
COLONIALISM, AMERICANIZATION, AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITY: A RESEARCH NOTE ON CHAMORRO IDENTITY IN GUAM

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This study explores baseline dimensions of identity among Chamorros in Guam, as a case in point of indigenous identity consciousness, in the context of U.S. colonialism, territorial relations, and Americanization. Despite the adverse effects of colonization and Americanization pressures, ethnographic findings suggest that Chamorros are conscious of their indigenous identity with respect to reference-group interaction, political awareness, cultural attitudes, and self-identification. Implications of these preliminary findings for future research on this understudied topic and population are discussed.

Colonized groups have actively negotiated their identities in response to colonial and neocolonial conditions (Liebkind 1989; Nagel 1998; Omi and Winant 1994). Identity is particularly relevant to indigenous people in the context of U.S. territories—places where Euro-American culture converges, often in unsettling ways, with indigenous cultures. Yet scholarship is lacking here. This research note addresses identity crisis and formation among Pacific Islander peoples in this context,

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with focus on Chamorros of Guam as a case in point.¹ I specifically explore the impact of Americanization on Chamorro identity formation, and suggest that Chamorro consciousness emerged from an uneasy relationship between the acceptance of, and resistance to, processes of Americanization. Hence, this article offers a glimpse into manifestations of indigeneity and consciousness. Because social scientific scholarship that empirically assesses Pacific Islander identity formation is lacking, and since the sparse literature that exists tends to be historical and anecdotal, this research note is intended to stimulate subsequent scholarship on an under-researched topic.

GUAM-U.S. RELATIONS: THE POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKDROPS OF CHAMORRO CONSCIOUSNESS

At the close of the Spanish-American War, Guam was officially annexed via the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. U.S. plenary power over Guam was sealed in the early 1900s with the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Insular Cases*, and in the case of *Downes v. Bidwell* (Rogers 1995, p. 125). The political obscurity of Guam's status laid the foundation for Chamorro ambiguity toward their political and cultural identities, having since been subject to American social standards (Aguon 1993; Perez 2002; Souder 1991; Underwood 1987). During World War II, following the "liberation" of Guam from the Japanese by the United States on July 21, 1944, the majority of Chamorros became especially patriotic (Souder 1991, 1992; Underwood 1987). Chamorros pushed for U.S. citizenship and civilian government, to institutionalize their U.S. patriotism and limit military control, resulting in the Organic Act of Guam in 1950 (Blaz 1994). Due to being granted legislative U.S. citizenship, the Organic Act conferred *limited self-government* to the people of Guam (Rogers 1995; Statham 1997).

¹Chamorros are the indigenous inhabitants of the Mariana Islands, while Guam is the largest and Southernmost of the Marianas chain in Micronesia of the Western Pacific. Guam has been a territory of the United States since 1898 via the Spanish-American War. Contemporary Chamorros are descendants of precontact inhabitants referred to as Ancient Chamorros, who settled the islands over 3,000 years ago (Cunningham, 1992). With the dramatic decline of the ancient Chamorro population due to colonialism, annihilation and disease, Spanish census began classifying Chamorros into a hybrid neo-Chamorro mixture in the late 1900s (Rogers, 1995; Underwood, 1987). Thus, contemporary Chamorros are technically linked to this so-called neo-Chamorro hybrid, which culturally combines indigenous, Spanish, Mexican, and Filipino influences, with a heavy Roman Catholic tradition (Diaz, 1993; Underwood, 1987). Pursuant to Underwood (1987), this neo-Chamorro cultural mixture serves as a "baseline" for empirical investigation.

This political ambivalence resulted in a splintering of Chamorro sentiments toward U.S. affiliation. U.S. status quo sentiment in Guam has been evident historically, resulting in Chamorro military *émigrés*, Chamorro exodus to the states, the island-wide celebration of Liberation Day, and the promotion of English monolingualism (Diaz 1998; Perez 2002; Underwood 1985). Yet in spite of these dramatic sociocultural transformations, an insurgent generation of Chamorro nationalists surfaced in the 1970s to change the political status of Guam toward self-determination (Perez 2001; Underwood 1990). Inspired by decolonization efforts of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico, the people of Guam arrived at an alternative status goal by the late 1980s via plebiscite vote—Commonwealth, which was believed to increase the level of self-government while maintaining U.S. sovereignty and citizenship (San Agustin 1996).

On October 29, 1997, the Guam Commonwealth Act achieved a long-awaited congressional hearing in Washington D.C. Deputy Secretary of Interior and representative for Guam Commonwealth negotiations John Garamendi indicated that the Clinton administration was opposed to the three central aspects of the act—mutual consent, immigration control, and Chamorro self-determination. The future of Guam's political status quest thus remains obscure and uncertain, in which more recent discussions have surfaced around issues of a subsequent "Chamorro-only" plebiscite vote. In short, the colonial relationship between Guam and the United States is the foundation upon which Chamorro identity crises and consciousness persist (Diaz 1996; Perez 2001; Souder 1991; Underwood 1991). However, there is a lack of empirical investigation of Chamorro experiences and sentiment, with respect to these dialectic forces of identity formation. This research note is a step in this direction, in that I seek to offer preliminary findings, and suggest how research on this under-studied topic might proceed in the future.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AS A BRIDGE

Consistent with assimilation theories (Gordon 1964; Park 1950), *Americanization* is conceptualized as a process of acculturation and conformity to mainstream American culture, rooted in Anglo-Protestant hegemony. Yet from a colonial perspective, Americanization is also seen as cultural consequence of colonization (Blauner 1972). In turn, derived from postcolonial theory (Goldie 1989; Mudrooroo 1985), *indigeneity* refers to the articulations and rearticulations of indigenous identity in a contemporary context in the

political and cultural interests of indigenous minorities; in spite of (and precisely because of) colonialism and acculturation pressures.

In an effort to offer some preliminary findings on Chamorro identity, symbolic interactionism (SI) serves as an analytical framework to empirically explore Chamorro identity in terms of reference-group interaction, political awareness, cultural attitudes, and self-identification. Given the limitations of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical lens to analyze indigenous identity, it is important to first note what SI can and cannot do in terms of identity formation and transformation.

Symbolic interactionism as empirically applied to racial and ethnic identity is a partial account of the complex dynamics of racial, ethnic and indigenous relations. Because of its emphasis on subjective reality, its conceptualization of power structures can be theoretically and empirically troublesome. Therefore, applications of SI run the risk of overstatements beyond what is empirically inferential. Nonetheless, SI as an interpretive framework has the potential of capturing some of the nuances of identity formation and transformation beyond structurally deterministic perspectives.

In general, SI asserts that social structures and realities are constructed and maintained by reflexive individuals during interaction, *vis-à-vis role-taking* (Blumer 1969). Individuals create meanings and identities, and hence come to share mutual perceptions of social reality and society, what Mead referred to as *the generalized other* (Berger and Luckman 1966; Mead 1934). Society is made up of a hierarchy of generalized others or *reference groups* (Berger and Luckman 1966; Charon 1992; Shibutani 1955). Moreover, social constructions of otherness through symbolic interactions based on dominant-group perceptions and the control of public discourse enable dominant perceptions of reality and “others” to matter more—that is racialized colonial images, assimilated identities, and gendered images (Kollock and O’Brien 1994; Lorber 1991; Omi and Winant 1994; Parenti 1992; Scott 1989). On the other hand, as active and reflexive beings, subordinate actors have the potential to change dominant perceptions of reality by reconstructing their identities according to their subjective reference points. In short, symbolic interactionism contributes insights regarding the negotiation of identity, which compliments prevailing perspectives in conflict sociology, ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies; hence serves as a conceptual framework to explore Chamorro identity. The formation of Chamorro identities and consciousness in spite of neocolonialism and Americanization, are proposed to be manifested in reference-group interaction, political awareness, attitudes toward indigenous culture, and self-conceptions/self-identification.

METHODOLOGY

Empirical investigation is based on semi-structured ethnographic interviews with Chamorros in Guam in 1997. Twenty-five Chamorros were recruited via networking, convenience, and availability. Subsequent recruitment resulted from snowball procedures with prior subjects. A small theoretical sample is appropriate on pragmatic (time, depth of analysis) and theoretical grounds (focus on in-depth accounts of self-conceptions, self-awareness, and attitudes; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Ragin and Becker 1992; Weiss 1994).

Table 1. Social characteristics of interviewees

Respondent*	Gender	Age	Ethnic-Id	Marital Status	POB	Length on Guam	Education
Norene	F	19	Chamorro	never married	Guam	19 years	College student
Eddie	M	51	Chamorro	married	Guam	18 years	H.S. diploma
Jackie	F	30	Chamorro	never married	Ca.	4 years	Masters
Danny	M	21	Chamorro	never married	Guam	18 years	<H.S. diploma
Beatrice	F	57	Chamorro-Filipina	married	Guam	57 years	H.S. diploma
Gary	M	60	Chamorro	married	Guam	58 years	Bachelors
Yvette	F	22	Chamorro-Japanese	cohabiting	Saipan	22 years	Bachelors
Ralph	M	46	Chamorro	divorced	Guam	46 years	H.S. diploma
Sarah	F	24	Chamorro-Caucasian	married	Guam	19 years	Bachelors
Kelly	F	29	Chamorro-Caucasian	separated	Guam	13 years	Bachelors
Peter	M	56	Chamorro-Chinese	married	Guam	56 years	Bachelors
Vanessa	F	19	Chamorro-Russian	never married	Guam	19 years	College student
Richard	M	24	Chamorro	cohabiting	Guam	24 years	H.S. diploma
Margaret	F	23	Chamorro	never married	Guam	23 years	Bachelors
Frances	F	44	Chamorro	divorced	Guam	36 years	Bachelors
John	M	22	Chamorro	never married	Guam	22 years	Bachelors
Bernice	F	72	Chamorro	widowed	Guam	65 years	Masters
Lisa	F	42	Chamorro	married	Guam	30 years	Bachelors
Dean	M	23	Chamorro	never married	Guam	22 years	H.S. diploma
Ben	M	54	Chamorro	married	Guam	52 years	<H.S. diploma
Marie	F	50	Chamorro	married	Guam	50 years	H.S. diploma
Kathy	F	27	Chamorro-Filipina	cohabiting	Guam	27 years	H.S. diploma
Paul	M	30	Chamorro	married	Ca.	6 years	Masters
Frank	M	29	Chamorr	never married	Guam	29 years	Bachelors
Claudia	F	49	Chamorro	married	Guam	20 years	A.A.

*Pseudonyms.

For descriptive purposes, social characteristics of interviewees are presented in Table 1. At the time of the interviews, the average age of the interviewees was 37 years, and ranged from 19 to 72 years. Fourteen females and 11 males were interviewed. Most of the interviewees identified themselves exclusively as Chamorro. Most were born in Guam, while almost all had lived in Guam for the majority of their lives. The sample is highly educated, with 10 having earned a bachelor's degree, three masters graduates, and two college students. Despite sampling bias, preliminary findings derived from this educated group is worthwhile in light of the central role of the 1970s "intelligentsia" in the Chamorro Movement (Perez 2001).

The semistructured interview schedule was devised based on assessment of racial and ethnic identification items eventually utilized for U.S. Census 2000, and sociological conceptualizations of race and ethnicity (Ferrante and Brown 2001; Omi and Winant 1994). The interview schedule was also created based on informal pilot interviews, observations, and discussions with a handful of Chamorros in Southern California and Guam prior to the formal interviews. The rationale of the semi-structured design was to benefit from the combined use of qualitative and standardized approaches. The interview schedule includes a number of categorical items and tasks (i.e., nominal, ordinal, and Likert-type scales), followed up by open-ended probing questions. The "standard probe" is an effective technique of compromise that allows collection of further ethnographic information from a fixed question that would have otherwise arrested the discussion (Weiss 1994, p. 12). Therefore, probing questions deepened the analyses of multiple layers of identity. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Baseline Dimensions of Chamorro Identity and Consciousness

If Chamorros are conscious of themselves as Chamorros, the patterns of in-group cultural interactions, and a general awareness of indigenous political issues ought to be apparent. Reference-group interactions and political awareness are conceptualized as *necessary*, but not *sufficient* factors of Chamorro identity formation and consciousness.

Reference-Group Interaction

Levels of in-group cultural interaction indicate that fellow Chamorros are primary reference groups in the lives of the respondents. The

majority of respondents indicated that more than half of their friends are Chamorro (80%). Several respondents mentioned that all of their friends are Chamorro. Likewise, the majority of respondents often interact in Chamorro social settings, such as fiestas, Novenas, Christenings, and political gatherings (72%). In addition, nearly half of the respondents stated that they often get together with ethnically diverse groups of non-Chamorros as well, often during Chamorro gatherings. For example, Peter elaborated on his interaction with non-Chamorros (in addition to Chamorros) in terms of his occupation and the *compare* (co-/god-parent) system in Guam:

I'm on a political steering committee . . . that overseas the Filipino American . . . I'm more or less politicking or pushing for my candidate in the other races, other than Chamorros . . . Also, I have god-daughters god-sons, you know a lot of them, . . . Chamorros, Whites, Caucasian what not. They may be Asian, Filipinos . . . I have a lot of friends who are not Chamorro . . . So as you can see my relationship with other ethnic groups is basically pretty good.

Understandably, this account reveals a likelihood of Chamorros to interact with non-Chamorros given the increasing diversity in Guam. However, interaction with non-Chamorros does not necessarily indicate a lack of in-group interaction, since the incorporation of non-Chamorros into neo-Chamorro ways of life is part of a prevailing pattern of Chamorro formations of fictive kin through the *compare* systems based on indigenous constructions of Catholicism (Diaz 1993; Perez 2002).

Political Awareness

A number of items designed to uncover political awareness and attitudes toward key issues surrounding Chamorro identity were incorporated; namely questions about awareness of Chamorro self-determination and indigenous rights, and attitudes toward institutionalized (and often politicized) cultural-maintenance efforts. The issue of land was also considered. This is not to say that non-Chamorro residents are less aware of political issues, but rather to determine levels of awareness among the respondents.

In regards to *general awareness of Chamorro self-determination and indigenous rights issues*, and familiarity with organizations that promote these issues, most of the interviewees revealed an awareness of self-determination and indigenous rights issues (76%), and specific organizations that promote these issues (84%); including the

Chamoru Nation, Organization of People for Indigenous Rights (OPI-R), Republic of Guahan, Taotao Guam, I Tao Tao Tano, and the Chamorro Land Trust Commission. Upon probing, several respondents elaborated by articulating critical opinions of some of these political organizations. Lisa, for example, criticized the Chamoru Nation for being “too extreme,” relative to a “true” Chamorro way.

Chamoru Nation . . . I think the way they go about trying to get their message across is a little bit too extreme, or more sensationalizing and not really representing you know the way a true Chamorro would. I think a lot of the Chamorro people are a lot more diplomatic than what they come across to be.

In contrast, Sarah criticized the Chamoru Nation for not being progressive enough: “Yes, Chamoru Nation. I believe in it, but I don’t join. Cause they’re not the hard ones.”

Two Likert-type items were further utilized to explore general *attitudes toward efforts promoting Chamorro culture and recognizing the ancient Chamorro way of life*; which most of the aforementioned organizations symbolize. Nearly all of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that efforts promoting Chamorro culture are a waste of time. Bernice expressed the importance of promoting Chamorro culture in the larger context of indigenous cultural interests in general: “I disagree. Because the kids now a days, . . . should be aware of their culture . . . not just in Guam. It’s everywhere, like the Hawaiians, like Native American Indians, you know . . . back to their roots.”

Despite some of the critical opinions of the Chamorro organizations noted above, the majority of interviewees disagreed (32%) or strongly disagreed (52%) that organizations that promote the recognition of ancient Chamorro ways are a waste of time. In fact, Sarah, suggested that recognition of ancient Chamorro ways and other cultures in Guam, is positive for Chamorro and non-Chamorro children: “I have three Micronesian students. I have Filipinos, Americans, and they liked it. You know they were interested, including the Chamorro students . . . I guess they should not only promote Chamorro, but also the other cultures.”

In light of these findings, negative criticisms of organizations seem specific to the political techniques employed by the organizations, rather than the goals of the organizations; hence suggesting baseline levels of political awareness.

Attitudes and awareness of *land issues* were also explored. Interviewees were asked in an open-ended format to express their opinions, thoughts, attitudes, and feelings on the issue of land in Guam (i.e., indigenous land rights, government land acquisition, and selling of land to capitalist investors). Given the politically-charged historical complexity surrounding land in Guam, respondents revealed diverse opinions. Jackie expressed ambivalence about the complexity of the issue—specifically with respect to the selling of land, environmental degradation, and land rights issues:

There's not much of it (land) . . . Before you know it, we're going to be building up instead of out . . . I'm very ambivalent on who should have rights to the land . . . if the Navy gave up a piece of land, who should have the rights to that land? . . . And who should stand in line? . . . Who would get priority over purchasing that land? . . . If we were to actually investigate who owned the land previous to the government owning it, we could be in a big mess. . . . A lot of lawsuits . . . I don't know what the best way to handle a situation like that . . . I don't think that we should exclude anybody from purchasing land, . . . Another part of me says that local Chamorros should maybe have a better chance at obtaining the land. But then we start to get into these discrimination issues.

Lisa grounded the scarcity of land to colonial-land acquisition: “Well my view on it is it's limited. You know there are only so many square meters of it available. There was a lot of it that was forcefully taken away from the original landowners, and without just compensation . . . You know there are really . . . families that don't have anything.” She further supported indigenous land rights in her explicit nationalist view towards the maintenance of ancestral land as an integral aspect of Chamorro identity and culture:

Others are benefiting more than the local people. And I feel that you know if they are going to go through land trust and giving back to the people that don't have land, that it really should be those that have Chamorro ancestry . . . And sure this is American soil, but if we were to go to the Philippines or to China, they're not going to give us anything, because we would be considered the outsiders too . . . We have less land than they do. You know it really should be Chamorros first.

Ralph also displayed a level of political awareness with respect to his value for land in his critical perception of governmental land

possession and exploitation: “Well, I for one would never sell my land. And from the people’s side, if the government has land they should put it in good use, not for somebody in the government for personal gain. That’s what we’re looking out for now, white collar crime . . . They get away with it within the system . . . They’re cheating the people.”

Political awareness of land was also reflected in insights on intraethnic and familial conflict in the context of individualism and profit-maximization; which is perhaps a consequence of the penetration of capitalist ideologies on Guam. For instance, Sarah voiced her value for land and the temptation of monetary gain that has led to familial conflict and land loss in her family. She also revealed cultural detachment in terms of one’s willingness to sell familial land for personal gain, thus suggesting further evidence of indigenous consciousness:

I don’t have any land because my uncles took it from my grandparents and sold it. So all the land that was in the family is sold already. My husband has land, and we’re not going to sell it. And our kids are not going to sell it. It’s just going to be a part of us, keep it in the family . . . Other people are selling because that money issue. I mean my uncles and aunts, when they sold it, ooh wow millions . . . I guess they don’t have that culture.

Bernice also elaborated on land disputes with her siblings and the scarcity of land. Her indigenous value for land was particularly voiced with respect to her children:

Now my brothers and sisters were all for selling the land except myself. Because I have children. I have land in Merizo that I can divide into four . . . And I have additional land in Agat and Maite. But my great grandchildren, I was thinking where will they go? Again I was thinking that Guam is one small island, and it doesn’t grow . . . We’re having a little bit of conflict, between me and my brothers and sisters because they want the land sold, and I don’t . . . I’ve seen people who would sell their land who to this day have no land . . . Money especially if you don’t manage it . . . it goes fast . . . Remember this is just 244 square miles . . . compared to the rest of the world.

Ralph’s value for land seems embedded in his experiences with poverty, therefore suggesting social class and indigenous consciousness: “We struggle . . . I come from a poor family. And we

never sold our land, ha! My mom and dad are gone. They passed the land down to the kids. Because we can build on it . . . The people out there, that's their personal thing . . . I mean they're so greedy . . . You know everything here is material."

John displayed considerable insight with respect to the land issue as he captured the complexity of familial conflict and government possession of native land:

Land is a very divisive issue . . . How you deal with land? . . . You have to compete with your relatives to try and get your own piece . . . But then you're talking about lands that are held by the government. I mean one-third of our island is owned by the Feds. The other third is owned by the local government. Its just too much . . . You know we're right here in the middle of the Pacific and land is not growing on trees. The population is growing . . . There's been a great injustice. The federal government took advantage of the fact that the people in Guam definitely had gratitude for their efforts during World War II . . . to rid the island of the oppression that the Japanese you know . . . But a new kind of oppression formed with all these land takings. It's the . . . best properties on the island, and they [military] took it for themselves.

John's expression of the negative impact of Western capitalist ideology typifies an indigenous world-view in terms of Chamorro cultural nationalism and familial concerns, in the context of the development of "a new kind of oppression." John further articulated his indigeneity regarding the hotly-contested complexity of Chamorro land rights and the exclusion of other racial and ethnic groups:

There's the issue of non-Chamorros who own land . . . You have to respect them . . . Then when you have government land that hasn't been distributed yet . . . Should other ethnic groups be eligible to receive that? I would say "no." . . . If I move to Spain or move to Thailand or even the Philippines, they have a closed land policy . . . It's controlled by the government. You have to be from that country. And so for people that think that just because Guam is part of that American family . . . that it's a free-for-all land grab . . . There's nothing wrong with distributing land among the Chamorros There's just so many facets to that problem, and land is just so integral to us.

In sum, there is evidence of indigenous consciousness in terms of cultural interaction and political awareness. This is not to say that

interaction with non-Chamorros is an impediment to the maintenance of cultural practices and indigenous identity. Non-Chamorros, in fact, seem to be incorporated into Chamorro rituals. Furthermore, non-Chamorros are perhaps equally conscious of the political issues explored. Nonetheless, these tentative findings suggest indigenous political awareness, and in some cases culturally nationalist sentiments.

Cultural Attitudes and Self-identification

In an attempt to tap some of the social psychological dimensions of Chamorro identity and consciousness, cultural attitudes and self-identification of these Chamorros are examined. *Cultural attitudes* refer to attitudes and feelings toward Chamorro cultural maintenance, particularly language maintenance. Again, given the preliminary status of this research note, cultural attitudes are conceptualized as a necessary baseline indicator of Chamorro identity and consciousness. Chamorro identity is explored here, in terms of racial and ethnic self-identification.

Cultural Attitudes

Chamorro attitudes toward various cultural maintenance efforts were assessed, particularly language maintenance. Likert-type baseline questions were again utilized to initiate more in-depth ethnographic dialogue. As anticipated, almost all of the respondents felt that it was very important to preserve Chamorro culture. Upon in-depth probing, the ethnographic narratives revealed mixed sentiments toward the preservation of Chamorro culture. For instance, Kelly detailed specific aspects of Chamorro culture she perceived as worth preserving, yet displayed a pejorative perception of indigenous culture in her use of the word “backwards,” in the context of Western notions of modernization: “I think it’s important to preserve the knowledge, skills, if possible . . . I don’t think you should try to go backwards. I mean, “oh, we’re going to reverse it because we’re losing too much of our culture?” . . . If it’s language that’s good. And if it’s keeping skill alive, . . . rope making . . . , that’s good to know. I mean those are valuable things. But as far as trying to go back in time . . . it’s not realistic.” This response suggests that Chamorros like Kelly have internalized modernist notions of progress, yet appreciate the importance of preserving Chamorro culture insofar as practical to contemporary conditions. On the other hand, this account also implies the adaptability of Chamorro culture, hence indicative of a possible form of indigeneity.

With respect to attitudes toward language-use, nearly all of the respondents indicated that they either agree or strongly agree that it is “too bad that more and more Chamorros cannot speak the Chamorro language these days.” Bernice especially displayed Chamorro consciousness of language maintenance, cultural erosion, ambivalence, intergenerational conflict, and identity crisis among Chamorro youth who do not speak from their mother tongues: “We are losing . . . I may be too old fashion, but I still think some of the teenagers, . . . you know their parents are speaking Chamorro, they’re speaking English . . . I still think that it’s because they are mixed up.” Similarly, Frank stated, “especially the younger generations . . . A lot of them don’t seem to respect the elders . . . They feel that well, we don’t have to learn the language because what good would it be to us . . . And it’s sad because a lot of the older Chamorros stress that we want to preserve our Chamorro identity. But it seems that the young generations seem to be wanting to move out of it.”

Assessing attitudes toward language-use with a more explicit cultural nationalist statement, a majority of the respondents further revealed that they agree (64%) or strongly agree (12%) that “Chamorros should return to the ‘original’ language of the people.” Despite the hybridity of the Chamorro language, I intentionally used the term “original” to essentialize the language issue for purpose of instigating ethnographic responses to this hotly-contested issue.² Again, a pattern of mixed sentiment among respondents was apparent. Eddie, for example, agreed but only in reference to Chamorros who were born and raised in Guam; therefore articulating indigeneity by geographical location: “I’m talking about the Chamorros that were born in Guam. Now I don’t necessarily agree for Chamorros not born in Guam. You know they never did speak it, the language, from birth. ”

Jackie specifically stated that they agree but not to the extent of replacing English with Chamorro, since English is the “universal language”: “I agree for cultural purposes . . . to preserve some feeling of distinctiveness. But not to the degree that it would be like the official language. Because alongside English as the official language, I could see that. But not to replace English . . . It’s turning out to be the universal language.” Likewise, Bernice stated, “Not versus English because I still feel that English is sort of the universal language. You know wherever you go. I’ve been traveling to different places in the world. English is sort of the venue . . . So they should return

²It is important to note that the Chamorro language structure still reflects its indigenous roots, despite its hybridity (Rodriguez-Ponga, 1998, Topping, 1980).

to the original language, but not to the extent of universal.” These mixed feelings imply consciousness about language, and the realization of the tremendous dilemmas and obstacles of indigenous language preservation efforts.

Richard was vehemently critical about the erosion of the Chamorro language, arguing that language preservation efforts are futile since the indigenous origins of the language significantly eroded. Nonetheless, upon further probing, Richard displayed culturally nationalist sentiments in his expression of frustration with the watershed of the Chamorro language: “How are we going to return the language when it’s supposed to be from the grassroots you know?... So original language of the people, return? No! That should already be there!”

Self-Identification

In light of the preliminary findings on Chamorro cultural interactions, Chamorro identity and consciousness were further explored in terms of self-concept and self-perception, as manifested in racial, ethnic, ancestral, and national identification. In other words, if Chamorros interact within Chamorro contexts, and hence identify with an indigenous self, one might expect this to be expressed in the way Chamorros self-identify and interpret prevailing racial and ethnic categories of classification. Integrating sociological and indigenous concepts, a number of baseline questions were designed to assess self-identification. Various fixed responses were utilized to represent indigenous (Chamorro), geographical (Guamanian), Hispanic (Spanish), panethnic, homogenized (Asian American, Asian Pacific), Americanized (American, U.S. citizen), and multi-racial/multi-ethnic identification. Probing questions enabled respondents to qualify their meanings of race, ethnicity, and ancestry. My intention was to explore their perceptions, not to clarify terms. As already noted, most of the respondents chose “Chamorro” when asked to identify their race (64%), ethnicity (84%), and ancestry (60%). In fact, most Chamorros (76%) also identified themselves as Chamorro socially. Understandably, there was some ambiguity about the meaning of race, ethnicity, and ancestry. By furnishing the categories with a closed-ended format, yet allowing open-ended responses, indigenous self-identification was implied in the dialogue.

For instance, Eddie understood the political-, cultural-, and land-based distinctions between “Guamanian” and “Chamorro,” with respect to the meanings attached to race, ethnicity, and ancestry: “The reason why I say Guamanian for my race is because I was born in Guam. Now when I answered Chamorro for your question on

ethnicity, Chamorro consists of people living in the Mariana Islands, and Guam is part of the Marianas Islands. And so is ancestry, the same reason.”³

Likewise, articulating her preference for “Chamorro” over “Guamanian” for race and ethnicity, Lisa revealed an indigenous self-conception, albeit implicit:

Ok, well I consider myself a Chamorro before anything else . . . And then Guamanian . . . Some people, . . . they don’t understand what Chamorro is. They say, “I’m not really a Chamorro, because they died along time ago.” And I tell them, “If you want to get technical about it,” . . . and “that I have Chamorro ancestry.” Because Guamanian is more like how people interpret it. Like the Haoles (white Americans) interpret it as they’re Guamanian if they’ve lived here (Guam) a long time, you know . . . But I grew up being identified and knowing that I’m identified as Guamanian because I have Chamorro ancestry.

Similarly, John was not only explicit in his preference for “Chamorro” over “Guamanian,” but commented on the issue of racial homogenization in the terms “American,” “Asian American,” and “Asian:”

I consider myself . . . a Chamorro from Guam . . . Guamanian . . . describes your place of origin by geographic location . . . Because once you move to Guam, you could be a Guamanian just as if you moved to California, you would be a “Californian” . . . I guess a lot of people . . . use the term “Guamanian” a lot . . . because they just want to make sure people know where they’re from . . . And then “American.” . . . I just don’t see myself as American . . . It’s a label . . . I do not use Asian American because I do not consider myself an Asian. I think that because Pacific Islanders are not as populous as most other ethnic groupings [in the United States], they don’t really know where to put us, and so they tag us on to the Asians.

John’s ethnographic account is insightful in terms of the larger issues of classification and homogenization, thus revealing evidence

³For clarification, “Guamanian” technically refers to residents of Guam regardless of race, ethnicity or ancestry. However, “Guamanian” is widely and exclusively used among Chamorros on the U.S. mainland to identify themselves ancestrally to Guam. “Chamorro” is essentially rooted to the Mariana Islands as an indigenous notion (Perez, 2002).

of Chamorro identity and consciousness. In fact, John's dialogue represents patterns of self-identification throughout the narratives, yet consciousness beyond most other respondents.

A number of the "multiracial" and "multiethnic" Chamorros identified themselves racially, ethnically, and socially as Chamorro, despite their mixed ancestry. For instance, despite her mixed ancestry and confusion with the terminology, Sarah explicitly identified herself as Chamorro at all levels, hence further implying evidence of an indigenous self-concept:

Ok my dad is half American and my mom is a quarter Dutch. You figure it out . . . I consider myself Chamorro (for race) because I didn't know my grandmother was Dutch until she died . . . I still think Chamorro (for ethnicity). Because that's what I've always been around . . . And I wasn't raised with my dad. I don't know his hoale side . . . I still consider myself Chamorro (ancestry), although I don't look it.

A few other items assessed self-identification by questioning the race and ethnicity of multiracial and multiethnic children and grandchildren of respondents. Given the tendency among respondents to identify themselves with their Chamorro self, perceptions of their "multiracial" or "biracial" children/grandchildren were probed. However, among those who responded (16), over half replied "biracial/multiracial" when asked what race they perceive their child/grandchild to be (56.3%), while a quarter answered "American." Only two responded "Chamorro," while only one mentioned "Guamanian." However, when asked what ethnicity they perceive their child/grandchild to be, half responded "Chamorro" (50%) while over a quarter replied "multicultural" (33.3%). For instance, despite specifying fractions of racial lineage, Frances identified her child ethnically as Chamorro. In other words, some of the findings on ethnic self-identification indicate a tendency of respondents to identify their children and grandchildren with their Chamorro lineage despite mixed ancestry. Some of the respondents who identified their children or grandchildren with their Chamorro background qualified their answers on cultural grounds. For instance, Eddie justified his response based on cultural socialization within a Chamorro-familial context: "She is living with us. That was the main reason why I said Chamorro (for race and ethnicity), because she's with a Chamorro family" (Emphases added.).

In sum, preliminary evidence with respect to self-identification suggests a tendency toward indigenous self-concepts, despite some ambivalence about the technical meaning of terms, hence providing subtle implications of indigenous identity and consciousness.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In exploring baseline dimensions of identity among Chamorros in Guam, this research note sought to empirically assess indigenous identity and consciousness, to contribute preliminary findings and spark subsequent research on an under-researched topic in the context of U.S. territorial relations and Americanization. This research note is especially timely in light of changing official racial and ethnic designations for the U.S. census and other national data collection initiatives in recent years, which affects the ways in which the U.S. territories make sense of their demographic distinctions with classifications schemes furnished by outside forces.

Beyond externally defined labels, this research note grappled with the question of identity formation among an indigenous people within a unique context of U.S. colonialism. Despite the adverse effects of colonization on Chamorros, these preliminary findings suggest that these Chamorros are conscious of their indigenous identity on various baseline levels. First, reference-group interactions imply that in-group cultural interactions remain paramount in the lives of these Chamorros in spite of Guam's increasing cultural diversity and patterns of Americanization.

With respect to political awareness, these Chamorros were found to be conscious of the pressing political issues surrounding their political and cultural identities and history. The interviewees in general displayed political awareness of Chamorro self-determination and indigenous-rights issues, particularly concerning cultural erosion, attitudes toward cultural maintenance, and land.

Chamorro identity was also assessed in terms of cultural attitudes and self-identification. The respondents displayed favorable in-group opinions and feelings toward cultural preservation efforts. Despite some confusion about the technical meanings of "race" and "ethnicity," evidence on self-identification suggests a tendency towards an indigenous self. Therefore, some forms of symbolic indigeneity are apparent in the self-identification of these Chamorros.

Because the findings of this research note are considered preliminary, limitations and suggestions for subsequent research are noteworthy. First, due to the possibility of sampling bias, generalizations must be considered tentative. Large-scale quantitative

empirical research would contribute to the already emergent historical and qualitative works. It would be fruitful for future research to incorporate large-scale research designs to uncover self-conceptions, feelings, and attitudes to statistically represent the broader population.

Despite methodological limitations and sampling bias, the observations in this research note are theoretically generalizable to other indigenous peoples in similar circumstances, in light of the historical commonalities of colonization and indigenous struggle throughout the globe; namely among Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Chicanos/as within the territoriality of the United States.

Second, as Gans (1979) suggested some time ago, symbolic identification does not necessarily translate into commitment to and conscious internalization of cultural identity. Hence, as noted, the findings of this research note are tentative. Nonetheless, the narratives, combined with the historical evidence, suggest that Chamorros are culturally resilient and adaptively responsive to adverse social and cultural change, in spite of the legacy of colonization and acculturation pressures. Contemporary Chamorros have, indeed, been noted for their cultural resilience, ethnogenesis, and hybridity (Diaz 1996; Kasperbauer 1996). For instance, Chamorros have negotiated their identities by appropriating Roman Catholicism, Discovery Day, and Liberation into contemporary Chamorro identity to the advantage of their own culturally nationalist interests (Diaz 1996, 1998). Therefore, given the historical and interpretive bases of these works, the contribution of this article (albeit preliminary and suggestive) is empirical validation of indigenous articulations that others have already noted in the literature.

Third, given the foundation of Roman Catholicism on cultural and political life on Guam, a more extensive empirical analysis of the role of religion on Chamorro identity formation and indigeneity is worthwhile, yet this research note merely addressed religious dimensions of Chamorro identity in passing. As noted above, the work of Diaz (1993) is the only published analysis of Chamorro indigeneity and hybridization of Catholicism, to my knowledge. Pinhey and Perez (2000) also contribute some insights regarding the role of Catholicism on Chamorro self-appraisals of divorce and cohabitation in Guam.

Finally, in light of the ongoing transnational mobility of Chamorros especially since the signing of the Organic Act in 1950 and the subsequent exodus of military *émigrés* who initiated the formation of Chamorro communities on the U.S. mainland, empirical

comparison of mainland versus on-island Chamorro identities is certainly worthwhile. In fact, Perez (2002) offers an interpretive note on Chamorro identity, hybridity, transnationalism and diaspora on the U.S. mainland, which in part grapples with convergence and tension between “mainland” and “on-island” Chamorros.

In conclusion, Chamorro identity is inextricably intertwined in a complex colonial history. This research note is a mere step in the direction of peeling away some of the layers, by exploring impacts of Americanization, and the adaptive responses of Chamorros.

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