the numbers of Micronesians [living in the U.S.]."

For Hawai'i public schools, the Compacts have meant a steep rise in the number of Micronesian enrollments in recent years. This has important implications for schools because of the challenges many of these students represent to Hawai'i educators. Most are considered to be LEP<sup>4</sup>; in

addition, some also have "interpreted formal education," that is, "little or no formal education... little or no literacy in their native language, and ...limited academic content knowledge" (Mace-Matluck, Alexander-Kasparik, & Queen, 1998, p. 12).<sup>5</sup> In one Hawai'i district in 2001, for example, 30% of Micronesian students were considered "non-English proficient," 65% "limited English proficient," and 5% "fully-English proficient." Eighty-three percent of these students qualified for free or reduced price lunch, an indicator of poverty commonly used by schools, 28% were not in "age appropriate" grade levels, 38% were failing at least one core content course, and 9% were placed in special education (Heines, 2002).<sup>6</sup>

### Formal Schooling in Micronesia

Thomas (1984) provides some helpful background context in his discussion of formal education in Micronesia. The first formal public schools were established in Micronesia in 1915, just after the Japanese assumed control of the islands. Prior to that, the only formal schools were run by missionaries, with instruction conducted in local languages. Schools closed during World War II, after which the U.S. Navy introduced a new school system for the newly formed U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. From 1945-1962, Micronesian public education consisted of an expanding number of elementary and intermediate schools, and one senior high school, in addition to an increasing number of private mission schools. The medium of instruction was the first language (L1) in the early grades, and English, which was a second language (L2), in the upper grades (Thomas, 1984).

The year 1962 was crucial for public education in Micronesia, and more generally for the U.S. "trusteeship" of the area: a report by a United Nations Visiting Mission critically concluded "that the United States must end its neglect [of the islands] and undertake greater efforts to prepare Micronesia for self-government" (Hanlon, 1998, p. 91). In terms of education, this meant expanded secondary education and a new policy in which L2 English was to be the medium of instruction at all levels of education. As Thomas (1984) and Spencer (1992) enumerate, it also meant more teacher training, Micronesia-specific curriculum and materials development, and a bilingual education initiative headquartered at the University of Hawai'i that developed L1 instructional materials for several of the major Micronesian languages (see Gibson, 1980; Pacific Area Languages Materials Development Center, 1978, 1999).<sup>7</sup>

According to Heine (2002, p. 10), despite current medium of instruction policies that mandate use of English (L2) for all grade-levels, "[i]n reality . . . most teachers [in the FAS] are not comfortable using English in

the upper grades, so end up using their first language [L1] as the medium of instruction" (also see Brown, Hammond, & Onikama, 1997; Spencer, 1992). Heine (2002) also notes that teaching English is "hampered" since teachers rarely have backgrounds in teaching English as a second language (ESL), and curriculum and materials are sorely lacking (also see Gibson, 1980; Spencer, 1992; Yunick, 2000). Gibson (1980) has argued that a primary reason why English education has not been more effective in Micronesia is because students' first languages (L1s) have not been utilized successfully. He notes certain "barriers" to utilizing students' first languages, including non-uniform orthographies (cf. Rehg, 2004), few bilingual dictionaries or first language reading materials, denigration of students' (and teachers') first languages, lack of Micronesian language specialists trained in bilingual education, and limited finances. While the Pacific Area Language Materials Development Center worked to alleviate the shortage of L1 materials, scarcity remains. As well, the lack of bilingual education teacher training, the denigration of the L1, and a disproportionate emphasis on English (L2) both in terms of materials and educational budgets continue today (cf. Heine, 2002; Spencer, 1992; Yunick, 2000).

Hezel (2002) provides additional, more contemporary, and frankly discouraging information about formal schooling in the FAS. Some noteworthy points are summarized in the following tables: they include school retention rates (Table 2.1), educational attainment in the FAS (Table 2.2); and FSM per-pupil expenditures (Table 2.3). As a basis for comparison, I have included corresponding information for the U.S. where possible.

While numbers such as these tell only a fraction of the story, they do broadly suggest on the one hand why the number of Micronesian students coming to Hawai'i is increasing in the first place, and on the other, why

**Table 2.1. School Retention Rates for FAS and USA**

| Country/State                | Number of Students – Grade 1 | Number of Students – Grade 12 |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| FSM - Chuuk <sup>a</sup>     | 100                          | 15                            |
| FSM - Kosrae <sup>a</sup>    | 100                          | 61                            |
| FSM - Pohnpei <sup>a</sup>   | 100                          | 28                            |
| FSM - Yap <sup>a</sup>       | 100                          | 35                            |
| RMI <sup>a</sup>             | 100                          | 28                            |
| ROP <sup>a</sup>             | 100                          | 50                            |
| USA (2001-2002) <sup>b</sup> | 100                          | 73                            |

Source: <sup>a</sup>Hezel (2002, p. 23)

<sup>b</sup>National Center for Education Statistics (2003, p. 39)

**Table 2.2. Educational Attainment of the General Population in FAS and USA (age 25+)**

| Country                 | Finished Elementary School | Finished High School | Finished College |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| FSM (1994) <sup>a</sup> | 60%                        | 36%                  | 5%               |
| RMI (1999) <sup>a</sup> | 85%                        | 39%                  | 4%               |
| ROP (1995) <sup>a</sup> | 79%                        | 64%                  | 10%              |
| USA (2001) <sup>b</sup> | 98.4%                      | 84%                  | 26%              |

Source: <sup>a</sup>Hezel (2002, p. 23)

<sup>b</sup>National Center for Education Statistics (2003, p. 45)

**Table 2.3. Per-Pupil Expenditures (Public Elementary SCHOOL), FSM and USA**

| State                             | Per-Pupil Average (Elementary) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| FSM - Chuuk (1993) <sup>a</sup>   | \$421                          |
| FSM - Kosrae (1993) <sup>a</sup>  | \$910                          |
| FSM - Pohnpei (1993) <sup>a</sup> | \$913                          |
| FSM - Yap (1993) <sup>a</sup>     | \$888                          |
| USA (1996-1997) <sup>c</sup>      | \$5,718                        |

Source: <sup>a</sup>Hezel (2002, p. 11)

<sup>c</sup>National Center for Education Statistics (2001, p. 96)

some are considered to have interrupted formal educations. School retention throughout the FAS is, with the exception of Kosrae, exceptionally low, as is formal educational attainment in the general population. Spending on education, which is funded primarily through the Compacts, is meager as well, particularly in Chuuk. In addition to considerations such as these, many FAS students come from families living in poverty, and those who come to Hawai'i may be living away from their immediate families for the first time. Thus, the multiple social, cultural, and linguistic transitions that Micronesian students undergo as they adjust to schooling in the U.S. are frequently daunting (Brown et al., 1997; Clark, 1999; Heine, 2002; Pacific Center, 2000; William & Prasad, 1992).

This is not to suggest that all Micronesian students in Hawai'i have similar educational experiences or backgrounds (cf. Heine, 2002; Hezel, 2002; Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, n.d.-a), or even that all have gone to school in the FAS. In fact, the description above in many ways masks a greater set of differences, at least among the Micronesian students at Tradewinds, that ultimately made generalizations about their

educational backgrounds and preparation difficult; these differences also worked to confound assumptions that teachers at the high school may have formed about them. Just as there are notable differences in formal educational systems in individual countries of the FAS (Brown et al., 1997; Hezel, 2002; Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, n.d.-a; Spencer, 1992; Thomas, 1984), there are those students who attend public schools and those that attend private schools, with the latter more rigorous than the former (Hezel, 2002). There are students from out-lying islands, where formal education has been described in some places as something close to "optional," and where schools are reported to lack basic materials (Heine, 2002; Hezel, 2002; Jenckes, 1997; Spencer, 1992), and students from urbanized areas that have better equipped, better staffed schools. There are also those students who first go to Guam or the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas to attend school before arriving in Hawai'i, and thus have more experience with U.S. educational practices and expectations than those who come from the FAS directly (Brown et al., 1997; Spencer, 1992). Therefore, a student who has attended a public school in the Marshall Islands before arriving in Hawai'i can differ considerably in terms of educational background and academic preparation from a peer who attended a Pohnpeian public school, a private school in Chuuk, who comes from an outer island, or has recently moved from Guam where s/he lived and went to school from between 1 and 8 years (Brown et al., 1997; Spencer, 1992). These differences are manifest in often significant dissimilarities in L1/L2 proficiencies, academic background knowledge, and familiarity with the cultures, practices, and expectations of U.S. schools (Heine, 2002; Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

### TRADEWINDS HIGH SCHOOL

At the time of this study, the Tradewinds High School student population, like the state of Hawai'i itself, had no single racial or ethnic majority. Local-born Chinese, Filipino, and "part Hawaiian" students comprised the largest proportions of the school enrollment, along with sizable numbers of students of Samoan, Japanese, and Korean heritage. Approximately half of the school population was receiving free or reduced-price lunch.

ESL students at Tradewinds accounted for roughly one-fifth of the total school enrollment. It was a diverse group, with more than 20 different language backgrounds represented. Students from the FAS made up a substantial proportion of the Tradewinds ESL program, with most students coming from the Marshall Islands and FSM, particularly Chuuk.

Tradewinds High School showed a strong programmatic commitment to providing ESL students with access to school curricula. In addition to dedicated ESL classes, Tradewinds offered "content-based" ESL classes in language arts, social studies, and science. The remaining core content courses, such as math and health, were "regular" classes: they served ESL and "mainstream" students together, with no English accommodations. It is important to note that ESL placements at Tradewinds were based on the length of time students had been at the school, rather than English proficiency. Thus, ESL classes there were extraordinarily heterogeneous, with students differing significantly in their first languages (L1) and English proficiencies due to varying durations of residence in the US and notable differences in prior education.

### SELECTED STUDENT PROFILES

In an effort to illustrate and humanize some of the differences in Micronesian students' backgrounds described earlier, I include here profiles of a few of the Micronesian students I had the opportunity to meet during my time at Tradewinds. These are not intended to be archetypes, but simply to suggest the diversity that the label "Micronesian" can frequently obscure.

When Mochenia<sup>8</sup> began her participation in this study, she was 14 years old and had just started the 9th grade. She had moved from Chuuk a year earlier and spent the 8th grade in an intermediate school in Hawai'i. Prior to that, she had been enrolled in a parochial school in Chuuk from 1st through 7th grades. However, she said, her grades had declined following her father's death and she had been unable to continue school there; thus, her mother had arranged for them both to come to Hawai'i so that Mochenia could continue her schooling. Mochenia stated that she missed Chuuk very much, particularly her extended family, and hoped to return as soon as school in Hawai'i was finished. However, she said she enjoyed Tradewinds because there were many Chuukese students there whom she had befriended, especially in her ESL class.

Despite the fact that the medium of instruction at her school in Chuuk, like all private schools in Micronesia, had been English, Mochenia frequently struggled with the reading and writing work in the ESL class where I observed her in. Indeed, academic L2 English print-literacy was a significant problem for nearly all of the Micronesian students who participated in my research, regardless of where they came from, or if they had attended private or public school in Micronesia. It was particularly acute for students who had recently arrived from the FAS and/or had interrupted formal educations. This is consistent with Spencer's (1992) find-

ings in her study of L2 English print-literacy in Micronesia, where after 7 years of formal schooling, students from RMI, ROP, and FSM in her research read and wrote at the 2nd grade level.<sup>9</sup>

Joyleen, a 15 year-old 10th grader who was in the same ESL class as Mochenia, was also from Chuuk, but unlike Mochenia, had stayed in private school there only until the 2nd grade. For grades 3-9, Joyleen had gone to public school in Guam. Her English proficiency was thus very strong, and she was clearly familiar with the expectations and practices of US schooling. Joyleen admitted that she did not miss Chuuk much, since she had not lived there for a long time, and claimed with a halting laugh that she had "no idea" when asked where she felt "home" was. She also noted that her L1 Chuukese was not as developed as she wanted it to be, and that she was often teased by her family and Chuukese-speaking friends about it. Although Joyleen stated that Tradewinds was more difficult than the high school she attended in Guam—she maintained that subjects taught in the 9th grade in Guam were taught in the 6th or 7th grade in Hawai'i—she did comparatively well at Tradewinds, at least in terms of grades (with the exception of math class), particularly at the beginning of the year.

Laidplayer, a 14 year-old 9th grader from Palau who had attended a private mission school there, was in the same ESL class as Mochenia and Joyleen, but sat well away from them, and rarely interacted with them or the other Chuukese students in the class. In sharp contrast to the other Micronesian students at Tradewinds, Laidplayer claimed that he seldom spoke with the other Palauan students at Tradewinds, and never spoke his L1, claiming that it felt "really weird" to do so. In an interview with me, Mochenia noted that Laidplayer did not "hang out with us," and when asked why she thought that was, replied, "I don't know. Maybe he don't want to be Micronesian. But he is." Indeed, of all the students from the FAS who participated in this study, Laidplayer was the one who most clearly downplayed his Micronesian heritage and who actively cultivated associations with other, non-Micronesian students, particularly with Locals,<sup>10</sup> and the long-term, U.S.-resident, or "generation 1.5" (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) ESL students. Laidplayer was highly proficient in spoken and written English, as well as Pidgin (or Hawai'i Creole),<sup>11</sup> and spoke both with no phonological features that might mark him as "foreign." When I first met him, I was astonished to learn he had only lived in the U.S. for one month, not only because of his English proficiency, but also his hip-hop style and dress, which indexed a Local identity much different from many of his Micronesian peers. As I came to learn, Laidplayer had extended family living in Hawai'i, with whom he had a strong connection.

Mack Daddy, also a 14 year-old 9th grader, moved from Chuuk, where he attended public school, to Hawai'i when he was 9 years old. He was bright and charming, and was well-known, if not well-liked, by all of his ESL classmates. Having lived and gone to school in Hawai'i for 5 years, Mack Daddy's English was strong. Although he was obviously familiar with the expectations and practices of school in the U.S., he tended to resist them, and was failing in all of his classes. When I questioned him about this, he noted that although he very much wanted to go to college, his present priority was to join a gang. He spoke with great enthusiasm about this, even though he expressed an understanding that being a gang member would likely interfere with his long-term goals.

Mary, a 17 year-old 10th grader from the Marshall Islands, had been in the U.S. for a year when I met her. She was quiet, rarely volunteering an answer even if called upon, and preferred to sit and work with her three Marshallese girlfriends in her ESL class. Mary and her friends remained well behind their classmates in terms of coursework, and other students often refused to work with them because of this, and perhaps other unspoken reasons. Mary ultimately dropped out of Tradewinds, for reasons I never learned of, and finally returned to the Marshalls.

Mona and Nell were two 17 year-old 9th graders who came from different outer islands of Chuuk. Both were at very early stages of L2 English proficiency, were unable to read or write much in their L1s, and had sporadically attended public school in Chuuk. Their circumstances were similar to a number of other Micronesian students at Tradewinds, both Chuukese and non-Chuukese, whose formal educations were interrupted and/or who had dropped out of school in Micronesia: they had come to Hawai'i because there were few educational and employment prospects for them in Micronesia.<sup>12</sup> Both girls struggled mightily in all of their Tradewinds classes. Unfortunately, any aspirations they may have held of graduating from a U.S. high school ended when they were both preemptively "released" from Tradewinds because they would not have the necessary credits to graduate by age 18. Many ESL students, particularly Micronesians, were similarly released at Tradewinds, and directed to "alternative education" programs where they could get job training and a chance at a GED.

#### THE OTHER OTHER: MICRONESIANS IN THE TRADEWINDS ESL PROGRAM

As I have described elsewhere (Talmy, 2004), ESL was stigmatized at Tradewinds, as it is in many US high schools (see Harklau, 1994; McKay & Wong, 1996), and was widely considered a remedial, dumbed down

program, on par with the equally devalued Special Education program. Students who were institutionally categorized as "ESL" were consistently positioned by an array of institutional policies, school curricula and instructional practices, by students and teachers in the "mainstream," and by ESL students themselves, as a monolithic cultural and linguistic Other. For a complex set of reasons, many of which derive from "linguicism" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), the same sorts of positionings and representations that were made about ESL in the wider school context, were also made *within* the ESL program itself. In this case, however, it was usually Micronesians who were cast as Other, usually by "generation 1.5" classmates as they attempted to differentiate themselves (cf. Barker & Galasinski, 2001; Barth, 1969) from lower English proficient and/or newcomer ESL students, and align themselves with students in the mainstream; thus, the uniquely stigmatized status of Micronesians as what I suggest was "the other Other" at the high school.

### Curriculum, Instruction, and Academic Performance

Although it is important to keep in mind disparities in background such as those outlined earlier, many Micronesian students at Tradewinds found themselves on the margins in ESL, content-based ESL, and mainstream classes at Tradewinds, where curricula were (quite understandably) based on a tacit set of normative assumptions about students' formal educational backgrounds and learning histories: in mainstream classes, that students had been in US schools throughout their educations and had a more or less uniform knowledge base on which to draw, and in ESL classes, that students had had continuous formal schooling and were generally print-literate in and had a metalinguistic understanding of their L1s. These assumptions were variously realized in class curricula and instruction; of interest here are assumptions about students' academic preparation and background knowledge, and L1 and L2 learning.

Normative assumptions about students' academic background knowledge and educational experience perhaps spelled the most trouble for Micronesian students at Tradewinds. This was particularly true in the core content areas such as math, science, and social studies where even the most basic classes included or were based on concepts that many of the Micronesian students—even those who had been successful in school in Micronesia—had simply not yet learned. Students in ESL social studies classes, for example, had some difficulty with fundamental political, economic, historical, religious, and geographic abstractions that were central to these courses, let alone the readings, lectures, worksheets, and projects that were based on them. This was a problem exacerbated by the lack of

such basic, Micronesia-specific materials as bilingual dictionaries. In contrast to many of the non-Micronesian students who had personal electronic or paperback bilingual dictionaries—or if they did not have them, had access to them in some of the ESL classes—Micronesian students had none. Bilingual dictionaries are available in several Micronesian languages,<sup>13</sup> but are generally hard to find or are prohibitively expensive. In addition, a number of Micronesian students had difficulties using the monolingual English dictionaries that were available in some classes because they had not been instructed in how to use them, basic skills that students were assumed to have already acquired.

The situation was more grim in the ESL science classes, which used difficult, non-ESL texts, as well as lectures, labs, and a raft of worksheets, quizzes, and tests for the instruction of complex scientific concepts and terminology: in the Life Sciences classes I observed, these ranged from antigens to alveoli, meiosis to mitochondria, protists to peristalsis. Micronesian students had trouble with these concepts as the lessons, activities, and textbook were evidently based on the presumption that students had, in previous years of schooling, already learned basic facts (and the often overwhelming amount of associated vocabulary) about cell biology, anatomy, nutrition, and the like. Matters were made worse by large class sizes, which prevented instructors from providing the sort of individualized instruction many students needed; teachers' minimal attempts to "differentiate" instruction (e.g., Gregory & Chapman, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999); the relative lack of instructional aides, particularly those who were bilingual in any one of the Micronesian students' languages; and the pacing of these courses, as instructors attempted to cover their state-mandated content and performance standards. Further, for a host of reasons, content was clearly prioritized over language learning in all of the content-based ESL classes I observed: rarely was L2 (English language) instruction incorporated into content lessons, and when it was, it generally was for a few moments, in order to discuss an important vocabulary word. Although I did not observe any math classes at Tradewinds, students reported that the situation in them was similar to that of the ESL science courses.

Some teachers appeared unconcerned about the difficulties that Micronesian students encountered with curricula and classroom instruction. Others were aware of the challenges they faced, even if, at the same time, they acknowledged that there were few additional accommodations they could provide to facilitate learning. As one ESL science teacher noted in reference to Micronesian students' struggles in his class, the demands of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) limited his ability to take more time to help them. He concluded in exasperation: "You want a child with a 3rd grade education coming into high school to pass these [NCLB-mandated

standardized] tests when they can't even read or write well in their own language let alone ours?"

All of the teachers of the content-based ESL classes I observed decried the pressures brought on by NCLB. They claimed that the demands of "covering" material to satisfy standards prevented them from taking the time necessary to actually "teach" it, including some of the more fundamental ideas on which lessons were based (cf. McNeil, 2000).

Micronesian students, for their part, grew understandably frustrated with curricula that many found incomprehensible, and instruction that did not accommodate their needs. For example, I-Ness, a 17 year-old 10th grader from Chuuk, protested that her science and math teachers

just want us to get A. But they didn't give us, like, how to, how to [solve] the problem. They didn't help us to learn. They just make the problem, give us, they didn't explain it. The people from Micronesia, if they ask a question, those teachers ignore them. They just want us to get A, but they didn't give us, like, learning to help us.

I-Ness's comments serve to elaborate teachers' complaints that they did not have time to teach some of the more fundamental concepts that students needed to learn. She points out that the lack of scaffolded instruction in her classes, and teachers' general reluctance to answer "basic" questions, prevented her from completing assignments, or, more to the point, from understanding what they were about. That these were issues for I-Ness, who had gone to a well-regarded parochial school in Chuuk and was considered by teachers to be conscientious and hard-working, suggests that students who had attended schools with fewer resources would struggle as well.

To give a general idea of how Micronesian students struggled in some of the core content classes at Tradewinds, I provide in Table 2.4 the following Spring 2003 semester grades of students for whom I have these data.<sup>14</sup> Although it is clearly foolhardy to draw too many conclusions about students' academic performance, or their struggles with curriculum, from grades alone (particularly with so few students), they do in this instance offer a sobering glimpse into how some Micronesians were faring academically at Tradewinds during the time of my research. As well, grades contributed to teachers' and other students' beliefs about and treatment of Micronesian students (cf. Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Tauber, 1997; Weinstein, 2002), as well as their own academic self-perceptions (Pajares, 1996), and had significant bearing on their educational trajectories at and beyond high school. The ESL grades come from first- and second-year dedicated ESL classes; the content-based ESL language arts, science and social studies grades come from first- and second-year

**Table 2.4. Spring 2003 Semester Grades (A-F) for Micronesian Students in Selected Classes at Tradewinds High School (N = 25)**

|                    | <i>A-C</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>F</i> |
|--------------------|------------|----------|----------|
| ESL                | 32%        | 28%      | 40%      |
| ESL Language Arts  | 24%        | 44%      | 32%      |
| ESL Social Studies | 12%        | 36%      | 52%      |
| ESL Science        | 4%         | 8%       | 88%      |
| Math               | 4%         | 4%       | 92%      |

courses. The math grades mainly come from one of two of the lowest math classes offered at Tradewinds.

As the numbers indicate, these 25 students' grades in the ESL social studies, ESL science, and math classes were considerably lower than they were in the dedicated ESL and ESL language arts classes, with more than half failing social studies and nearly all failing science and math. Clearly, factors such as low English proficiency, absenteeism, any one (or more) of a host of difficulties adjusting to Hawai'i and/or Tradewinds, differences in teaching styles, grading, student resistance, and more account to a considerable extent for these low grades, in addition to the likely mismatch between teachers' perceptions and the realities of students' academic backgrounds and experiences.

As the grades in Table 2.4 hint at, even in the ESL classes, curricula appeared more suited for students with different educational backgrounds and needs than that of many of the Micronesian students. Although there was considerable latitude in terms of ESL curricula (in contrast to the content-based ESL and mainstream courses), classes generally revolved around the reading of children's books, with associated vocabulary, occasional grammar, and short writing assignments that involved summarizing and answering comprehension questions.<sup>15</sup> That is, ESL curricula were geared for students who were already able to read with some facility, who could compose at the sentence- and paragraph-level, who had basic metalinguistic awareness, and who did not need more fundamental work with print-literacy and numeracy in their L1s or in English. Also, because classes were generally large, with students of multiple English proficiency levels, instruction tended to be oriented toward the intermediate and advanced L2 students, who voiced their needs, questions, and comments far more frequently than the lower L2 proficient students. Micronesian students such as Laidplayer and Joyleen were able to function comparatively well in this sort of environment and with this sort of work; however, those like Mona, Nell, and to a certain extent, I-Ness and Mochenia, were disadvantaged by it.

Although students were generally all given the same assignments in their ESL classes, regardless of their English proficiency, a few ESL teachers I observed attempted to provide some form of instructional accommodation for the Micronesian students. The most extensive accommodations were provided in one ESL class, where the teacher provided her lower L2 proficient Micronesian students with occasional "supplementary" assignments in basic English. These included worksheets on the English alphabet, days of the week, and telling time. However, this particular accommodation was notably ad hoc and ultimately unsuccessful; as the teacher herself admitted, she lacked the training, as well as the necessary materials and classroom aides to deal with these students' instruction in any sort of consistent, principled way. Thus, these assignments left the impression of being "busy-work" activities, given less for their pedagogical efficacy and more so that the teacher could be freed up to work with the rest of the class. As she commented after two of her Micronesian students dropped out of the high school:

I felt so at a loss with them. I would spend time with them, little chunks of time whenever I could and it was so incredibly low level and also I would have [other Micronesian] students working with them. And you know I feel bad, I feel bad that they dropped out. I can see the students at that level sooner or later, I can totally see why they do. 'Cause they're not getting enough help. And, you know, I wasn't ready for them, I guess.

A frequent accommodation that ESL and content-based ESL teachers employed for Micronesian students was the use of peer tutors and language brokers to facilitate instruction. Teachers would recruit classmates from the same language backgrounds who were more proficient in English to help those with lower English proficiency, a successful strategy that has been employed in (ESL) classes for decades. However, that teachers relied so heavily on peer tutors and language brokers meant that all too often, *all* of the Micronesian students in a class would be grouped together, off in a corner, alternately doing classwork, but more usually, chatting (in their first languages) and hanging out.<sup>16</sup> Thus, this particular accommodation led to a subtle and inadvertent form of intra-class segregation, which effectively removed Micronesian students from participation in the day-to-day goings-on of the ESL classes and denied them, and in particular, the peer tutors, opportunities to work and interact with other students.<sup>17</sup> Even if this strategy did provide these students with a relaxed, familiar space in which they could socialize and speak in their L1s, it undermined the broader effort of content and L2 learning.

Although the focus of this chapter is on Micronesian students at Tradewinds, it is important to point out that Micronesians were not the only ones who struggled in ESL, content-based ESL, and mainstream

classes: many others, particularly those from rural areas of China and Southeast Asia, also had difficulty. However, as groups, none fared as poorly, at least in terms of their grades, as Micronesians. In Figure 2.1, I provide some indication of this in a comparison of Tradewinds ESL students' grade point averages (GPA), based on a 4.0 scale, from the academic year 2002-2003.

As Figure 2.1 indicates, there is a significant difference in GPA depending on students' L1 background ( $F = 19.417$ ,  $df = 3, 149$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). A Tamhane post-hoc test confirmed that all groups indeed had significantly higher GPAs than the Pacific Islander group.

Curriculum and instruction in the Tradewinds ESL and content-based ESL classes appeared to be intended for an altogether different kind of ESL student than that presented by many of the Micronesians. Content-based ESL classes were evidently based on the supposition that ESL students had had prior educational experiences and academic preparation similar to their counterparts in mainstream classes, only not in English. Curricula for the dedicated ESL classes seemed to assume that students had already had substantial experiences with print-literacy as well as a metalinguistic awareness of their L1s. Although these assumptions held for some Micronesian students, they did not for many others.

## Relations Among Teachers and Students

In addition to overall struggles with curriculum and instruction at Tradewinds, another and more immediate facet of Micronesians' experiences at the high school involved their relationships with teachers and non-Micronesian students. In this section I briefly describe both.

What was most striking about teachers' interaction with Micronesian students at Tradewinds was how little they knew about Micronesia, and by extension, about their students from Micronesia. Even in the ESL classes, where Micronesians often comprised upwards of one third of the students, teachers clearly lacked understanding not only of the different cultures, customs, languages, and educational systems of Micronesia, but even of the countries that make up the geographical area. Teachers routinely confused Marshallese with Chuukese, Palauans with Pohnpeians, and appeared not to realize that students from these countries spoke different first languages (L1s). This problem was no doubt exacerbated by the majority of students from the FAS who self-identified simply as "Micronesian." Because teachers knew so little about where these students came from, what sorts of schooling they had had, the circumstances concerning their arrival to Hawai'i, and so forth, they were unable to teach them as effectively, and even routine, personal interaction with them was compro-

mised. In an effort to contend with teachers' general lack of knowledge about Micronesian students, the Hawai'i Department of Education has in recent years sponsored a series of professional development seminars on Micronesia and Micronesian education.

Although rarely articulated in front of students themselves, there was a larger, deficit-oriented discourse among teachers at Tradewinds about Micronesian students. Many of the teachers I spoke with bemoaned the high failure rates of these students, their frequent absenteeism, and certain behaviors such as spitting and chewing betel nut that were at odds with expectations for acceptable classroom behavior. Teachers tended to locate the causes for students' low academic performance and "strange" school behavior squarely in the students themselves, implicating low motivation, lack of intelligence, cultural and linguistic deprivation, drug use, a desire to go on welfare, and in one instance, the lingering effects of nuclear weapons tests in the Marshall Islands (see Valencia, 1997, for incisive discussions of such deficit thinking). Rarely did teachers express alternative explanations, such as differences between their normative assumptions and actual realities of students' prior educational experience and preparation, or inadequate institutional understanding about or support for the unique needs of these students. As well, as some of the few available resources on Micronesian education suggest, there may have been additional, culturally-based differences that came into play, including divergent norms for suitable school behavior, different valuations of formal education (Heine, 2002; Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, n.d.-b), and a reluctance to conform to certain practices expected of U.S. school students.<sup>18</sup> Regardless, teachers' notably negative beliefs about Micronesian students evoke research findings concerning how "teachers' ideologies" (Bartolomé & Trueba, 2000) about students can powerfully influence curriculum and instruction intended for them (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Dusek, 1985; Tauber, 1997; Weinstein, 2002).

Although on occasion some Micronesian and non-Micronesian students would work together in class, generally the two groups had little to do with one another. Relations were usually peaceful, if not civil, though there were hints of deeper tensions: similar to what Bickel (2002) has reported, there was a racist "status order" evident among students in the Tradewinds ESL program, with "[s]tudents from East Asia often look[ing] down upon Micronesians" (p. 2).<sup>19</sup> Discrimination was generally covert, but did have an impact in the classroom, primarily in students from either group refusing to work (or in several instances, play classroom games) with each other. These underlying tensions, then, short-circuited attempts at alternative grouping arrangements, for example, of grouping non-Micronesians and Micronesians by their English proficiency within the same class, a strategy that several of the ESL and content-based ESL teachers tried but ulti-

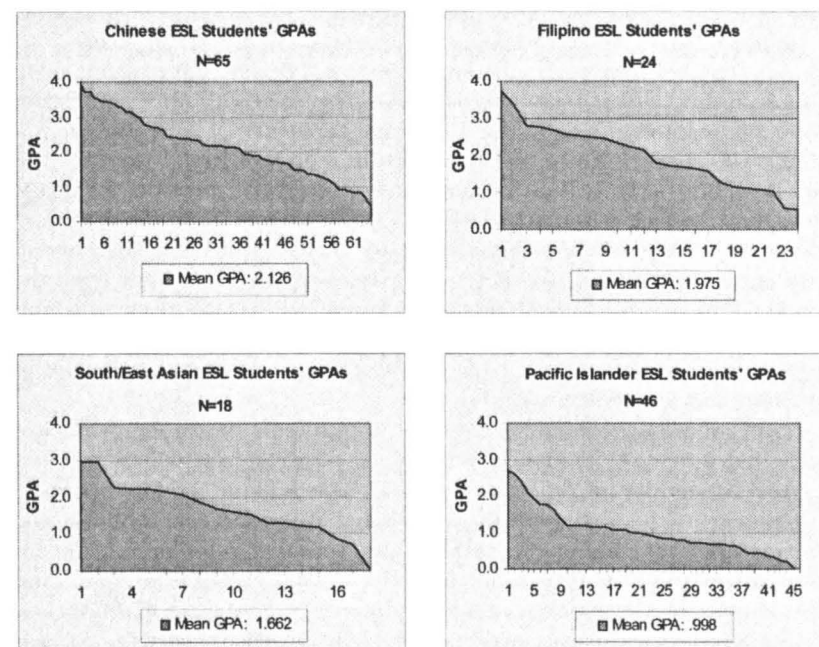


Figure 2.1. Comparison of Tradewinds ESL students' GPAs for Academic Year 2002-2003

mately failed at implementing. Thus, students' racism contributed to the sort of in-class segregation of Micronesian students described earlier.

There were also more overt expressions of non-Micronesian students' racism, mostly manifest in comments about Micronesians' appearance, intelligence, hygiene, classroom behavior, and motivations for being in the U.S. As one 9th grader from Hong Kong noted about his Micronesian classmates: "They disgust me. They spit, they dig their nose in the middle of the class, they talk so ((loud screeching voice)) wa ya wa ya! They don't do their work. They're thieves. I can't work with people like that." Said another, "They talk too much. They so loud. They don't even work. They lazy." A Taiwanese boy said he was "embarrassed" being in the same class as Micronesians, while a Korean refused to touch them because he believed they had *uku*, or lice. These comments are similar to those made by a number of teachers as well.

Several classroom practices that Micronesian students engaged in were singled out by their non-Micronesian classmates for derision. Primary among these was L1 use: while other students also spoke L1s in class, it

was not on the same scale as the Micronesian students (particularly the Chuukese), who frequently spoke throughout class, a problem likely exacerbated by their segregation from classmates. Micronesian students' hallway "cruising" during class time was also described with criticism: classes were often interrupted by the arrival or departure of Micronesian students who slipped out of one classroom in search of friends to talk to in another. But perhaps the practices that received the most overt ridicule and that most clearly marked Micronesian students as "different" from their ESL classmates were those that many teachers and non-Micronesian students simply found peculiar: eating Kool-Aid drink powder from the packet, applying liberal amounts of perfume during class, massaging generous amounts of moisturizing lotion onto themselves and their friends. Appearance was also a point for mockery, from clothing to hairstyles to the backpacks students carried.

Other more overt manifestations of non-Micronesian students' racism included "joking" about and teasing Micronesian classmates.<sup>20</sup> Racist "jokes" were told of "glow-in-the-dark" Marshallese; of Micronesians' intelligence: "they invented the microwave, Microsoft, microphone, the microscope"; of joining the "MMM," an apparent reference to the Ku Klux Klan; and of having secret friendships with, or worse, sexual desire for Micronesian classmates. Teasing, however, was the most public way non-Micronesian students expressed disdain for Micronesians in a classroom, perhaps because it was also the "safest," given teachers' presence, and the ever-present risk of physical retaliation. For example, in one class, Micronesians were teased during a research project concerning the flags of countries where students had been born. In contrast to the non-Micronesian students, Micronesians had difficulty locating flags from countries of the FAS in the reference materials the teacher brought in—indeed, their countries were not even included in the classroom atlas or world globe—and whether or not these places were countries, or even *existed*, became a topic that several non-Micronesian students delighted in taking up for weeks after the assignment was finished. In the same class, a 17-year-old 10th grader from Chuuk was humiliated by his classmates and teacher, at first for his low English proficiency, and subsequently for his Chuukese heritage, with references to fire-walking "savages," and the general laziness and unemployability of Micronesians (see Talmy, 2004).<sup>21</sup> Students were also teased about their L1s and L1 use, their often distinctive names, and occasionally for being "high" on betel nut in class.

For their part, Micronesian students, particularly the Chuukese, appeared on the whole to be aware of and understandably resent non-Micronesian students' negative perceptions of them, and to challenge classmates if those perceptions ever went public. Non-Micronesians' racism is one likely reason why many (though not all) Micronesians tended to

eschew inter-group interaction, preferring instead to work with classmates from the same region. Some teachers were cognizant of the underlying tensions between non-Micronesian and Micronesian students and did what they could to maintain the peace and defuse instances where a dispute loomed. As one ESL teacher commented wearily: "I'm sick of the Asian kids thinking that they're better than the Micronesian kids. I'm really tired of their whole attitude. It's deep, very deep. And I've seen it all year."

As discussed earlier, the subject category of "ESL student" at Tradewinds was positioned and represented in a multitude of ways as a cultural and linguistic Other in the high school (Talmy, 2004). The same sorts of positionings and representations that were made outside the ESL program were also made inside it, with Micronesians in this instance cast as Other, usually by "generation 1.5" ESL classmates, as they worked to align themselves with "mainstream" students and differentiate themselves from the "real" Others: Micronesians. This sort of identity work was facilitated by the unique struggles that many Micronesian students faced in dealing with a curriculum that did not take into account their educational histories and academic preparation; by the ways they were segregated from their peers in classrooms; by the marked status of certain social practices such as hallway "cruising" and eating Kool-Aid; by their appearance; and by teachers' and non-Micronesian students' ignorance and racism about them and where they were from.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have outlined the educational circumstances of a group of Micronesian students in the ESL program of one high school in Hawai'i. One problem about attempting to do this, particularly in a single book chapter, is that the nuances and complexities of those circumstances—and the abundant and unique variety of peoples' lived experiences—become elided, in many ways leaving a representation that is far too partial and one-dimensional. While I have attempted to suggest that there were as many differences *within* the Micronesian population at Tradewinds as there were between them and non-Micronesians, I realize that every time I refer to them as a single group, I undermine that.

Still, as I have also attempted to suggest, for all their differences, these students were subject, in varying ways and degrees, to social, historical, and political forces that collectively and distinctively affected them *as* Micronesians. U.S. neocolonial policy concerning the FAS, for example, has directly and indirectly contributed to the current increase of Micronesian children arriving in Hawai'i public schools. In this regard, as Micron-

esian children living and going to school in Hawai'i, these students share in a broadly common experience, identified and positioned as they are as "Micronesian students" in these schools, or as I argue occurred at Tradewinds, as "the other *Other*." Many of the representational practices that cohered around this particular subject position at Tradewinds derived from normative institutional assumptions about students' prior formal educational backgrounds and academic preparation, instructional practices that effectively excluded them from classroom participation, and teachers and non-Micronesian students who knew little about and/or were bigoted toward Micronesians. These considerations suggest why Micronesian students as a group at Tradewinds were subject to a very particular form of marginalization; they also point toward the perpetuation of social, linguistic, and educational inequalities, a bitterly ironic outcome if it indeed comes to pass, as many of these students came to Hawai'i as a result of such inequalities to begin with.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

To conclude, I would like to suggest some empirically grounded recommendations for educators at Tradewinds, and those in other schools with Micronesian student populations, in order to work toward the elimination of problems described above.

*School organization and support.* There were a host of promising modifications that the Hawai'i Department of Education and Tradewinds administrators had implemented in an effort to better accommodate ESL students at the high school, including Micronesians. These included making a range of content-based ESL classes available to these students in language arts, science, and social studies; the hiring of classroom aides, a minority of whom were bilingual in Micronesian languages; hiring a number of Micronesian support specialists who were available at the district level; and sponsoring a series of professional development seminars specifically intended to broaden understandings about Micronesia and Micronesian students. All of these have gone some distance toward leveling the academic playing field for Micronesian and non-Micronesian ESL students at Tradewinds. However, additional changes could be usefully employed in this effort. They include placing greater emphasis on incorporating L2 (English) instruction into content lessons, not just in the content-based ESL classes, but in the mainstream ones as well; adding "newcomer" sections within the school intended specifically for students with interrupted formal educations (see Short & Boyson, 2004); adding a bilingual class in students' L1s if the numbers of such students are high enough; and hiring additional classroom aides for use in the content-

based ESL and mainstream classes that have substantial numbers of ESL students (e.g., math, health). Furthermore, ESL at the program level needs to be more effectively integrated in the high school, with improved communication between ESL professionals and the many subject-area teachers of language minority students who have little background in ESL or bilingual education. Cultivating parental involvement and cooperative linkages between schools and Micronesian communities is also crucial to facilitating students' school success (Lucas, Henze, Donato, 1990; see Heine, 2002, p. 7, for suggestions on how to do this). Finally, in a point that may (or may not) be unique to Tradewinds, ESL placements need to be made based on English proficiency, rather than on the length of time students have been at the school. Barring this, strategies for differentiating instruction could be productively incorporated.

*Curriculum and instruction.* It goes without saying that educators need to rethink normative assumptions about student backgrounds that inform the design and implementation of curricula (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Mace-Matluck et al., 1998; Ruiz de Velasco & Fix, 2002; Ruiz de Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000). Increasingly, students, particularly ESL students, are arriving in secondary classrooms with different academic preparation and configurations of L1 and English proficiency and literacy abilities than are anticipated, and are falling farther and farther behind. These students are particularly disadvantaged by the compressed time frame within which they are expected to acquire content and English skills in order to graduate. There are no easy solutions, especially given the pressures of NCLB, but avenues worth exploring derive from some of the alternative literacy activities many of the Micronesian students in the Tradewinds ESL program frequently engaged in (including creating photo-collages, "slam books," poetry, word play, and so forth; see Note 9). Projects incorporating students' devalued "out-of-school" literacies—e.g., those involving music, video, photography, and computers—may also be brought into the classroom and exploited to "extend the range of the literacies with which [students] are conversant" (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 603).

An increasing number of instructional guides have been made available that provide educators with suggestions for working with Micronesian students in their classes (e.g., Heine, 2002; Pacific Center, 2000; Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, n.d.-b; William & Prasad, 1992). Although some may argue that they hint at essentialism, they contain suggestions that could prove useful; I provide a brief overview here.

At the broadest level, creating a climate of tolerance and respect for cultural and linguistic differences within classrooms is viewed as a critical component for a pedagogy that is "responsive" to the needs of Micronesian students. This means that teachers need to confront head-

on the sorts of racism directed at Micronesians described above, and to work to integrate fully these students in their classes. In addition, setting and maintaining high expectations for Micronesian students' academic performance should be considered essential (cf. Bartolomé & Trueba, 2000; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Dusek, 1985; Tauber, 1997; Weinstein, 2002), although it is equally if not more important to provide the pedagogical means to help students to achieve to those expectations. In this regard, use of instructional practices common in content-based ESL pedagogy is suggested by these guides, such as providing bilingual instruction and materials; using "think alouds" and modeling; explicitly teaching language and content learning strategies; adjusting teacher talk; and using visuals and other realia. Also mentioned are use of small cooperative group activities, not singling out students for praise or reproach, and working to develop trusting relationships with individual students. Further, it is suggested that students will benefit from explicit instruction about certain expected practices and procedures at school (cf. Delpit, 1988), including learning that attendance policies are strictly enforced in the U.S., that a commitment to time schedules is expected, that classroom participation structures and activities may highlight individual over group contributions and decision-making, and similar sorts of values and practices which, if not adhered to, may result in negative valuations from classmates and teachers in U.S. schools.

*Materials.* Although there is a dearth of L1 instructional materials available in Micronesian languages (cf. Gibson, 1980; Yunick, 2000), some *are* available (Pacific Area Languages Materials Development Center, 1999) and can be usefully employed in classrooms. In addition, there is no reason for teachers not to look to Micronesian students *themselves* as L1 materials writers and enlist them as experts in developing an evolving corpus of materials for school and classroom use. Student generated handbooks, guides, video documentaries, or Web sites in L1 and in English that spell out school expectations, for example, or students' experiences adjusting to the U.S. and U.S. schools, helpful English vocabulary and expressions, and so forth, could be created, and could also contain information about Micronesia for teachers and non-Micronesian students.

In addition to L1 materials, an increasing number of instructional resources specific to Micronesia and the rest of the Pacific region is becoming available in English, much of it from the publication house Bess Press ([www.besspress.com](http://www.besspress.com)). They include material on Micronesian history, literature, geography, and legends, all of which could be usefully employed in various classes, for Micronesians and non-Micronesians alike. An added benefit of using such material is that as non-Micronesians become better informed about Micronesia, the relative standing of Micro-

nesians in the school and classroom will likely improve. However, it is important to remain aware that many Micronesian and non-Micronesian students may have interests and affiliations that are less connected to their countries of origin and more to the U.S. and U.S. popular culture, and/or to other countries and cultural forms. Thus, teachers need to guard against the romantic and essentialist conflation of nation = language = culture = person. Just because a student hails from a particular country, it is certainly *not* the case that s/he will by default know about, have an interest in, or worse, be able to serve as a "representative" for that country and its cultures, customs, or languages.

As the number of students from Micronesia continues to increase in U.S. schools, more research about their educational backgrounds, academic preparation, language learning, and school experiences in the U.S. needs to be published, so that schools, educators, parents, and students themselves can work to diminish the achievement gap between these students and their non-Micronesian classmates. As the situation at Tradewinds that I have described above suggests, the consequences of not adjusting curriculum, pedagogy, and the assumptions they are informed by—of allowing, in this instance, for Micronesians to remain "the other Other"—are simply too great.

## NOTES

1. The research reported in this chapter was supported by grants from the Spencer Foundation and the TESOL International Research Foundation. I am grateful for this support and for the helpful comments made on an earlier draft by Jo Ann Kadooka and Graham Crookes. Thanks to Carsten Roever for his assistance with the statistics. The data presented, the views expressed, and all remaining shortcomings below are my responsibility.
2. The names of the school, the teachers, and the students that appear in this paper are all pseudonyms.
3. Besides RMI, ROP, and FSM, the rest of the area called Micronesia is comprised of two additional countries, the Republic of Kiribati and the Republic of Nauru, as well as a U.S. commonwealth, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and a U.S. territory, Guam.
4. One hundred percent of students from RMI and FSM, and 96% of students from ROP are reported as LEP (Kindler, 2002, p. 13). I should note that this is hardly surprising, given that English is a second language (L2) in these countries.
5. Fleischman & Hopstock (1993) estimate that 20% of all high school ESL students have missed 2 or more years of schooling since age 6.
6. According to Fleischman & Hopstock (1993), more than a quarter of all high school ESL students are not in age appropriate grade levels.
7. The Pacific Area Language Materials Development Center was responsible for developing these materials. Many of the nearly 800 educational book-

lets in Carolinian, Chamorro, Chuukese, Kosraean, Marshallese, Palauan, Pohnpean, Samoan, Ulithian, Woleaian, and Yapese have since been re-released on CD by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (Pacific Area Languages Materials Development Center, 1999).

8. Student pseudonyms were chosen by students themselves, unless denoted at first mention by an asterisk (\*).
9. It is important to note that academic print-literacy is only one (if privileged) form of literacy; there are many others. In fact, many of the Micronesian students who struggled with school L2 print-literacy requirements participated in alternative literacy activities such as constructing elaborate, annotated photo collages, writing "slam books" (notebooks passed around to friends in which comments about other friends, classmates, and teachers were written), singing and translating songs, writing poetry, and engaging in often ingenious forms of word play.
10. "Local" is a term used throughout Hawai'i to refer to the culture and identity of those who were born and raised in the Islands.
11. "Pidgin" is the popular name for "Hawai'i Creole," a contact language which developed in plantation Hawai'i around the turn of the twentieth century. As the L1 of more than half of Hawai'i's population, it is a critical, if often stigmatized index of "Local" culture and identity, and tends to enjoy covert prestige among many public school students. For more on Pidgin, see, e.g., Da Pidgin Coup (1999), Sakoda & Siegel (2003), and Sato (1985, 1991).
12. Hezel (2002, p. 7) notes that young Micronesians who travel abroad for work and/or school "may not always be the best educated Micronesians. They include a large number of high school and elementary school drop-outs." This is certainly not the most sympathetic characterization, but it does confirm several Micronesian students' comments to me that they or their friends had come to Hawai'i for school because they had been unable to enter high schools back in Micronesia because they had earlier stopped attending school, could not pass entrance exams, or both. See Brown, Hammond, & Onikama (1997) and Kamakawi (1995) for more discussion of school drop-outs in the FAS.
13. E.g., there is a Chuukese-English dictionary: (Goodenough & Sugita, 1980); a Marshallese-English dictionary: (Abo, 1976); a Palauan-English dictionary: (Joseph, 1990); and a Pohnpean-English dictionary: (Rehg & Sohn, 1979), among others.
14. I do not have grades for all the Micronesian students who participated in this study—let alone for all who attended Tradewinds—but these data come from a cross-section of Micronesians in the ESL program. They include long-term residents and newcomers, students with high and low L2 proficiencies, those with interrupted and continuous formal educations.
15. For a number of reasons, including the reading of children's books, many ESL students complained about the "childishness" of ESL at Tradewinds; with a few exceptions (e.g., Laidplayer), the Micronesian students did not.
16. As I discuss further below, some teachers attempted to group non-Micronesian and Micronesian students together by L2 proficiency; however, these students often refused to work together.
17. Although all the Micronesian students I observed who were recruited as peer tutors willingly agreed to help their classmates, some complained to

me privately that the tutoring took them away from their own work. They also noted that they would inevitably be drawn into talking, joking, and other "off-task" behavior with friends this way.

18. A small but instructive example of this point concerns many Micronesian girls' refusal to participate in PE classes at Tradewinds (also see Clarke, 1999). A PE teacher I once spoke with had grown exasperated by this. In the belief that her female Micronesian students did not "suit up" because they could not afford to buy the shorts that were required for participation, she bought several pairs for them herself. Still, they refused to participate. As it turned out, wearing shorts is frowned upon in areas of Micronesia, especially for girls. Nonetheless, at the time I concluded fieldwork at Tradewinds, Micronesian girls were still required to wear shorts in order to participate in PE class, and a large number of Micronesian girls continued to fail it. It is likely this status order was informed by perspectives on race in students' countries of origin, families, etc., not just at Tradewinds.
19. It is likely this status order was informed by perspectives on race in students' countries or origin, families, etc., not just at Tradewinds.
20. Teasing was not reserved for Micronesian students alone, but also for lower L2 proficient and recent arrivals to the US.
21. Included among the students who led the teasing of this Chuukese boy was a Marshallese student who had lived in Hawai'i for 8 years. In this regard, there was evidence of another status hierarchy, this one a specifically Micronesian one, with Marshallese in the superordinate position and Chuukese on the bottom. Bickel (2002) also makes reference to this hierarchy, as does Hezel (2003, 2004), who maintains that many Micronesians consider Chuuk "the sinkhole of Micronesia" (2003, p. 1).
22. The Hawai'i Department of Education is currently working toward this with the system-wide implementation of the SIOP model (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

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