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Understanding Childhood in the Micronesian Diaspora by Linking Home Island Lives to Post-Migration Experiences

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Introduction

The contemporary migration of children and families from the new nations of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of Palau (RP) to the United States (US) Territory of Guam, the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Hawai'i and the continental US has brought serious challenges in both the origin islands and the receiving locations. Effects on these children have rarely been systematically studied. The lack of a firm description and understanding of Micronesian children's development in their home cultures and contexts further hampers both the sending and receiving communities, as they grapple with questions regarding the children's needs and appropriate ways to support them.

One purpose of this paper is to establish what is known about Micronesian childhoods in both home island and migration contexts. It pursues this objective by highlighting that knowing the contours of life in each major sub-context (i.e. home, neighbourhood, school, church and community) is important to understanding the everyday lives of Micronesian children that circulate within and around their home islands and their migration

locations. This more thorough understanding is foundational for the practical support of child development, as well as for appropriate social policy. The second purpose is to project new directions for research of Micronesian children whose childhoods have been subjected to major episodes of residential movement. The emerging post-migration research with children worldwide, with those from Micronesia and particularly that conducted by indigenous Micronesian scholars holds promise for a greater understanding and policy guidance. In this chapter, childhood will be operationally defined as birth through to the late teens, unless otherwise explained.¹

How the Flood of Contemporary Migration Is Shaping the Research Paradigm

Geographic movement is an age-old phenomenon for Pacific Islanders. The history of Micronesian migration around, away and back and forth is a fascinating one (Hess et al. 2001; Hezel 2013; Perez 2004; Spencer 2012). Many important cultural qualities of the different Micronesian groups are intricately tied to geographic movement: navigation, canoe building, arts used in trade such as weaving, and genealogy practices. Nevertheless, with the exception of the forced relocations of Marshall Islanders by the US for atomic bombing purposes, Micronesian movement was more limited during the years following the Second World War, in which the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) arrangement was in place. US security practices severely limited access into the region as well as inter-entity and extra-Micronesia movements in general.² Many took for granted that most Micronesians would spend their lives in their heritage islands or perhaps in regional administrative locations. Some would leave on US I-20 student visas for higher education and some would leave for medical care, especially Marshallese who had been victimised by the atomic testing. However, it was widely assumed that most would return to

1 The operational definition of *child* or *children* in this chapter is flexible, but it is generally framed by the first two decades of life. A review of anthropological research in multiple Micronesian island groups reveals culturally textured developmental scenarios across the age range, differentiated by puberty events, gender roles, birth order expectations, societal status and privilege traditions (Barnett 1960; Carucci 1985).

2 Because Guam was home to a strategic military base, a Navy security clearance was needed to enter; President Kennedy's appointed governor, William Daniel, was instrumental in having Kennedy lift the requirement in 1962 (Sanchez 1987).

assume leadership positions at home. Neither the scale of movement nor the nature of globalisation that this new phase of the postcolonial period would bring to the Marshall Islands, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap and Palau had been widely foreseen.³

It was not until several years after the 1986 RMI and FSM Compacts of Free Association with the US were finalised that Guam, CNMI, Hawai'i and several US mainland states began to realise the heights to which the population influx from these new countries would rise. Palau's 1994 Compact with the US heightened this realisation. When the predominantly adult-male composition of migrants to Guam and Hawai'i shifted to include women, children and elders, the residents, educators, health providers and social workers in the receiving areas realised how little they knew about their new neighbours and how much more understanding was needed. Similarly, it would not be enough for the Freely Associated Micronesians to understand local child development that is preparatory for a lifetime spent on the home island. It became necessary for them to also understand what children who leave will experience in new settings and how they can be prepared for this before they depart. Stakeholders and individuals in the migration settings, especially those who play major roles in children's lives, needed information on Micronesian children's family, community, culture and past experiences to nurture them in positive ways. There was a lack of information and strategies that could facilitate the process of working through differences quickly. This led to frictions in places where high rates of post-Compact Micronesian migration occurred. In reaction, US federally funded 'Compact Impact' projects were established in the early 1990s (Smith et al. 1997).

On Guam, there were needs-assessment surveys performed for each major Micronesian culture/language group that identified the problems and critical needs of the families. The projects were primarily conducted by leaders and members of these same groups and guided by the university social science faculty. Resulting lists of prioritised problems, needs and recommendations proved to have long-term usefulness to multiple agencies on Guam. The projects also developed an indigenous leadership pool and provided them with employment experience in their new home. Evolved remnants of these 'Compact Impact' projects continue,

3 The Northern Mariana Islands, the other post-war entity of the TTPI, opted to join the American family by becoming a US Commonwealth. By order of President Jimmy Carter, the CNMI constitution went into effect in 1978 (Farrell 1991).

even now, in Guam, CNMI and Hawai'i. Even so, a conversation today with professional human service personnel in any of these places would readily reveal questions and stories that speak of much misunderstanding. These voids of understanding and lack of appreciation for the rich *funds of knowledge* that Micronesian migrant children and families bring with them appear to be commonplace in the post-migration contexts.⁴

Practical imperatives in the educational, health, social services and economic domains of the Micronesian migration sites are shaping the childhood research paradigm for Micronesian migrant children. Cross-context investigations that include the heritage island location prior to migration as well as the migration destination are now needed. What do the children and their families bring with them? What demands and experiences do they face once they arrive? How do the post-migration experiences in different locations compare, especially when children experience multiple stepping-stone relocations? What is the fit between the heritage resources and the demands of the new context? What are the consequences of the gaps and misalignments for the children? What adjustments are made and to what end? What experiential factors in the new location protect them and hold a promise for enhancing their development? Is there a feedback loop between the migration experience and the heritage island location throughout the history of the migration cycle? That is, what collective learning about migration success factors gradually accumulates over a period of years and decades of the migration process? These are just some of the broadest questions that arise and that could be addressed by a cross-context research design that is focused on the circulation of Micronesian children.

Cross-Context Research Literature on Micronesian Childhoods

A review of the literature was conducted to bring to the forefront the lessons learned on Micronesian child development in both the broad migration contexts—home island and migration destination. For increased explanatory power, the research was further organised by sub-context—

4 See Gonzalez et al. (2005) for a full discussion of the 'funds of knowledge' concept relative to children and families who have migrated to the US.

family home, school, church, neighbourhood or community. Also noted was the type of research design. The findings were first summarised for the home island and then for the migration context.⁵

Home Island

Family Home

The only direct observations used to document and describe the family homes of Micronesian children in their islands of origin have been ethnographies or short-term case studies. Ethnographies were conducted by Thomas Gladwin and Seymour Sarason (1953) and Fischer (1950, 1956) on Romonum Island, Chuuk Lagoon; by Mary Thomas (1978) and Juliana Flinn (1982, 1992a, 1992b) on the Western Chuuk islands of Nomonuito and Pulap, respectively; and by Donald Rubinstein (1979) on Fais Island and Anne Douglass (1999) on Woleai, both sites in Yap State, FSM.

More recently, I conducted 12 observational case studies with children of Romonum Island, Chuuk FSM (Spencer 2015). All were enrolled in school (young were aged 6–8 years; middle were aged 9–10 years; and old were aged 11–14 years). I found considerable concordance of results across this study and the earlier ethnographic studies in Romonum and four other locations in Micronesia regarding the nature of children's play and work activities, and in their interactions with significant adults.⁶ The play activities of the children (e.g. young children digging holes, making little boats, drawing in the sand, playing tag, middle and older children running races or participating in organised games) were similar across the studies. However, many of the traditional activities that were documented for children of Fais, Nomonuito and Woleai are now unknown to Romonum children—although some of these were observed there in the late 1940s (e.g. canoe building).

5 Contact the author for an annotated listing of references for each setting within home or migration context.

6 See Spencer (2015, pp. 161–165) for a summary comparison across these researchers.



Figure 1. A young Romonum girl tends to a cooking fire in the family compound.

Source: Author.



Figure 2. An eighth-grade Romonum boy returns from a fishing trip with neighbours.

Source: Author.

The human environment in all sample homes in my study was multigenerational, with an extended family composition and a wide age range in which multiple simultaneous activities were underway. Developmental trends were uncovered in the frequencies of child engagement over a range of activities that were documented for the sample of children. These differed from those documented for the same children at school. The differences revealed that gender and age contrast and relate to the nature of adult and child interactions and roles in the home. The work engagement for children of all ages was large. Younger girls engaged in work more often than younger boys. Middle and older-aged boys performed more work than the same-aged girls. Older boys

had virtually no play activity and no hanging out/spacing out time at home—their time was dominated by work.⁷ Only younger children had the freedom to be purposeless and idle. Young and middle boys played or hung out until work commitments were imposed by the family.

Direct home instruction was not prominent on Romonum; rather, the children's teaching and learning at home more often consisted of a child learning through a gradual, observational and experiential process with an adult or older child, and through repetitive practice (i.e. the 'intent community participation tradition' or the 'guided repetition tradition' as described by Rogoff et al. [2007]). Sibling care of younger children was pronounced (Spencer 2015).

In all the observational studies of children that were cited, researchers engaged with theoretical questions relating to the mechanisms of child development. The relative resilience of these theoretical considerations mirrors the historical changes in professional acceptance of specific theoretical tenets and empirical methods of research. My study demonstrated how contemporary digital photography and recording can be conducted at modest cost and combined with more traditional observation and interview methods to effectively document child and family life in remote Micronesian settings.

School

Considerable resources have been applied to school studies in Micronesia. FSM, RMI and RP have all had student achievement testing programs for many years. Typically, these programs produce annual academic achievement reports for English-language reading and mathematics. For some Micronesian entities, results in other subjects such as home-language literacy and science are also reported. Testing programs are relatively new and are not yet organised for longitudinal research. Improvements in sampling, quality of test instruments and reliability and validity characteristics may make longitudinal or predictive results possible in the future. Several large multi-year US federal contracts for educational support services (e.g. Pacific Resources for Education and

7 Tudge's (2008) system for coding child observations was applied to the video records of Romonum children's activity samples. At times, sample children would sit or stand in sustained quiet and inactive mode, sometimes by themselves and sometimes with other children. We coded those instances as 'hanging out/spacing out'.

Learning; the McREL Regional Education Laboratory for the Pacific) have trained education specialists and addressed a US federal research and development agenda.

In my Romonum Island case study and research in the school setting, school and FSM census data revealed that only 56–74 per cent of the children in Grades 1 to 8 attend school. For the 1–12 grade range, only 44 per cent of school-aged Romonum children are attending school. The 2010 census statistics for the entire Chuuk Lagoon area, of which Romonum is one island, indicate that 66 per cent of the school-aged population are enrolled in high school, with 56 per cent males and 71 per cent females. This percentage would be much lower for Romonum and the many similar lagoon islands where there are no junior or senior high schools. For those who do not attend school, one might conclude that their lives appear much as the observation findings for home settings. However, further observations of children who do not go to school are warranted. In the observations of school children, 80 per cent of the time of the three age groups combined was spent on lessons. Only 2–18 per cent of their time was spent hanging out/spacing out, with variations depending on age and gender. For older students, comprised of a small group remaining after years of attrition by age mates, very little time was spent in off-task, unproductive ways.

Indigenous priorities, viewpoints, traditions, content, teaching methods and administrative directives were apparent throughout the overall school experience. Although US textbooks and teacher support materials were prominent, Chuukese oral language was ubiquitous in teacher–student communication in the earlier grades, with teachers gradually using some English instructional content in Grades 5–8. A local culture curriculum was taught several times a week by a male and female culture teacher, and it was somewhat integrated into the other subjects. The greatest emphasis in the formal instruction was on the symbolic knowledge of literacy and numeracy—all with US textbooks and Chuukese teacher narratives. The three learning traditions described by Barbara Rogoff et al. (2007) were all documented to varying degrees, but the assembly line learning tradition was dominant—that is, in the typical school experience, a single teaching expert would conduct a lesson to a group of students in an authoritative style. Lessons requiring rote memory activities were common. When used, the intended community participation teaching–learning method was most likely to be found in the culture lessons. At times, a mix of teaching approaches was apparent. There were no science materials, but

several teachers taught science content based on their own traditional knowledge or they taught by an individual teacher sharing content that he or she had independently found in a science book.

Church

No studies directly focusing on children were found for the church sub-context on the home island. Flinn's (2010) book relates to some degree to the role of the churches in child development on Pulap Atoll, Chuuk and FSM. I have previously mentioned the perceived importance of the role of churches throughout Micronesia to children's development and practice of literacy and linguistic skills (Spencer 1992). Studies that better document the lives of Micronesian children as they engage with churches would fill a gap in the evidence that is available on the lives of children in various Micronesian cultures.



Figure 3. Groups of children take turns reciting memorised bible verses to a large child and parent audience during Children's Sunday School at the Lelu Church in Kosrae, FSM. Just one prominent example of the role the church plays in literacy development and the role that rote memorisation plays in learning activities.

Source: Author.

Neighbourhood and Community

Ethnographic and case studies conducted on home islands typically incorporate some aspects of children's compounds, neighbourhoods and communities. The social arrangements and physical attributes of these contexts in close relationship to child development have received little direct study. The best research resources for glimpsing these arrangements are the studies on Romonum by Gladwin and Sarason (1953), Fischer

(1950, 1956) and Spencer (2015); by Thomas (1978) and Flinn (1982, 1992a, 1992b) on the Western Chuuk islands of Nomonuito and Pulpap, respectively; and by Rubinstein (1979), Douglass (1999) and Spencer (2018) in Yap, on the island of Fais, Woleai Atoll and Ulithi Atoll, respectively.

In the summer of 1985, I conducted observations of children on the Falalop Island of Ulithi Atoll over six weeks, during which I also taught University of Guam courses at the Outer Island High School to teachers from a wide range of the Yap outer islands. I documented young children often playing in groups and engaging in peer teaching (Spencer 2018). For example, children aged approximately 5–10 years old were observed playing music with homemade instruments and singing together, walking paths in small mixed-age and gender groups, peer teaching dance and games, detailed teaching of the seated stick dance to a dance partner, tree climbing, playing in sand piles, ocean swimming, drawing, kung fu acrobatics, and quiet sitting and hanging out. Culturally based and contextually defined rules of silence appeared to direct the children's behaviour when in the company of adults. Even during their free summer days, families and neighbours stimulated literacy development via books to read and opportunities to draw and write. The children had many opportunities to shadow and assist family adults; for example, as they conducted daily work such as collecting flowers and making leis, contributing to the food preparation process, or assisting men bringing in canoes full of freshly caught fish.

One aspect of my courses in Ulithi was the study of the role of culture in child cognitive development. In one assignment, teachers read and discussed Susan Philips's (1972) study of the teaching–learning methods that she documented with Warm Springs Indians in Oregon. Afterward, teachers from Lamotrek, Woleai, Farraulap and Ulithi provided individual written descriptions of how children's lives and learning in their own cultures might compare with Philips's findings. Student comments included the view that within their families, there is a private proprietary nature to knowledge. The owner of knowledge carefully selects who will receive his or her knowledge, based on the respect and care that this person has given to the knowledge owner's family member; on their demonstrated care for the good of the community; on their ability to respect the knowledge; and on their need to be secretive about it themselves. The sole female Ulithian teacher said, 'The most important aspects from my culture, about the person who wants to learn, come from listening to and observing their

parents, family members, and people within their community'. She also noted that customs, stories and legends were important in this process. She further explained that the composition of groupings in her culture were important to learning: 'There is always the division of men and women in almost anything: learning skills, working, playing, etcetera'.

Some obvious variables related to child development in the communities of Micronesia, which are of interest for future research, included a) high versus low island geography and island size, because of the resource differences and relative remoteness that these physical features endow on the inhabiting families; b) the degree of technological access; c) the modernity of communication and travel facilities; d) the access to health, education and commercial resources; e) the continuity of cultural control of the home island; and f) the nature and extent of the home island's immigration and emigration activity. These variables all have the power to shape children's lives on the home island and to maintain influence on children who circulate to other places.

Post-Migration

Family Home

Documentation of the lives of Micronesian children in their family homes in post-migration contexts is rare. Of the two relevant studies to date on children's post-migration home lives, the interview study by Katherine Ratliffe (2010) focuses on the implications of Micronesian migrant family obligations for education. She conducted interviews with 26 adults from the FSM, RMI and Palau, mostly in Hawai'i. Many of the informants were educators. Others had worked in entry-level jobs as janitors, fast food workers and drivers, or they were homemakers. Seven were recent migrants or had children in US schools. They explained that their traditional cultural responsibilities to their immediate and extended families—in both Hawai'i and their home islands—continued to play major roles in the lives of both children and adults. These obligations included maintaining connections with their distant families, keeping them informed about their lives, asking permission for many things or even returning home when needed. Obligations often revolved around life transition events such as births, graduations, home building, illnesses, marriages and deaths. Based on her interviews and review of the literature regarding other migrants, Ratliffe (2010, p. 680) concluded that 'the actions that a person takes to fulfill traditional and other obligations to

family members are part of the maintenance and development of both personal and ethnic identities both in Micronesia and after emigration'. Children will be fully engaged in these obligations and will likely be absent from school when their participation is needed by the family.

In their 2012 study on Oahu, Hawai'i, Kaneshiro and Black selected four 13- and 14-year-old Marshallese and Chuukese migrant children who had been found eligible for special education services. With the support of interpreters, the children were individually interviewed about pictures that they themselves had taken in their homes with disposable cameras provided by the researchers. Afterward, they and their families reviewed the written summaries for accuracy. Researchers concluded that a common strength among the children's home experiences was family cooperation; for example, the child performed housekeeping, cooking and childcare responsibilities that benefited the whole family. Grandparents sometimes provided temporary housing, as well as advice and supplementary funds.

School

Post-migration outcome data for Micronesian children in educational settings should be robust due to the intensive academic testing required by US federal and state education policy. My examination of Guam Department of Education databases in 2012 revealed that Micronesian migrant data were identifiable and systematically collected (Grandjean & Spencer 2013). Hawai'i State Department of Education academic databases also contain regularly collected achievement data; however, Hawai'i has resisted coding Micronesian students' ethnicity identifiers in a manner that would permit analysis (Ault 2013, pp. 3–5). In both locations, technical issues of missing data may pertain due to such factors as exclusion from testing of students with limited English proficiency. Documentation of the extent to which Micronesian migrant children are thriving academically in US schools is legally required by Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act 1964* (US Department of Education 2018). The absence of this information and the lack of action to acquire it may eventually require US federal regulatory intervention. The potential for positive change stemming from such intervention is substantial. When students identified as English-language learners (ELLs) are discovered, whose ability to participate in or benefit from US public school instruction on the basis of language or minority race or ancestry, Title VI requires that the school district takes 'affirmative steps to ensure that the English learner students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational

programs and service'. This includes providing 'an educationally sound language assistance program' with 'qualified staff and sufficient resources to instruct ELL students', 'monitoring the progress of ELL students in learning English and doing grade-level classwork, remedying any academic deficits' and 'evaluating the effectiveness of *their* ELL programs'.

Paul (2003) was an early observer of the post-migration school lives of Micronesian children in Honolulu. She was a woman who had married into Pohnpeian culture and worked as a volunteer teacher's assistant in elementary classrooms, and reported teachers describing the Micronesian children as 'bad' and 'lazy'. She was surprised at the teachers' public criticism of the students in ways that humiliated them and brought them to tears. Steven Talmy (2006, 2009) published detailed observational studies of Micronesian students in Honolulu high school classes, most of whom had to relocate to Honolulu from the Marshall Islands and Chuuk. Academic English as a Second Language (ESL) print literacy was a significant problem for all, regardless of their island origin. Talmy also detailed a social environment that was presented to these students by teachers and classmates in which intimidation and degradation were thoroughly engrained.

In Walter et al.'s (2011) survey study of Chuukese migrants to Guam, education ranked only second to jobs as what they liked best about Guam. Becoming a teacher was the highest-ranked dream job. However, racism and discrimination ranked as what they liked the least about Guam. Relationships between the Micronesian community on Guam and the Guam Department of Education (GDOE) have not always been smooth. However, collective action of the Micronesian migrant community has tended to motivate GDOE improvement efforts. A major crisis occurred when, in the 2010–11 school year, a series of schoolyard events at a middle school became the subject of a contentious televised oversight hearing of the Guam Legislature on the subject of bullying (Spencer 2012). A small group of Micronesian migrant students who had been expelled continued to come to school on the school bus. Once at school, they retreated into a jungle area through holes torn in the school's back fence. From this sanctuary, they and other students yelled insults and threw rocks at students and school personnel in the schoolyard. Shortly afterward, the GDOE Superintendent organised a public meeting with the Chuukese community in which mutual concerns and recommendations were shared. This positive event forged inter-group connections and the

GDOE promised to hire a number of bilingual school aides who could assist newly migrated Micronesian students. It was mutually acknowledged that Chuukese students had also been victims of bullying.

Maria Pong, a Micronesian migrant parent living in a northern Guam neighbourhood, demonstrated how true Walter et al.'s (2011) finding is regarding the importance of Guam's educational opportunities to parents like her. School bus service was often lacking in her neighbourhood due to unpaved roads that became impassable after hard rains. One day, she learned of an urgent plea to parents from the school to be sure that their children came to school the next day for the annual testing activities. When the school bus failed to pick up the waiting children, Maria walked all 47 of them to the school several miles away. Guam DOE thanked her at an appreciation ceremony (Ngirairikl 2011a).

In an observation study of several Chuukese children in K–5 elementary classrooms on Guam, I reported that a nurturing and caring instruction of Micronesian students was observed in numerous contexts (Spencer 2012). However, the lack of best practices and resources needed for them was also sometimes apparent. There were no instructional aides or teachers who could communicate with the young students in their home languages. ESL materials were scarce and many training needs were evident—for example, how to use GDOE curriculum standards and performance indicators, effective bi-literacy strategies for ESL and regular classrooms, strategies for infusing higher order thinking skills and how to plan and carry through a course of study for students who lack prior or adequate schooling when they arrive. Most troubling was the reaction of one teacher to children who, as an appropriate sign of respect in Chuukese culture, did not make direct eye contact with the teacher. Repeatedly, the teacher spotlighted these children before the entire class, scolding them for not looking directly at her. Multiple times, she cupped her hand around the child's jaw and rather roughly pulled the student's face upward. In a more recent study, a group of teachers at a school with many Micronesian migrant students conducted systematic observations of a sample of these students. They used an observation instrument, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria et al. 2013), which is designed to document the extent to which eight categories of best instructional practices for ELLs occur. The engagement of these educators and their principal in this action research project demonstrates their intentions of learning and applying effective instructional methods for the Micronesian migrant students in their care.

Based on her adult interview study regarding the implications of Micronesian family obligations for education in Hawai'i, and informed by her review of the literature (e.g. Heine 2002), Ratliffe (2010) provided six suggestions on how educators can support Micronesian families so that they can successfully navigate US school systems: a) ask them about their home islands; b) ask them who the decision-makers are in the family; c) give alternative options for gender-sensitive educational practices; d) become familiar with laws and practices regarding guardianship and provide relevant paperwork and instructions for completing it;⁸ e) identify members of the different Micronesian communities who can bridge communication between families and schools; and f) build on the cultural importance of personal relationships by creating opportunities for relationships to develop.⁹

Church

Few studies of Micronesian migrant children relative to direct post-migration church experiences have been identified. Kaneshiro and Black's (2012) study in Hawai'i with four Marshallese and Chuukese pre-adolescent children demonstrates the potential for such inquiry. They documented that family participation in church activities, and the cultural association of these particular churches, were regular and formative experiences. Church members also assisted these students and their families by making a variety of financial opportunities available, such as providing activities in which the children could earn money or obtain domestic goods.

During Kupferman's (2009) interviews with Kosraean mothers living in Honolulu, a local Kosraean church was identified as a main feature in the lives of the mothers and children. They credited it as being an important source of personal support and of Kosraean language and culture exposure for their children. Allen (1997) conducted a study of Marshallese migrants in Enid, Oklahoma, and found two very different Marshall Island communities, one composed of chiefly families and the other composed

8 The presence of migrant Micronesian children on Guam who have travelled without their parents or who live with adults other than their parents continues to confuse and worry many educators, health providers, public safety, airport or other governmental personnel. This concern is usually due to lack of information about the cultural traditions of the children's heritage islands. In some locations in Micronesia as many as 90 per cent of children experience adoption. Adoptive parents are usually aunts and uncles, or grandparents, and the secrecy so often present in US adoptions usually does not apply (see Rauchholz 2008, 2012).

9 For example, at Upi Elementary School on Guam, the principal invited Micronesian parents and community members into the school for literacy instruction on evenings and weekends.

of Kili Atoll recipients of US nuclear compensation and relocation funds. To unite themselves and create shared traditions, they organised a new church that became central to their lives in Enid. Although children's experiences with the church and its effects on their lives have never been reported, Allen documented its centrality to community life. Its activities affect not only the lives of Enid Marshallese children, but they extend to the home islands because of its vigorous work to provide educational scholarships and arrange for student home stays in Oklahoma.

Neighbourhood and Community

The meagre body of post-migration research sometimes addresses Micronesian children's neighbourhoods and communities, usually through needs-assessment surveys of adults that include reflections on resource access issues, challenges, adjustments, schooling and attitudes relevant to families and children (e.g. Walter et al. 2011). A direct and systematic research focus on children in the neighbourhood or community context is missing.

Journalistic sources have provided some of the most insightful views of post-migration, neighbourhood/community experiences of Micronesian migrants. In Honolulu, Kandell and Foley (2012) related the story in words and photos of young Micronesian men representing multiple cultures and a newly discovered cross-cultural unity, creating a basketball 'league of their own'. Twenty teams, playing more than 90 games a year in gyms all over Honolulu, culminated their 2012 season with the All-Mike Basketball tournament. A Marshallese community leader, Dr Wilfred Alik, was quoted as saying, 'The fact that we were there changed a lot of people's thinking. It's often a struggle just to gain access to public courts. Many were downright scared, but sitting in the Blaisdell Arena, the feeling—that sense of empowerment—was palpable'. The teams include teenagers. The tournament is a pride-inspiring experience for children and spectators of all ages who come from Micronesian migrant communities throughout Oahu.

A situation involving sex trafficking of minors has been the most serious community problem on Guam involving Micronesian youth. Referred to as the Blue House case, it was closely reported by journalists of the *Guam Pacific Daily News* and prosecuted by both local and federal law enforcement (e.g. Aguon 2011; Matthews 2011; Thompson 2011). A Guam bar owner recruited minor girls and young women from their home islands in Chuuk. Their testimony revealed that they were held

hostage, called degrading names and forced to perform sex acts to work off their debts to the bar owner. At least one girl was beaten and forced to have an abortion when she became pregnant. Another is raising her child from one of these customer unions. The girls flew to Guam on the promise of working at a restaurant. The bar owner was convicted on all counts and sentenced to life in prison.

Other journalists followed community activities and debates that focus on the effects and terms of the Compact of Free Association on Guam (e.g. Ngirairikl 2011b, 2011c). Journalistic attention has been given to the Guam Contactor Association's Trades Academy and the Center for Micronesian Empowerment, who created a model for employment training and life skills (e.g. Pacific Daily News 2011).

The University of Guam faculty in the Women and Gender Studies Program, funded by a grant from the American Association of University Women and the Island Girl Power organisation, provided a summer program for Micronesian teens (Thompson 2009; Thurber 2009). The girls met at the university, were mentored and encouraged to attend college and were given computer journal writing projects. They converted these journals into dramatic monologues and performed them for an audience. Some of the mentoring relationships continued for several years after the summer program.

For Guam's *Pacific Daily News*, journalist Ngirairikl (2011d) reported a project that the Guam Humanities Council conducted with teenage Micronesian migrants: *The Micronesian Question—Issues of Migration, Identity and Belonging on Guam*. The 57 participating Micronesian teens carried out a youth-centred photography and creative writing project using community conversations and civic reflections. After learning photographic techniques, they created large storyboards that they displayed and explained in settings such as high schools and shopping centres. Project Director Monaeka Flores described the major themes of their productions as reflections on their education, culture and identity, faith and community. One participant, Richy Santipas, was quoted as saying that the activity allowed him to find his voice: 'I'm not scared anymore to stand up and tell people they're wrong when they talk about stereotypes like it's the truth'. When someone in his class said that it was a Chuukese tradition for men to drink alcohol, get drunk and fight, Richy told them it was ridiculous and untrue.

Personal and Interpersonal Development

The pre-migration personal and interpersonal development of Micronesian migrant children influences the meaning, trajectory and effect of their experiences in all the settings of their everyday post-migration lives. A research thread has emerged that illuminates the importance of indigenous and migrant children's protective factors and risk management. The personal and interpersonal wellbeing of adolescent Micronesian children, regardless of home location, must be taken as a bright-line priority due to the exceedingly high suicide rates among this demographic category (Rubinstein 1992; Twaddle et al. 2011).

Noting the high rates of problematic social and behavioural outcomes for the youth of many Pacific Island societies, Okamoto et al. (2008) examined the risk and protective factors that Micronesian migrant adolescents in Honolulu experienced. On the basis of interviews with nine different focus groups consisting of 41 Chuukese, Pohnpeian and Marshallese middle and high school students, Okamoto et al. reported that the youths had experienced stress that was associated with their migration to Hawai'i. This included poor housing conditions; racism, especially in school; dirty neighbourhoods; interethnic gang fighting in school and the community; and pervasive substance abuse in their communities. On the reverse side of this deficit portrait, the students described traditional cultural practices (e.g. celebrating Micronesian holidays and election results from the home island; preparing for and attending traditional funerals; attending church and singing religious songs) and culturally specific prevention programs (e.g. drug and violence prevention involving mentoring and networking in the context of familiar language and customs) that they believed buffered the adverse effects. Ratliffe (2010) concluded that when Micronesian migrant children perform traditional obligations, they are developing and maintaining their Micronesian ethnic identities.

These results are interesting when compared to the findings of a recent, rigorous three-year longitudinal study of the effectiveness of certain *protective factors* with indigenous Māori adolescents in New Zealand (Stuart & Jose 2014). Stuart and Jose's study may have heuristic value for future research with Micronesian migrant children because of the mutual Pacific Island origins of the Māori and Micronesians. The three-year longitudinal study with Māori youth (aged 9–15 years old) found that culturally specific protective factors were associated with the levels of adjustment that are typical for the adolescent years. Further, the degree

of both family connectedness and ethnic identity predicted initial levels of positive wellbeing. The state of wellbeing over time was significantly predicted by family connectedness, and it was marginally predicted by ethnic identity. Stuart and Jose concluded that while normative developmental processes tend to result in decreases in adjustment with their Māori sample during middle adolescence, appropriate supports can significantly buffer these reductions in wellbeing. They reported that the results are similar to studies showing a normative decline in the wellbeing of children of other ethnic/racial origins in middle adolescence, and that the results of the study are consistent with the health and wellbeing framework postulated by practitioners working with the Māori population (Durie 1997). Important to this framework is the quality of *whānau* (extended family) relationships that are the foundation for healthy intergenerational cultural transmission. The finding that ethnic identity positively predicted wellbeing for Māori youth was congruent with international research (e.g. higher self-esteem, fewer behavioural problems and higher academic achievement: Umana-Taylor et al. 2002) and with research focused on marginalised groups (e.g. Phinney 1990). Stuart and Jose noted that ethnic engagement by itself was not enough. Development of healthy adjustment also required that the feelings that an individual held toward his or her ethnic group needed to be positive and potent—that is, engagement coupled with pride and identification with the ethnic group. For Micronesian migrant adolescents, we might hypothesise that engaging in traditional cultural practices (e.g. cultural dance and forms of work), family obligations (e.g. preparing for and participating in funerals) and exciting and fulfilling community activities (e.g. community sports) constitute protective factors.

Summary and Conclusions

The research reviewed in this chapter sheds light on the contours of Micronesian children's lives in their family homes, neighbourhoods, schools, churches and communities—on the home islands, as well as post-migration. Empirical research is meagre in both contexts. There are few studies directly documenting the post-migration lives of Micronesian children in their family homes. However, research in these and other settings is increasing in frequency, depth, breadth and quality. There are some disturbing outcomes regarding the treatment of Micronesian migrant children, particularly in public schools and community experiences.

There are also a growing number of reports of promising practices and opportunities for Micronesian migrant children and instances of positive diaspora community organisation and socioeconomic progress. Research on risk management and protective factors suggests that cultural dimensions that are shared by multiple Pacific Island populations may provide protection against post-migration difficulties if applied in the new environment.

Children occupy multiple contexts within their home islands and each context may have different and important developmental consequences that transfer with the children to their respective migration sites. Direct observations were reported on the lives of a sample of children in their family homes and school on their home island in Chuuk State—a district that contributes the highest level of migration from Micronesia to the US. The industry and labour contributions of the children, beginning early and increasing with age, were remarkable. The role of play and cultural expectations regarding children's exhibition of speech were reported. Outer island Yap teachers outlined key dimensions of family teaching–learning practices. Features of home island lives in all of these locations will matter later in post-migration contexts, as children strive to adapt to the expectations and routines of the people and institutions there.

Contrasts were found between the home island–learning patterns of children in homes when compared to schools. Home island schools structured instruction much like US post-migration schools. However, large numbers of Micronesian migrant children have never attended school or have only attended intermittently before moving to US destinations. The school attendance profiles of individual children will probably not be known to receiving educators. Second, most Micronesian migrant children will not be proficient in English when they arrive. Judging from earlier research, US schools may not always provide effective ESL or bilingual instruction for them. The home learning patterns documented for Romonum children could be interpreted as flexibility across contexts featuring didactic instruction, teaching and learning that is grounded in repetition and recitation, as well as collaborative apprentice-like development. Such flexibility could be important to success in school and other settings following relocation—but only if those in the receiving locations provide linguistic access and take responsibility to learn how the funds of knowledge that the children have brought with them can be applied.

New Directions

In reviewing the emerging research and journalistic reporting on phenomena surrounding the migration of Micronesian children to US destinations, it has been encouraging to see the expanding voices of indigenous researchers and authors.¹⁰ Their involvement in research with Micronesian children and communities holds promise for increasing depth, relevance and validity of results. In a 2014 interview with Palauan researcher David Rehuher, co-author of the Okamoto et al. (2008) article on family obligations of Micronesian migrant children in Honolulu, he discussed practical research implementation problems that arise when indigenous researchers are absent from the enterprise. For example, tasks such as preparing and sending letters, or making personal approaches to families to secure informed consent for the participation of minor children in research require indigenous language and culture support. Also, unrealistic expectations may arise in assuming that indigenous culture or language associates can communicate with Micronesian migrants from multiple different Micronesian cultures besides their own. The multiplicity of mutually non-intelligible Micronesian languages and variant cultures is often not fully understood by the non-indigenous research community. These factors threaten the quality of data collection and interpretation if inappropriate language–culture matches are made between data collectors and research participants. If requests for participation, or instructions for providing informed consent, are not made in the families' respective indigenous languages—or if follow-up communication in their indigenous languages is not available—the sample will likely be skewed and minimised. In such cases, the study may become unfeasible.

Rehuher, who works with suicide prevention programs across the University of Hawai'i campuses, shared compelling advice from Micronesian migrant family members as they cooperated with research discussions. They urged him not to focus solely on the problems of their migration. Their message, in effect, was that they know about the bad things, but what can they do to make things good? Their advice reminds researchers of the classic dangers of leaning too heavily on the *deficit* model

10 Works of the following ethnic Micronesian scholars were consulted for this paper: RP: C Filibert, O Ngirairekl, DR Ongalibany; FSM–Chuuk: M Cholymay, N Cholymay, J Peter, A Walter; RMI: H Heine; FSM–National government employees from the Department of Education and the Division of Statistics, Department of Economic Affairs; Guam–Chamorro: M Aguon, M Castro, M Flores, F Cruz Grandjean, CG Meno, EJG Perez, M Perez, MC Salas, PC Sanchez.

of designing research in ways that only document the problematic and the anomalous (e.g. Valencia 1997). Besides the stigmatising effects when that approach is over-used, it leads to the under-identification and under-study of the whole range of positive social and behavioural possibilities. Indigenous researchers, because of their cultural and linguistic capital, may be in the position to perceive options for *promising*, *positive* or *best practice* research models. For example, Chuukese researcher Novia Cholymay was part of a research team that interviewed Chuukese students and parents in Honolulu and reported their recommendations for *building bridges, not barriers* by inviting Chuukese family involvement in Hawai'i schools (Iding et al. 2007). In another example, Micronesian migrant adolescents in the Guam Humanities Council project authored their own stories and created photo-documentation of their migration experiences. Incorporating their oral traditions, they presented these personal histories in multiple public forums on Guam (Ngirairikl 2011d).

One clear conclusion that emerges from my close-up examinations of Chuukese children's home and school lives on their home island (Spencer 2015) is that the activities and patterns of learning in the two contexts were in contrast. Had only one of these settings been observed, one would greatly misjudge the diversity of experience that the children actually enjoy. The paucity of empirical documentation of the home lives of Micronesian children leads to an underestimation of the richness and the extent of experience, depth of skill building and the resulting intellectual capital that Micronesian children bring to both their home island and their post-migration contexts. Classroom observations such as those reported in Hawai'i by Paul (2003) and Talmy (2006, 2009), or on Guam by Spencer (2012), caution that many educators in the migration destination schools lack knowledge of the richness of the Micronesian migrant learners' backgrounds. Enriching the appreciation of receiving adults and institutions for the cultural funds of knowledge that migrating Micronesian families bring with them could represent a new and positive research and application direction.

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