

## Pacific Identities beyond US Racial Formations: the Case of Chamorro Ambivalence and Flux

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Although racial and ethnic relations scholarship continues to proliferate, there is a lack of scholarship on race and ethnicity in the context of US territorial relations. The foundation of US race relations is embedded in territorial expansion. In turn, Pacific Islanders, albeit a small population in the US, have emerged as a relatively recent group within the US racial and ethnic mosaic precisely because of US territorial politics, yet research on Pacific Islanders on the US mainland is lacking and marginal.

Pacific Islanders on the US mainland find themselves historically and socially situated in ambivalence in the context of US territorial relations, colonialism and race relations. With the homogenisation of ethnic labels such as 'Native American', 'Asian Pacific American', and 'Hispanic', and in lieu of the essentialism inherent in a nation that romanticises its immigrant history; Pacific Islander experiences are often watered down by these binarisms. In essence, there seems to be an intraethnic and interracial hierarchy that deals with Pacific Islanders as epiphenomenal, or virtually ignores their experiences. Consequently, within US academic discourse, Pacific Islander experiences further tend to be reduced within biracial theorising to minority-majority dichotomies. Therefore, issues of identity among Pacific Islanders are entangled in a history of racialisation and colonial binarisms, thus perpetuating invisibility — that is, embedded in their existence at the edges of US neocolonialism, race relations and ethnic studies.

The focus of this paper is on Chamorros of Guam, as a case of Pacific Islander diaspora on the mainland US.<sup>1</sup> Heightened by the Organic Act of Guam in 1950, which granted *congressional* US citizenship to the residents of Guam, Chamorros have emerged as the third largest Pacific Islander community in the continental US (Barringer *et al.*, 1993). I explore Chamorro ambivalence and diaspora in the context of US neocolonialism and racial formation. In so doing, I discuss the complex layers of ambiguity and flux among Chamorros on Guam and the US mainland; and adaptive cultural and political responses among Chamorros in the context of US neocolonialism and race relations.

### Historical Context of Chamorro Ambiguity and Identity Crises

The Chamorro presence in the US is rooted in the colonial history of Guam/US relations. Chamorro invisibility and ambiguity are inherently linked to this

ongoing colonial relationship. Hence, Chamorro experiences are grounded in a complex web of colonial conditions. I seek to capture some of this complexity by linking US colonialism on Guam to Chamorro mainland experiences at the interface of identity crises.

### *An Overview of US Colonisation of Guam*

Although the history of Guam represents a long saga of conquest since Spanish contact, I refer exclusively to Guam's political history following the American capture from Spain in 1898. Sparked by North American imperialism, the late 1800s marked the beginning of the US occupation of Guam. As the geopolitical arena became more complex and globalised during this era, the US became especially interested in expanding its military presence in the Pacific Islands, Asia and the Caribbean. Likewise, Guam was intimately tied to US intentions to establish authority in the Philippines, thereby becoming the most strategic US colonial outpost in the Pacific. Also as the Spanish-American War was in motion, the occupation of Spain's colonies became a vested interest for the US (Farrel, 1991).

Through a series of political mandates by the US, Guam came under US military control for its strategic location in the Pacific Rim, and was officially annexed via the Treaty of Paris on 10 December 1898. Guam eventually became an extension of the American normative structure, subjugating Chamorros to American social standards, which profoundly affected Chamorro self-concept (Aguon, 1993; Souder, 1991; Underwood, 1987). Sovereign authority of Guam was placed in the hands of the US, where it was to remain for years to come with the exception of the Japanese Occupation during World War II.

Treaty negotiations between the US, Spain and the international community set the stage for legitimate and paternalistic control of Chamorros on Guam (Underwood, 1987). As control of Guam emerged out of military interests, the Navy politically subjugated Chamorros for such interests. The legitimacy of US authority on Guam was sealed in 1901 with the US Supreme Court decision in the *Insular Cases*. A major issue surrounding these cases was

whether constitutional restrictions (such as the Tenth amendment) on congressional authority over the US states also served to check federal power over the new island acquisitions. (Rogers, 1995, p. 125)

In the case of *Downes v. Bidwell*, the Supreme Court ruled that the 'insular territories' are not equivalent to the states; thus the US Congress has unlimited authority over US territories since the Constitution of the US is inapplicable. The political status of Guam remained obscure, thus enabling unprecedented subjugation of Chamorros by the US Navy and Congress during the early 1900s.

World War II placed Guam in a precarious situation. The Japanese occupied Guam during 1941 and 1944, as a result of shortcomings on the part the US to secure a sufficient military fortress and dominance in the Pacific. Nonetheless, Guam was 'liberated' by the US on 21 July 1944. Following Liberation, the US reestablished its authority on Guam. To prevent future military vulnerabilities,

the US initiated an aggressive campaign to institute political and military dominance. Guam, thereby, was recognised for its strategic geopolitical value in a new light. Due to being 'rescued' by the US military from Japanese occupation combined with the continued Americanisation of the Chamorro people, the majority of Chamorros became highly patriotic and grateful for American rule in the 1940s as an extension of their appreciation, generosity and reciprocity so characteristic of their indigenous world-view (Souder, 1992, 1991; Underwood, 1987). This heightened Chamorro desires for US citizenship and Americanisation.

However, the reality of American 'rescue' became painfully obvious with the lack of concern for postwar civilian conditions (Souder, 1992). The years following the War were again marked by political subjugation boiling into discontent among Chamorros that escalated to become a key trajectory for political resistance in the 1950s and 1960s. The US Government further seized land in the interest of national defence. Displacement of Chamorros from the land profoundly affected Chamorro cultural identity. Rooted in ancient Chamorro society, land continues to be central to indigenous culture, for at one time Guam was seen as 'a sacred place to the Ancient Chamorros who believed that all life Sprang from its soil' (Souder, 1992, p. 31). At the beginning of World War II the US had acquired over one-third of the island. With revitalised post-World War II military interests in developing Guam into a military fortress, the US claimed huge pieces of land with the goal of possessing over half of the island (Underwood, 1987).

The US presence in Guam was also aimed at promoting acculturation, with education as a major vehicle of Americanisation (Aguon, 1993; Underwood, 1987). Compulsory public education was immediately instituted following US annexation, and was intended to establish English as the official language, replacing the Chamorro and Spanish languages. In addition to language, other dimensions of cultural behaviour were constrained. For instance, local customs and celebrations were replaced with federal holidays through mandates requiring observance. As the process of Americanisation escalated following Liberation, many Chamorros became highly malleable and patriotic to the US to the point of perceiving one's self and people as being forever in debt to 'America' (Souder, 1991).

In light of the rapid changes brought on by Americanisation, Chamorros began a quest for US citizenship and civilian government (Blaz, 1994). Various petitions for self-government and citizenship were filed in Washington over the years. Following docile efforts toward US citizenship in the 1920s, the citizenship effort escalated. Chamorro leaders went to Washington to lobby and personally communicate Chamorro grievances and their desire for citizenship.<sup>2</sup>

Other political developments fuelled the Chamorro drive for citizenship and decolonisation. With the emergence of New World politics after World War II, promise of self-determination was articulated with the creation of an oversight council — the UN Trusteeship Council (Rogers, 1995).

In 1945, land claims became a focal issue of political protest as Chamorro land rights were obscured and continued to be violated for military interests. Years of festering animosity towards subjugation by military government

converged at a heated confrontation between Guam's local leaders and Governor Pownall in 1949, thereby culminating in the removal of naval government from Guam. President Truman formally transferred administrative control of Guam from the Navy to the Department of the Interior and appointed the first civilian governor of Guam — Carlton S. Skinner (Rogers, 1995). Civilian election of the governor eventually replaced executive appointment further empowering the people of Guam.

Following years of enduring political opposition, the Chamorro drive for US citizenship and to limit military control was codified with the Organic Act of Guam in 1950. The Organic Act led to a number of steps toward self-rule and decolonisation. With local government being placed in civilian hands, civilians became connected to the executive branch and congress. For the first time, the three conventional branches of government were established. A Bill of Rights was also introduced through the Organic Act. In 1951, the First Guam Legislature was established, which enabled further local political control. Finally, Chamorros could travel more freely to the US mainland prompting enlistment in the US military and migration to the states.

Despite landmark social and political changes surrounding the Organic Act, Guam's strategic value remained a primary concern to the US. Neocolonialism surfaced in subtle forms but with the same intention — to remotely control Guam and its people. This is related to the fact that Chamorros did not vote on the Organic Act, yet are governed within its parameters. Although Chamorros obtained American citizenship, thereby transforming Guam from an 'unorganised' territory to an 'organised' territory, their newly acquired citizenship status remains second class. The US government in many ways continued to treat Guam as an unorganised US possession under the rationale of the Insular Cases. As a result of being granted congressional versus constitutional US citizenship, Chamorros of Guam did not acquire many conventional constitutional rights. They were denied full protection from federal and congressional authority, participation in national politics, federal, social and economic benefits, and constitutional protection under the American legal system (Rogers, 1995; Statham, 1997).

Despite enduring efforts toward self-determination, the replacement of military government with civilian government, and transfer of authority from the Navy to the Department of the Interior, the Organic Act conferred *limited self-government* to the people of Guam with significant power remaining in military hands. The immediate tone of the Organic Act ironically seemed to limit self-rule. The neocolonial intentions of the US were confirmed at the onset as Guam was declared an 'unincorporated' versus 'incorporated' territory — indicating that there was no future plan to incorporate Guam in union with the US as a state (Statham, 1997). The US congress maintained full authority to legislate and even amend the Organic Act without consent of the local people. The US president also maintained authority to claim any portion of Guam's land for military purposes. In the meantime, the military continued to control over 36 per cent of the island (Rogers, 1995).

Although the formal goal of the Interior was to transcend the colonial aftermath of Guam, decolonisation efforts were either lost within the complex

bureaucracy of the Interior or remained a low priority. The people of Guam, in short, were granted the label of American citizenship and self-government, yet still lacked a fully legitimate voice. These contradictions set the tone for a new era of political subjugation.

With a new tide of geopolitical interests and developments combined with Guam's obscure status, further instances of political subjugation surfaced. International political relations in the mid-1900s revitalised military interests on Guam. For instance, anticommunist sentiment, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War plunged Guam into a new chapter of national defence (Rogers, 1995; Underwood, 1987). Over the years, attempts were made to formally reestablish military control over civilian authority. Therefore, Chamorros were subject to contemporary political manoeuvres on the part of the military to act as it deemed fit for national security without consent of the people of Guam (i.e. storage of warfare products including nuclear warheads, bombs, missiles, further land acquisition, and construction of storage facilities).

In regards to land, the US military has retained overwhelming possession of Guam, in spite of Chamorro resistance. Moreover, the combined ownership of the military, federal, and local government is 50 per cent of the entire island (Rogers, 1995). With down-sizing of the military in the 1990s, a huge proportion of Guam's land under military possession is in excess of military 'need', yet remains off-limits to locals.

Compounding the situation, Guam's economy was absorbed into a new era of modern capitalism. In the heart of modern capitalism, removal of restraints on private investment occurred, while Guam's economy experienced tremendous growth in the 1960s as a result of the rise of the tourist industry and other complimentary industries (i.e. construction, commerce, and imports). As Guam became positioned within the larger context of modern capitalist development in the Pacific, Guam's economy in the years to come was to experience fluctuating cycles of economic crisis and growth characteristic of capitalism — and hence would suffer the residual brunt of inconsistency, dramatic social, cultural and economic change, labour immigration and exploitation.

By the early 1970s, tourism had expanded with high-rise hotels sprouting up on Tumon Beach (Guam's version of Waikiki). Japanese capitalist investments began to outweigh US investment, as Japan became the primary source of capital and tourists in Guam. Consequently, land values have inflated tremendously through the years, enticing Chamorro landowners to sell their land.

Despite periods of economic growth, Guam's economy continued to fluctuate through the years. For centuries, Guam had been a thriving independent society that was transformed into a dependent welfare economy as a result of outside intrusions and dependent development. These conditions induced push-pull factors involving subsequent waves of Chamorro migration to the US to seek the American dream, thus establishing permanent Chamorro communities especially in California (Munoz, 1979; Underwood, 1985). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, Guam's economy prospered, while becoming increasingly dependent on Asian economies. Once an independent self-sustaining society, Guam became a dependent consumer society marked by

urbanisation. Subsequent generations began to recognise the neocolonialist relationship between the US and Guam, and that in fact the return of the US and Liberation of Guam was not to save Chamorros but to save face and ensure US military dominance in the Pacific (Diaz, 1998; Souder, 1991; Underwood, 1977). This consciousness served as an undercurrent of resistance that surfaced in the 1970s. Since the 1970s, Chamorro nationalism has proliferated (Perez, 2001).

In response to neocolonialist conditions, Chamorro activists and leaders pondered alternative strategies toward self-determination. Prompted by decolonisation efforts among other US colonies, a new strategy emerged on Guam that recognised the need to transform the existing neocolonialist relationship between Guam and the US. In light of seemingly 'successful' decolonisation efforts of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico, Guam's leaders pondered strategies toward decolonisation and self-determination such as commonwealth, statehood, and free association (Cristobal, 1993). Guam's political status efforts have been a long uphill struggle due to the lack of incentive on the part of the US to decolonise a possession over which it seeks to maintain control. Despite division among Chamorros regarding the most feasible alternative towards decolonisation, Guam finally possessed a status goal by the late 1980s — commonwealth — which was believed to increase the level of self-government while remaining under US sovereignty and citizenship (San Agustin, 1996). However, diverse sentiments surrounding Guam's Draft Commonwealth Act revealed division.

On 29 October 1997, the Guam Commonwealth Act finally achieved a long awaited Congressional hearing — only the second hearing on the act within a 10-year span. After pleas and testimonies from numerous Chamorro leaders and advocates, the Deputy Secretary of Interior and President Clinton's representative for Guam Commonwealth negotiations, John Garamendi, indicated that the Administration was not willing to agree to three main areas of the act — mutual consent, immigration control, and Chamorro self-determination — indeed core elements of the proposal. Therefore, as Guam's non-voting delegate in congress, Robert A. Underwood (1997, p. 1), states: 'The most significant outcome of the hearing was the clarification of the executive branch's official position on the draft Act'. Therefore, the future of Guam's political status quest remains obscure and uncertain. In short, the neocolonialist relationship between Guam and the US is the foundation upon which Chamorro ambiguity and ambivalence on Guam and the US mainland persists.

### *Identity Crises: Political and Cultural Dimensions*

As with colonised people throughout the world, Chamorros have certainly been subject to political domination and cultural genocide — that are likewise manifested in identity crises among Chamorros on Guam and the US mainland. With the transplanting of American institutions to Guam, along with the rigorous Americanisation campaign since 1898, political identity crisis has long been accompanied by cultural crisis. *Identity crisis* is thus conceptualised as a multilayered state of political, cultural and social psychological ambivalence

resulting from political ambiguity of non self-governing status, the cultural displacement of colonised peoples, and cultural erosion vis-à-vis Westernisation.

### Identity Crisis on Guam

In the tide of Chamorro nationalism, there has been an emergence of discourse on the impact of US colonialism and Americanisation on Chamorro identity. In direct light of the neocolonial context described, Underwood (1990) contributes an enlightening yet disturbing evaluation of the contemporary state of Chamorro identity crisis involving false-consciousness and stigmatisation — what he refers to as ‘consciousness’ and ‘maladjusted’ — thereby capturing the nuances of false ideological construction of reality that is embedded in the paternalistic and hegemonic relationship between the US and Guam.

On Guam most of us have become victims of a limited consciousness ... Because of the strength of this myopia, this limited consciousness, we are pilloried as a group of people incessantly, without respite and seemingly with no hope of escape. We are used to viewing the relationship to the United States in certain ways. We view the development of the Chamorro people in a framework, which denies them the right to be. We are forced to relate to each other as members of different ethnic and social groups as if we were not on Guam, but in a different world.

This state of ambivalence has, in turn, perpetuated a state of mindlessness toward colonialism. Underwood (1990) further implies that the long standing political and institutional apparatus by which the US has controlled the Chamorro people has distorted the perceptions of the local people and the reality of this colonialist relationship — yet remains legitimately intact and painfully elusive. Hence, those who maintain power to construct a distorted reality ideologically buffer the realisation of this subjugating framework.

These contradictions are conveniently dealt with in a variety of ways that separate the real issues from the artificial ones. The fake issues are then combined within the unique framework of a consciousness that enables them to ignore the duplicity inherent in their views, their prescriptions for society, and their operations in society ... They accept society's prescriptions for life without recognising them to be false, dehumanising, or alienating. If the contradictions are at first apparent, a generalised consciousness will inevitably overcome these pangs of uneasiness and thus they will be able to be bought, and sold, as reality in operation. (Underwood, 1990, p. 9)

Within this game of legitimacy and reality construction, those ‘maladjusted’ Chamorros who are at the forefront of realisation and brink of consciousness-raising are stigmatised, and thus silenced.

Of course maladjusted individuals do not have to be dealt with. They are simply tolerated, occasionally recognised ... and even treated well

within institutions ... If they persist being maladjusted (retain critical perspectives on society), they will be tolerated as one would a fool or mentally-retarded individual ... It simply reduces them to a 'disgruntled minority', a 'vocal few', or 'hot-headed nationalists'. (Underwood, 1990, p. 9)

Despite this seemingly helpless ideological terrain, Underwood further suggests that realisation and empowerment is possible, for the maladjusted are in critical positions to expose the system and transcend this hideous cycle of identity crisis and false-consciousness.

But still the maladjusted continue to argue, to point out, to offer non-cooperation, and to reject the artificial friendship of those who are liberal enough to recognise that there has been injustice. The hidden strength of the people lies with the maladjusted. They have been able to fend off powerful forces and once they are strong enough to demonstrate not that choices are ours to make, but that others have no right to put boundaries on our choices, the Chamorro people will again be free. Thank God for the maladjusted. (Underwood, 1990, p. 18)

Specifically in regards to the American recapture of Guam from the Japanese, Laura Marie Torres Souder (1991) discusses the long-term social psychological impact of US colonisation and Americanisation. Souder (1991) suggests that since Guam's liberation from Japan in 1944 by the US was followed by deliberate attempts to further Americanise the people, Chamorros became locked into a mentality of paying back the US for their 'generosity'. As remnant of their indigenous world-view, Chamorros have been giving to the point of being self-sacrificing.

In deeply felt acts of Chamorro reciprocity, our people extended the most valuable of their possessions, albeit the only possessions they had to give — land and their very spirits — to Uncle Sam. (Souder, 1991, p. 120)

This mentality has not only carried over to contemporary times, but has been further reinforced by contemporary ideological processes of Americanisation and patriotism, whereby US motives have long gone unquestioned:

We have become the worst kind of mistress to Uncle Sam. Much like women throughout the world who are 'kept' by possessive, oppressive husbands or lovers, whose silence is interpreted as docile acceptance of benevolent patriarchy, the island people of the 'American Pacific' have been whopped into docile submission, so to speak. There is no greater testimony to Uncle Sam's success in the Pacific than this mindless dependency. Our psyches are under siege. Our spirits as indigenous people are held under lock and key. We are typically afraid to speak out for fear of reprisal. Our creativity and self-sufficiency have been stymied. We long for justice. (Souder, 1991, p. 123)

Souder, however, identifies the other side of the colonialist coin, suggesting

that Chamorros have significantly raised their consciousness on these issues in recent years. Chamorro resistance is manifested in the realisation that the US did not rescue Guam because of love, nor did Uncle Sam seek to Americanise the people for sake of facilitating their independence. Rather, it has been in the political interest of the US to perpetuate dependency while clouding up the reality of colonisation.

Identity crises are also manifested in familial and intergenerational relations. Based on in-depth interviews with elderly Chamorros (as well as Filipinos) residing on Guam, Amanda Smith Barusch and Marc L. Spaulding (1989) examined the effects of Americanisation on intergenerational relations between the elderly and their children and grandchildren, respectively. Focusing on issues of elderly perceptions, life satisfaction, mental health, intergenerational assistance, and language-use, the authors found 'Americanisation' — in the forms of modernisation, American educational socialisation, and American media — to have detrimental effects on the indigenous pattern of intergenerational assistance and the social psychological well-being of the elderly. Intergenerational factors are significant to indigenous identity in light of extended family networks that have long been viable structures of cultural transmission, economic security, and emotional support. Barusch and Spaulding (1989) further suggest that among these dramatic sociocultural changes affecting relations between generations, an intergenerational language-gap, whereby grandchildren do not speak the native tongue, is especially detrimental to cultural integrity. This is profound since the ability to think from an indigenous point of view emanates from the ability to communicate in the native tongue, thereby marking a potential generational departure and virtual snipping of the indigenous umbilical cord.

Shifting the focus to education, Katherine B. Aguon (1993) specifically discusses the negative effects on Chamorro of the American educational system transplanted on Guam. Grounding this contemporary social problem, Aguon underscores the process by which the indigenous 'Chamorro educational process' marked by 'value of interdependence, respect for nature, the supremacy of familial obligation, respect for old age and respect for social position', has been eroded since contact with colonial powers (Aguon, 1993, p. 91). She specifically outlines the denigration of the Chamorro self-concept perpetuated by an insensitive paternalistic educational system historically enforced on Chamorros. In the process, the coloniser's perspective has been subconsciously internalised by Chamorros, generating a disturbing cycle of self-denigration that persists today, especially among younger generations.

Told that they were lazy, incompetent and part of a primitive reality, the people eventually accepted these distorted images. Chamorros became their own worst enemy in terms of self-concept ... Largely through the vehicle of schooling, Chamorros accepted their status as children in need of guidance. The creation of dependence, the loss of self-worth and reliance on American largesse were all part of the American educational scene. (Aguon, 1993, p. 95)

This is particularly damaging to Chamorro identity in the sense that it not only

retards self-conceptions, but it influences Chamorros to forgo their own perspectives so that they can continue to be blind-sided by Americanisation.

### Identity Crises on the US Mainland

With the exodus of Chamorros to the US, mainland Chamorros in turn experience political and cultural identity crises — perhaps to more telling degrees given the fact that they are not only politically and culturally located in ambivalence, but also geographically detached from their homeland yet peripherally bounded within the coloniser's institutions and borders on the mainland. Although there is a lack of scholarship on mainland Chamorros, a few works on Chamorro identity on Guam provide useful connections to mainland Chamorro experiences. Likewise, a few works specifically on mainland Chamorros are noteworthy.

For instance, Aguon (1993) further indicates that educational problems on Guam discussed above have been marginally dealt with under the premise that solutions to Guam's educational problems (i.e. need for vocational training, bilingual education, Chamorro cultural education) have been carried out only in so far as they are implemented on the mainland. In other words, Guam's educational needs have not been addressed, but rather solutions to problems on the mainland have been transported to Guam as part of the larger American educational institution. Solutions on Guam have thus not been locally invented, but have rather emanated from outside forces. Educational solutions on Guam tend to be irrelevant and residual at best. Therefore the educational system in the US tends to be insensitive to Pacific Islanders in general (Endo *et al.*, 1990). The issues of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism to deal with America's cultural diversity, and pressure from racial minorities on the mainland to incorporate an educational philosophy that promotes cultural diversity and awareness are manifestations of this phenomenon. I thus find Aguon's critique of the American educational system on Guam regarding the larger movement towards cultural pluralism and multiculturalism in public education especially insightful. She argues that cultural pluralism, albeit a movement promoted by racial minorities on the US mainland, is yet another instance of a proposed solution to Guam's cultural problems that has resulted from pressures on the mainland that are not necessarily relevant to conditions on Guam. Aguon (1993, p. 99) suggests that pluralism is 'a uniquely American philosophy in response to particular American realities and situations'. Hence, to critically examine the validity of its assumptions, 'we must carefully measure the total impact of pluralism on a sense of identity, a sense of peoplehood, and a sense of managing the future'. As part of the assimilationist paradigm, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism posit the simultaneous equal coexistence among diverse groups and maintenance of ethnic identity among immigrant minorities. This American ideology not only masks the reality of immigration and racial oppression on the US mainland, but is entirely irrelevant to the situation on Guam and Chamorros in the US. Attempting to deal with the cultural problems on Guam and in the US from this framework, Chamorros simply become equated with newly arrived minority groups or get overlooked.

On Guam, the situation is not analogous. We have a majority (in number) who are in danger of cultural extinction rather than threatening others. Moreover, this group must now argue in cultural pluralism terms so that they may achieve immigrant-minority status in order to protect themselves. For this majority, which is native-born, to seek immigrant status so that they may maintain their dignity as a people defies human logic. (Aguon, 1993, pp. 99–100)

This is a major fallacy of biracial theorising — it oversimplifies the complexity of intergroup relations by assuming that all dimensions of racial oppression are parallel — thereby perpetuating binarisms that water down the experience of indigenous people. In fact, if analogies are to be drawn with the major racial minorities on the US mainland, it is under the common experience of oppression as indigenous people that the parallels must be drawn both on Guam and in the US. As Aguon (1993, p. 100) states:

... like the Native American, the Chamorro does not need to argue the validity of his existence under a new social philosophy. The Chamorro shares with other indigenous peoples the legacy of having come under domination for no other reason than having been born on a valuable piece of real estate. They have the first rights to land, water and air. Sovereignty inheres in them by their very existence. No additional philosophical position, no matter how righteous or glib need be attached to their position.

Focusing on the impact of Americanisation on Chamorros on the US mainland (as well as Guam), Faye Untalan Munoz (1990) highlights a number of similar processes explored by Barusch and Spaulding (1989). Discussing the effect of Western value systems on traditional family patterns, Munoz (1990) explored specific aspects of Chamorro culture such as traditions, shared values, family practices, and intergenerational relations. Based on the premise that family relations sustain ethnic communities, Munoz emphasised the important function of the family to the maintenance of indigenous culture. She found the 'family support' policy set by the US negatively effects Pacific Islander families in general. Munoz concluded that this family policy is designed for the ideal American family and cannot be positively effective for indigenous people when applied without sensitivity to the Pacific Islander family structure.

### **Chamorros on the US Mainland: Layers of Ambivalence**

Chamorro ambivalence on the US mainland is clearly linked to contradictions inherent in Guam-US relations, as manifested in various sites of identity crises that transcend national boundaries. Chamorro experiences on the US mainland are therefore quite complex. Pursuant to Underwood's (1985) seminal essay 'Excursions into Inauthenticity: The Chamorros of Guam', I highlight the shifting layers of Chamorro ambivalence on the US mainland.<sup>3</sup>

*The Formation of Chamorro Communities in the United States*Push-Pull Factors

Representing the largest migrant stream from the Micronesian region of the Pacific Islands, Chamorros emerged as the third largest Pacific Islander group on the US mainland as noted. This is a result of various push-pull factors.

Young Chamorro men enlisted in hoards to serve Uncle Sam though the years. Although Chamorros have migrated to Hawaii and the mainland US in previous historical eras as whalers, labour migrants and sojourners, the Organic Act initiated a steady stream of Chamorro military émigrés to the US (Munoz, 1979; Underwood, 1985). Other factors influencing Chamorro migration included economic and educational opportunity that were perceived to be unavailable on Guam. Additionally, Underwood (1985, p. 171) highlights the seduction of popular American media on Chamorro exodus:

Through cable television Chamorros were now able to watch complete programmes on seven channels, all of them originating in Los Angeles. The result as I wrote in 1981, was that 'Not only does it [the media] make us feel homesick for places that we have never been, it gives us the uneasy feeling that what we experience daily is abnormal'. A trip to America now seemed obligatory if one was to experience the full joys of life that awaited the Chamorro in California.

As Chamorro families migrated to settle permanently in the US while others met and formed families in there, Chamorros on the mainland formed resident communities. Since 1978, Chamorros in California alone were estimated to outnumber Chamorros on Guam (Underwood, 1985). Given the role of the military as a vehicle of migration, Chamorro communities tend to exist at the periphery of military installations in places like Long Beach and San Diego, California. However, in contrast to many minority communities in the US, Chamorro communities are commonly dispersed geographically, yet tight contact endures across counties through fiestas, novenas and christenings. Underwood (1985, p. 173) summarises the formation of Chamorro communities:

What began 1937 as a trickle of mess attendants had become by the 1970s a steady stream of visitors, movers, and emigrants. What began essentially as an activity stimulated by military service, initially restricted to young men, ultimately became an enterprise affecting in some way every Chamorro family on Guam. Going to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s was not rare but carried the aura of going somewhere distant and foreign; departing for the 'mainland' in the 1970s was not only commonplace but also had the feeling of being natural.

*Ethnic Homogenisation and Racial Formation*

Due to their relatively small population size and their 'racial' similarities with other 'brown faces' on the US mainland, Pacific Islanders in general and

Chamorros in particular remain relatively invisible within the context of the US 'melting pot'. Therefore, Pacific Islander experiences are perhaps distinct due to the combined impact of racist treatment as minorities in the US, homogenisation and racialisation. In spite of (or precisely because of) their invisibility, Pacific Islanders have certainly been absorbed into US racial formations that have resulted in unique circumstances.

The terrain of racial formation has long erected boundaries of otherness that are the foundation upon which racial and ethnic relations and homogenisation play out in the US (Omi and Winant, 1994).<sup>4</sup> The racial order has been a major impetus and justification for racial oppression. Yet the major racial and ethnic minority communities in the US have located a space of contestation within the US racial hierarchy that has manifested itself in strategic political, legal and cultural ways. However, as alluded to, Pacific Islanders experience a layer of oppression unique to their marginal existence that is not captured within conventional ethnic studies frameworks.

In the context of US racial formations and ethnic enumeration, Pacific Islanders are technically lumped under the 'Asian Pacific' category, which for many makes little historical or cultural sense. In fact, as is the case of any homogenising term, the term 'Asian' is problematic in itself. As R. Bhopal *et al.* (1990) suggest, 'Asian' is an inappropriate fallacy that lacks universal meaning. Such a term is a reflection of racialisation processes of grouping together those who supposedly share common physical, cultural and/or geographical characteristics. But with the exception of being from the Pacific Rim, groups represented by the term are tremendously diverse. As L.F. Ignacio (1976, p. 84) states, 'There is no such group as 'Asian Americans and Pacific Island Peoples'. There are different ethnic groups under the general term'.

Therefore, a crucial consequence of categorisation is that the experiences and interests of less socially recognisable ethnic subgroups are often subsumed under the experiences and stereotypes of more recognisable groups within the racial and ethnic category. In the context of identity politics, Pacific Islander interests seem to be negated by the 'Asian Pacific' category within an intraethnic hierarchy whereby the interests of some become paramount over others — perhaps gradations of otherness whereby Pacific Islanders become invisible perplexed others. Homogenisation and racialisation are therefore detrimental to indigenous self-determination — a central issue among Pacific Islanders despite their geographical location; as reflected in the lack of discourse on Pacific self-determination within the Asian American canon that claims inclusion of Pacific Islander experiences.<sup>5</sup>

### *On the Edge of the Margins: Outsiders Within or Insiders Without?*

Perhaps the most telling source of ambiguity and ambivalence among mainland Chamorros is their marginal existence across multiple dimensions of culture, nationality, and otherness. These dimensions involve experiences with US minority status and racism, intragroup antagonism, and being at the margins of Chamorro and American cultures.

### Minority Status and Racism in the United States

Perhaps the most striking experience for Chamorros being off the island for the first time is their initial confrontations with US racism, which, when combined with their social ambiguity, presents paradoxically unique experiences. A Pacific Islander on the mainland is non-Asian, non-Hispanic, and non-American Indian, yet is simultaneously all of that at any given moment. And when Pacific Islanders are recognized as Pacific Islanders, notions of exotic people and preindustrial throwbacks permeate.

### Intragroup Antagonism and Folklore

With the formation of Chamorro communities in the states, a major dimension of marginality involves a fundamental binarism constructed from a seeming departure between the Chamorro community on Guam and Chamorro communities in the US. As Underwood reveals, this cultural and perceptual dichotomy is perhaps manifested no more vividly than within the perceptions of mainland Chamorros and Chamorros on Guam of one another (Underwood, 1985).

In addition to their marginality at the invisible periphery of US race relations, mainland Chamorros find themselves culturally situated in contradiction based on perceptions by Chamorros on Guam of them — as being Americanised, culturally naïve, sell-outs, hoale, and ‘inauthentic’. As Underwood states, ‘The oldest stereotype and greatest source of humour is of the returning traveler who feigns ignorance of Chamorro food, customs, and language’ (Underwood, 1985, p. 181). However, Underwood further emphasises the conscious superficiality of such notions of ‘inauthenticity’ embedded in Chamorro folklore on Guam:

Thus this display of inauthenticity is perceived to be an artificial, rather than genuine, shift in personal behavior that emanates from a misguided view of how to impress other fellow Chamorros. (Underwood, 1985, p. 182)

On the other hand, mainland Chamorros also hold negative perceptions of Chamorros on Guam as dependent, less globally competent and cultured — as sources of their own self-esteem enhancement and mainland Chamorro folk humour.

Nonetheless, in light of the trials and tribulations endured in their journeys off Guam to the continental US, mainland Chamorros display positive self-concepts. Underwood captures the context of their perceptions:

Despite individual differences, the perceptions held by migrant Chamorros — of themselves, of those who remain on Guam, and of the very act of movement itself — cluster in perceptible patterns that reflect the persistence of migrant flows and the status accruing to travellers from small Pacific societies. These perceptions, when arrayed along a continuum, reveal that any characteristics the migrants themselves feel they possess are assumed to be lacking in those who did not leave Guam.

Such an outlook serves to justify their presence outside the homeland and rationalise an awkward position, especially when that position is the target of comments by nonimmigrant kin. (Underwood, 1985, p. 180)

So in this context, mainland Chamorros tend to perceive themselves as adventurous risk-takers who mustered up the courage to migrate through a hostile environment for the betterment of their lives and families, and often resent being seen as less authentic.

Another source of negative sentiment among Chamorros on Guam and in the US is related to the seductions of capitalism at the advent of skyrocketing property values that have enticed many Chamorros on Guam and in the US to sell their land on Guam to capitalist investors. For mainland Chamorros, who maintain notions of Guam as their homeland close to their hearts, often return only to discover that they no longer have kinship ties to the land, nor a piece of property to which to return and settle. Likewise, it is equally frustrating for Chamorros on Guam, who have been struggling socially, politically and economically to maintain a land-based (or land-less) living in spite of the history of land acquisition on Guam, to have their mainland kin return simply to sell the land and depart Guam with their wealth.

So indeed, Chamorro animosity ranges on a continuum from seemingly harmless intragroup folk bashing to the centrality of land. These locations of antagonism are manifestations of colonial binarisms and marginality among Chamorros in general, which have often divided and conquered indigenous people across the globe. Yet, as Underwood (1985) suggests, Chamorros on Guam are more sympathetic in their views of mainland Chamorros. Likewise, mutual pride and admiration among Chamorros on Guam and in the US of each other seems apparent.

#### *At the Margins of Chamorro and American Culture*

The cultural dimension of marginality among mainland Chamorros involves the state of simultaneously being at the edge of both Chamorro and American culture. For instance, a common dilemma faced by mainland Chamorros is the reconciliation of their familism and Western individualism. This seems especially pronounced among subsequent generations of Chamorros who increasingly marry non-Chamorros. Likewise, this layer of ambivalence can be psychologically profound. Incorporating an autobiographical narrative, Chris Perez Howard (1993) captures the dimensions of marginality discussed above by offering first-hand insights regarding Americanisation and identity based on his personal experiences at the margins of being a statesider and native son. Outlining major events throughout his life, Perez Howard (1993) details his own personal experience in terms of identity crisis, false-consciousness, and revelation. He left Guam during childhood with his American military father after World War II following the death of his Chamorro mother at the hands of the Japanese, and was raised in the US for most of his life. He returned to Guam 27 years later. Accordingly, this marginal existence generated a personal crisis within Perez Howard's self-identity, from which he draws an analogy

with the cultural situation on Guam at the macro level. In other words, identity crisis is both a micro and macro phenomenon resulting from a fundamental paradox of simultaneously being American and Chamorro.

... what I found was an island and its people mirroring my own situation, because I was both a Chamorro and a stateside American, I didn't identify fully with either, nor could I reconcile the two ... In all honesty, the unhappiness I experienced was not only because the Guam I remembered did not exist and because I felt that I didn't belong among my own people, it was also because Guam and my people didn't measure up to the American standards I held. (Perez Howard, 1993, p. 154)

He further indicates the false yet elusive nature of assimilation in the context of US race relations.

Now looking back, I wonder how something so simple could have remained hidden from me so long. I had actually seen my being American in much the same way as I now see myself as a Chamorro. I saw being an American as a member of an ethnic group. Even when the understanding of this basic difference was so close at hand, I had just let it go by. (Perez Howard, 1993, p. 158)

In his personal quest for identity, Perez Howard became involved with writing a book about his mother, political advocacy of war reparations and Chamorro self-determination. This was the context in which he transcended his identity crisis and raised his consciousness. The colonial reality of Guam/US relations thus became painfully obvious in lieu of his personal identity issues.

The knowledge I gained in my search for information for my book, coupled with introspection, lead me to acquiring my Chamorro identity. Accepting it, and the comfort of knowing that I belonged among my mother's people, I began to see things from a perspective different than which I had brought to Guam. I began to see things from the perspective of a colonized people and not from the viewpoint of the colonizer. (Perez Howard, 1993, pp. 158–59)

Yet the irony is that despite this revelation, Perez Howard implies that his ongoing personal struggle is an uphill battle as is the larger struggle of Chamorro self-determination under US rule — thus indicating the crucial importance of Chamorro self-determination at the micro and macro levels.

Presently, I feel that my Chamorro half is dying at the hands of its American counterpart, ... The foundation of all Chamorro concerns is directly related to the Chamorro people's relationship with the government of the United States ... Despite words to the contrary, the viewpoint of US ownership over Guam and its people continues today, and this relationship can be readily pointed to as a living example of colonialism. (Perez Howard, 1993, p. 160)

### **Adaptive Chamorro Responses: Resistance Culture and Diaspora**

Although identity crisis has been conceptualised as a negative consequence, the notion of identity being in a state of crisis also refers to social locations of identity crises as critical junctures of opposition and rearticulation. Indeed, Chamorros on Guam and in the US continually articulate and rearticulate their culture and identity in strategic adaptive ways in the context of Chamorro hybridity and diaspora.

#### *Transnational Mobility and Cultural Transiency*

In spite of the supposed departure between the Chamorro community on Guam and Chamorro communities in the US, Chamorro transiency is a critical source of postcolonial transcendence. It is quite understandable to dichotomise Chamorros on the basis of mainland versus homeland, and indeed it makes much sense given the historical patterns of migration and community formation. However, in light of their transnational identities and cultural transiency, Chamorro communities need not be carved into perceptual entities. Chamorros are Chamorros in all their forms, strengths, weaknesses, locations and complexities. For instance, it is quite common for Chamorros to be physically and culturally located in both places. Many Chamorros literally have two homes, spending significant time on Guam and in the US. And for Chamorros who rarely travel, they remain culturally connected to one another via communication technology, mass media, long-distance familism and cultural continuity. One can be in Los Angeles and experience Guam through the stories of their relatives on Guam and vice versa. These mutual experiences are also direct since Chamorro culture on Guam is transplanted in the US, while Chamorro/American culture (although seemingly a statesider phenomenon) is precisely a Guam experience. In short, Chamorro experiences are in a perpetual process of hybridity and flux regardless of geographical location, birthplace or migrant patterns. Location is one's dynamic perception of place at any given moment, as opposed to a bounded static basis of one's identity. As Underwood (1985, p. 184) articulates:

From every perspective the strength of the Chamorro migrant stream occupies a central place in local discussion of immediate plans and long-range conditions. In many respects it serves only to remind Chamorros of their weaknesses in coming to terms with social and economic change. Perhaps going away is just another in a long series of experiences with the forces of colonialism. However, in the modern era the colony does not await the arrival of powerful outsiders — rather the colonised are transported to the centre of the metropole. The fact of Chamorro movement is sobering, for people are now Guam's major export. Yet it is also heartening to realise that love for Guam and genuine respect for Chamorro ways have managed to transcend vast distances, the attractions of California life, and even the American dream. It is not every Chamorro who does not return.

*Chamorro Hybridity and Flux*

As alluded to, Chamorros on Guam and in the US display adaptive cultural responses to their colonial (or postcolonial) conditions. Such displays may be seen in terms of hybridity. Based on the focus of this essay, I refer specifically to mainland Chamorro hybridity in the context of US race relations. In sharp opposition to assimilationism, *hybridity* refers to dialectic cultural rearticulation by colonised people of their indigeneity — that involves a reconciliation of traditional culture yet coming to terms with outside cultures. For instance, although Chamorro families maintain a level cultural continuity in the continental US, their patterns of adaptation can also be described as a process of hybridisation or the incorporation of new cultural forms into traditional culture to adapt to changing social conditions. Therefore, Chamorro families are neither equivalent to mainstream American families nor exact replicas of 'traditional' families in the Mariana Islands. For example, similar in the way that Guam Liberation is strategically celebrated on Guam to rearticulate Chamorro culture, as opposed to simply display allegiance to Uncle Sam's historic 'rescue', (Diaz, 1998), Chamorros in the US also celebrate Guam Liberation, yet contribute additional forms of hybridity with respect to their mainland experiences.

Another site of Chamorro hybridity is directly related to the fact that Chamorro communities in the US are geographically dispersed and often find themselves rubbing elbows with other minority groups in the US. As described above, Chamorros are often mistaken for more socially recognisable minority groups, which perpetuates their invisibility. However, Chamorros often utilise this homogenisation strategically to their advantage. For instance, Chamorro youth on the mainland often adopt Chicano identities in response to presumptions of being Mexican, which provides a powerful basis of minority solidarity and self-esteem. In turn, rather than having a bad taste in one's mouth associated with the historical stigmatisation of being 'Meskin', Chamorros further utilise this false amalgamation in forming fictive kin through mutually beneficial compradazgo/compare systems based on Mexican and Chamorro versions of Catholicism. The same process can be said of Chamorro/Filipino, Chamorro/Hawaiian, Chamorro/Irish (and Chamorro/fill-in-the-blank) relations in the US. Therefore, hybridity provides a crucial basis of cultural panethnic formation that has played a significant role in the social, cultural and emotional well being of Chamorros in the US.

Furthermore, Chamorros who have married and/or have children with non-Chamorros may on the one hand be perceived as diluted Chamorros. However, given the vitality of Chamorro culture, multi-ethnic and multi-racial Chamorro families maintain Chamorroness through the similar processes of hybridity, familism and fictive kin beyond mere amalgamation — *vis-à-vis* incorporation and cooptation of other cultures and people into Chamorro culture.

**Diasporic Politics**

In light of their daily hybridity and flux, resistance culture among Chamorros in the US are displayed in various contested sites of diasporic politics. Among

these sites are Chamorro self-determination in the US, Chamorro ethnic communal politics on the mainland, and the politics of panethnicity.

#### *Politics of Self-Determination on Guam*

In light of their patterns of transnational mobility and diaspora, mainland Chamorros remain ideologically and culturally rooted in the 'island community', and hence sharply keen on political status issues on Guam — especially with the availability of multi-media. However, this has long been the case involving the snail-mail of local Guam newspapers to relatives in the US. Therefore, the ongoing politics of self-determination and political status remain crucial bridges across Chamorro communities east and west of the Pacific, albeit with greater speed and efficiency today. In lieu of recent discussions of a subsequent plebiscite vote to determine the future direction of Guam toward self-determination in the wake of the congressional denial of Commonwealth in 1997, the mainland Chamorro connection is most profoundly located in the hotly contested issue of the 'Chamorro vote'; that is, whether the vote should be 'Chamorro-only', and whether stateside Chamorros should be included in the vote on Guam's political status. These are profound questions in light of the fact that Chamorros in the US outnumber Chamorros on Guam (stay tuned!).

#### *Chamorro Ethnic Communal Politics on the US Mainland*

Chamorro communities in the US also reflect a similar pattern of ethnic politics characteristic of people of colour on the US mainland. As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) suggest, despite the negative consequences of racialisation, racial formation also provides a legitimate platform of contestation and rearticulation. Since racial formation is a perpetual process, dominant perceptions of racial identity can be challenged and reconstructed. Omi and Winant (1994) clearly articulate the potential of minority political trajectories, and identity formation from the margins. Likewise, there has been a string of minority identity movements in the US since the 1960s in response to the dominant racial formations, which continue to play a significant role in the racial and ethnic panorama and future of minority voices.

Mainland Chamorros have likewise positioned themselves as Pacific Islander minorities in the US; forming clubs and political organisations in the US since the 1970s. A newsletter of the recently formed Southern California-based National Organization for the Advancement of Chamorro People (NOACP) captures the relevance of ethnic political formation among Chamorros:

The NOACP is *not a social club*, but rather, an organization with great success and dramatic development, which started as being a little known and very small civil rights and fraternal group in the early 1990s to local prominence less than six years later. The NOACP has made plans not to stand still; the plan is to build into a major civil rights and fraternal institution like the National Organization for Women (NOW),

the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), whose influence reaches throughout the nation and beyond. (Baubauta, 1999)

Organisations such as NOACP have been instrumental in the promotion and sponsorship of academic scholarships, cultural preservation, civil rights, health care, anti-discrimination, and consciousness-raising.

### *Politics of Panethnicity: Prospects for Pacific Islanders*

Although Pan-Pacific movements are in motion on the Pacific Islands, less is discussed about panethnic movements for Pacific Islanders on the US mainland. So what is the potential of incorporating pan-ethnic movements into Pacific Islander diasporic politics on the mainland? This section briefly ponders this question on the backdrop of US racial formation and homogenisation.

Proponents of panethnic political strategies suggest that since the racial and ethnic classification system is well intact, minority groups have historic opportunities to turn the racial order on its head by being active in shaping the system (Espiritu, 1992; Padilla, 1985). Thus by solidifying under panethnic umbrellas (i.e. Latino panethnicity, pan-Indianism, pan-Africanism, pan-Asian, pan-Pacific), colonised groups can reclaim their destinies and enhance their empowerment. As Omi and Winant (1994) suggest, racial ideologies and categories are continuously constructed and reconstructed through a dialectic process of political contestation and accommodation. Although the racial state often restabilises the racial order following legitimacy crises, empowerment is possible and probable. Consequently, in spite of overarching state interests to perpetuate the long-standing politics of ethnic enumeration (i.e. convenience, minimising government expenditures toward anti-racist legislation), mass lumping may also serve the interests of minority subgroups including Pacific Islanders, in the context of US racial politics.

### **Concluding Remarks**

As part of the larger effort to document and articulate Pacific diasporic identities and politics, and a larger movement to legitimise indigenous paradigms, this paper marks the obstacles and progress of Chamorro hybridity and diaspora as a case of Pacific Islander experiences on the US mainland. The trials and triumphs of Chamorros are certainly entangled in a complex history of colonialism, migration, displacement, and transformation. Yet despite the seemingly disheartening terrain, Chamorros continue to endure as a people in spite of their locations at the edges of US racial and ethnic relations. Notions of indigeneity are therefore not limited to being authentically located in a given place. Rather they located in space across various sites. Chamorros are Chamorros precisely because of their indigeneity, diasporic transnationality, resistance, consciousness, and articulation.

*I wish to express the impact of the many conversations with my father, Pedro Arriola Perez, Jr, who has influenced my thinking in ways he may not be aware of. I would also like to acknowledge the influence of Robert A. Underwood's work, which I relied on so heavily in this paper. Robert Underwood is a former activist scholar, current non-voting delegate of Guam, and a gubernatorial candidate on Guam.*

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## Notes

1. Chamorros are indigenous to the Mariana Islands, while Guam is the largest and southernmost of the Marianas chain in the Micronesian region of the Western Pacific. Although this essay focuses on Chamorro locations of diaspora from Guam to the Southwest US, Chamorro diaspora involves multiple points of departure, destination and transnational movement. Other sites of Chamorro diaspora have yet to be explored.
2. With this emergent Chamorro sentiment, following World War II, the Chamorro population became split between patriotic Chamorros who continued to celebrate US affiliation, and a minority of Chamorro rights advocates who remained discontent in spite of the American recapture of Guam from the Japanese. Nevertheless, the majority of Chamorros converged in their interests to become US citizens.
3. Underwood (1985) provides an enlightening overview of Chamorro migration, life on the US mainland, and perceptions of Chamorro migrants and Chamorros on Guam of each other; by illustrating the fallacy of static notions of 'inauthenticity' among seemingly 'displaced natives'. In so doing, he contributes a path-breaking piece of discourse that transcends notions of authentic Chamorroness as bound to the homeland, and serves as a critical springboard for subsequent scholarship on Pacific Islander diaspora.
4. The notion of racial formation and racialisation is derived from Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) text, which highlights identity formation within US racial politics. In response to the deficiencies of assimilation, neo-Marxist and colonial theories, race is located at the centre of analysis and is conceptualised as an organising principle of oppression, categorisation and ideology in itself. A key assumption of racial formation theory is that racial ideologies and identities continually emanate from political and economic 'trajectories'. Political climates, in turn, are marked by racial orders whereby oppressed groups are subject to dominant monopolies of racialisation and false ideological constructions of otherness. Omi and Winant emphasise the role of the state in shaping racial politics, meanings, policies and categories. Although there is virtually no application of racial formation theory to Pacific Islanders, I find the perspective relevant and potentially fruitful to Pacific Studies.
5. Although I contend that there is a lack of scholarship on Pacific Islanders

within Asian American studies, there is certainly a proliferation of native Pacific studies on sovereignty and self-determination that occasionally locates space within the Asian American canon. So the issue of a 'lack of scholarship' refers to the fact that native Pacific studies, albeit a trajectory in itself, is at the edge of the Asian American and ethnic studies in the context of race and ethnic relations in the US. Perhaps the time is ripe for Pacific studies to assume legitimate recognition in spite of its invisibility within US ethnic studies. Thus, it is perhaps desirable to remove 'Pacific' from 'Asian Pacific' in favour of recognising the two distinct fields of study — Asian American studies and Pacific studies; or for the Pacific Islander caucus to be significantly recognised beyond token coverage within Asian American studies with the replacement of the term to 'Asian American and Pacific Islander studies'.

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