

# Fostering Educational *Movement*: Connecting the College Writing Classroom in Oahu with Indigenous Values of Family and Familial Learning for Migrant

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## **Students from the Regions of Micronesia**

For three years now, I have spent my weekends in Kaka'ako park, a large grassy field surrounded by sidewalks in downtown Honolulu. This park is home to anywhere between 20-30 Micronesian families at a given time. Taking shelter in tents lined up along the sidewalks, these migrant families work hard to adjust to life in Oahu – a life radically different from the one experienced in many of the small outer islands in Micronesia. The children in these families have to work against harsh material conditions to attend school every day – conditions like inclement weather, cramped living spaces, lack of resources, and struggles against the local authorities.

However, these obstacles often pale in comparison to the very real struggles that these children often face within the educational system, itself. Over the years, I have been told innumerable stories of how these children have been denigrated and labeled within their classes, both by other students and by their teachers. In too many cases to count, these children have expressed that to be Chuukese, to be Yapese, to identify as being from Kosrae and Pohnpei means to be excluded, stereotyped, and even labeled as special ed. The result is that many students dread their writing classes because they feel as if they must separate writing from any form of connection to their families and their communities. And at its most extreme, the denigrations experienced in school move students to stop writing and reading altogether, and to drop out of school entirely.

Sadly, as much of the research indicates, this educational situation isn't just limited to the experiences of the children in Kaka'ako park. The form of education that children in regions of Micronesia and on the island of Oahu receive leading up to and even in college, has created a situation forcing students from these regions to disconnect from their families (geographically and culturally). Thus, students feel that to succeed in tertiary education they must separate themselves from a sense of place firmly rooted in the family and the Micronesian regions that they call home. This separation is the greatest obstacle to encouraging students from these regions to attend college in the first place, to stay in college once there, and to see collegiate studies not just as a pragmatic means to achieving a career, but as a means of empowering, building, and improving Micronesian communities – a goal that critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire refer to in terms of developing “critical consciousness” (Freire 1).

In this essay I outline some of the ways in which the current educational systems in Micronesia and Oahu undermine the movement toward building student “critical consciousness” and enabling connections between tertiary education and family values for students from Micronesia. After emphasizing where specific educational gaps exist, I refer to student and administrative responses to propose an alternative framework (one built upon indigenous values of familial learning) that works to address specific educational gaps at the beginning college composition level.

### **Tertiary Education in Micronesia**

Since the late 1990s, composition and rhetoric scholars have written on the importance of addressing the connection between writing and community. Ellen Cushman addresses writing in the context of inner-city African American communities in New York in her 1998 book *The Struggle and the Tools*. Furthermore, in her 2003 study of African-American church communities and literacy, Beverly Moss writes, “If community is to be part of the educational process, and it must be, then schools must understand the role of community”(4). These acknowledgments of the crucial role of connecting writing with an understanding of communities and community writing practices is nothing new.

However, although these insights are not new, they have not yet been readily applied to looking at writing in the context of instruction in the Micronesian regions of the Pacific. In work that has been done recently, though, in the field of education the significance of connecting Micronesian community values with learning has been emphasized. For example, in addressing education more broadly in her dissertation *Way Finding: Envisioning a Culturally Responsive Educational System for Chuuk State, Federated States of Micronesia*, Chuukese scholar Margaret Cholymay highlights the necessity of constructing educational systems for Micronesian students based upon an understanding of indigenous values of the family and family learning. According to Cholymay, in Chuuk, as in many of the Micronesian regions, there are no single words to define family and family members as they are understood in a Western context. Therefore, “Father” refers both to the biological father and the men who are in both the father’s and mother’s lineages. The same applies to the words “mother,” “brother” and “sister.” This illustrates the extraordinarily close ties among the people (Cholymay 34). Scholar Francis Hezel in his 2013 book *Making Sense of Micronesia: the Logic of Pacific Island Culture*, further details this conceptualization of the family in much of Micronesia when he writes:

The “family” that strikes the deepest roots, the meaning that explains the grounding of an islander’s identity, is not the western-style nuclear family consisting of mother, father, and children....In just about all Micronesian societies, the lineage is the fundamental family unit...the nebulous “extended family” group with whom a person most closely associates is a mixed group— some belonging to that person’s own lineage and some with other ties even though they are not members of one’s lineage” (Hezel 26-27).

Thus, as Hezel points out “family” in much of Micronesia consists of those who share in one’s lineage – both biologically and through extended family networks formed through marriage and adoption. In this definition of “family,” one’s connection to the family structure, the community, is both linked to a specific place and ancestral link, as lineage is traced through the mother and the mother’s connection to the land, and also spread out over multiple spaces as extended family networks can be found throughout different islands within Micronesia and beyond.

Ultimately, in relation to this specific family construction and understanding, education is positioned and understood as an act that involves learning from and giving back to the family, including members that live next door and those who live thousands of miles away. Cholymay defines the value of indigenous Micronesian education through the term “tumuneoch” which means “caring for the home” (83). She goes on to say that, “It is very important to understand that ‘caring for the home’ relates to caring for the people. People are central to this value” (83). This reciprocal relationship with family members (those within one’s home island and extended family network) is therefore vital to understanding and constructing an indigenous educational model.

However, as will be shown in the following section, primary and tertiary education in terms of the writing classroom within the Micronesian regions has typically functioned in a way that serves to disrupt the integral role of family in the educational process.

In the 1960s, U.S. funding for education in the Micronesian regions of Chuuk, Kosrae, Yap, Palau, and the Marshall Islands experienced a massive increase. According to Francis Hezel, funds from the U.S. government were poured into education in particular in order to generate human resources, a more skilled labor source in the islands (13). Schools were primarily founded then for utilitarian purposes with curriculum that reflected colonial value systems rather than the value systems relevant to students' daily lives. Thus, the education system in the islands was primarily built up after WWII to serve the following U.S. political agenda: "For efficient employment of the manpower tool, most people would have to be relocated near the 'industrial' centers. Such a policy would require that they [indigenous peoples] subordinate traditional values associated with their family lands and their clan ties to the economic growth of the territory. It is unlikely that this change of attitude could be carried out in a short period of time" (Hezel 17). Education served to move indigenous students farther and farther away from their own families and family lands over time geographically. Many of the larger high schools were established on the central islands, forcing students from outer island regions to leave their homes and lands and take up residence at boarding schools in the urban areas. Thus, familial disconnect was established first and foremost by geographical distancing.

This disconnect, which still continues today, is further augmented in the present-day educational system itself, through the privileging of Western (rather than indigenous) texts in writing courses and through the imposition of values which associate learning primarily with utilitarianism. As Margarita Cholymay, a Chuukese scholar and former student and teacher in Chuuk indicates, students in Chuuk and the FSM today carry the effects of a curriculum designed for building skills but not building indigenous empowerment. According to Cholymay, English and language arts classes never take place in the student's own native language but rather "when we first started learning English it was mostly grammar, writing, symbols...very isolated" (Cholymay). Students are immediately forced to write and read in very formalized, grammar-oriented English courses with Western texts and concepts— never in their native tongues (Cholymay). Furthermore, the educational system also excludes oral texts from the individual regions which value familial ways of knowing "passed down by ancestors who were wise and knowledgeable in order to bring and strengthen peace and harmony among the people" (Cholymay *Way Finding* 9). What this has produced then is a population of students that is not encouraged to form a meaningful connection to writing and literature (Cholymay). Writing is made into an isolated form, then, rather than a tool for reciprocity and familial knowledge-building. This approach to education is not dissimilar to those that have been practiced in other parts of the Pacific, as Konai Helu-Thaman, Haunani Kay Trask, and Albert Wendt write about the ways in which colonial educational systems work to disconnect indigenous writers from family and community engagement in Samoa and Hawai'i. However, the ways in which this educational rupture is coupled with geographic disconnect is highly unique to the Micronesian regions, themselves. As Hezel asserts, an emphasis upon curriculum that is largely "irrelevant" to students, is made to undermine family-based indigenous learning values all the more through being coupled with geographic "relocation" (25, 17).

The multiple layers of dislocation that are enacted within the education systems in Micronesia, are only augmented when students choose to attend college. Currently, the College of Micronesia is the major tertiary institution, and it serves the region, with campuses on the central

islands of Chuuk, Yap, Pohnpei, and Kosrae (the states making up the Federated States of Micronesia). The college of the Marshall Islands currently serves residents of the Marshalls. The COM again moves students away from the outer islands, as the main campuses are located on the central, industrial centers of each island region. Furthermore, as the campus' website declares the goals of the U.S. Department of Education sponsored college are primarily to promote "student success and satisfaction" in terms of economics— financial terms like "fiscal" "financial" workforce" "economic development" and "human resources" are listed in the mission statement, itself ("Mission" [www.comfsm.fm](http://www.comfsm.fm)).

Therefore, according to the tertiary institutions, themselves, education is primarily framed in the context of U.S. economic goals in the regions. These goals, to be more precise, are to maintain the U.S. as the prominent employer in the Micronesian regions (primarily in the form of government and educational positions). (Hezel 38). Thus, education is to produce human resources for U.S. government employment and, more specifically, to enable the continuation of an education system that will continue to produce "human resources." Unfortunately, though, as more residents of Micronesia began to pursue college educations, the number of skilled, educated workers has begun to exceed the number of jobs available. In 1995, with a significant drop in U.S. funding and several accompanying cutbacks in the government sector, the FSM saw no significant increase in the number of jobs, and since that time employment has been on the steady decline (Hezel 16). Thus, residents of the various regions of Micronesia are being forced to seek employment after college even farther away from their own families – in areas across the Pacific like Oahu and on the West coast of the continental U.S.

With migration trends currently on the rise students in Micronesia are increasingly being pushed to think of their college educations on a global scale, rather than a local one. At a seminar in 1999 sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, an organization that works to foster connections between Japan and other international powers, Elizabeth D. Rechebei of the Northern Mariana Islands specifically emphasized globalization as the key to future educational success in Micronesia. Rechebie remarks that,

Donor countries such as Japan, the US, Australia, etc., have been very generous in supporting many social and economic projects in the islands. In the area of education, perhaps a comprehensive review of all the bodies that have potential in increasing the education capabilities in the islands should be undertaken in order for these [sic] assistance to be more effective. The objective of this initiative would be to reassess the purposes and strengths of these bodies and how they may support quality educational practices in the region using new paradigms and technology to respond to global trends, and to prepare for unanticipated events that may result from these trends ("Micronesia and Education" [www.spf.org](http://www.spf.org)).

This emphasis upon education in terms of "global trends" defined by external donor country "bodies" (not actual human bodies and families) is widening even further the gap between education and familial investment and engagement. As the utilitarian emphases of the U.S. tertiary institutions in Micronesia are increasingly less viable within the regions themselves, powers like the U.S. and Japan are increasingly moving indigenous students to view their education primarily in terms of an international "body" rather than actual physical bodies and people.

### **Tertiary Education Preparation in Oahu**

As individuals from the various regions of Micronesia increasingly move across the Pacific, they and their children enter into new systems of education. However, these new systems, rather than offering more promise, often add to the educational limitations and denigrations imposed upon students from the various island regions. Currently, Hawai'i is the second most popular destination for settlers from Micronesia (following the continental U.S., which currently contains 24,048 Micronesian migrants). The 2012 report *Micronesians on the Move* asserts that approximately 450 individuals move from Micronesia to Hawai'i every year, and those numbers are rising (Hezel 29). In 2012, 7,948 settlers from Micronesia had taken up residence in the island regions of Hawai'i (Hezel 28). The median age of settlers is 26.9, and many come to Hawai'i with younger elementary-school-age children (Hezel 28). Unfortunately, with the high cost of living, and the restrictions currently placed on low-income housing, many of these settlers are placed in situations with crowded housing, instability, and in extreme cases situations of houselessness, like the ones described at the beginning of this paper. Micronesian settlers currently make up 15% "of all those served by shelters in the state" (31). Furthermore, in order to assist in household survival, most children start working at the earliest legal age, 15, as 35% of all Micronesians 15 and over work for cash (Hezel 30).

In addition to the very real material struggles that students must encounter as they pursue education in Hawai'i – from a lack of resources to houselessness to balancing wage earning with school hours and homework – these students must also face an increasingly heightened disconnect from their family within the educational system, as well. According to a PREL briefing paper released by Hilda Heine in 2002, "challenges that the children from Micronesia face include... a mismatch between their culture and the school's culture" (Kaneshiro 27). At the center of this observation is an emphasis upon familial and cultural rupture within the educational system.

Sadly, rather than working to bridge previous student family values and cultural literacies with new educational expectations and values, many schools in Oahu relegate students instead – whether in the classroom itself or through separation into some form of special education, specifically in reference to writing and language arts classes (Kaneshiro 28). As one student interviewed in the 2008 study "Risk and Protective Factors of Micronesian Youth in Hawai'i: An Exploratory Study" remarks: "when [teachers] ask you a question, you have to answer it, you cannot say you do not know... They say it's third grade English (Okamoto 5). Thus, as this statement indicates, within many of the junior high and high school language arts classrooms in Oahu, Micronesian students are pushed to learn through a rhetoric of not belonging and a value system of learning through competition and animosity – pitting students against each other to move them to "do better."

This rhetoric and its underlying values simply moves students farther away from familial values practiced in many regions of Micronesia that view sharing knowledge and story-telling as a collective family act. In a report submitted to the Hawai'i Public Housing Authority, Katherine Ratliffe, an Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at the University of Hawai'i, interviewed several Micronesian migrants about the ways they value and approach education. As Wally, an indigenous migrant from Yap relates, "There's not a lot [of support here], whereas, if they were back home... There is support. I can go over to that house and somebody might know this in that house. I will be comfortable to go to that house because I grew up, I know that family" ("Family Responsibilities" [www.hpha.hawaii.gov](http://www.hpha.hawaii.gov)). This displacement from an environment in which learning is a collective activity shared across familial networks tends to separate students

from a sense of identity in the classroom, especially as writers who can feel comfortable in their own indigenous approach to the writing and learning process.

In addition to this administrative and institutional disempowerment, students also feel pressure from their school peers to separate themselves from their specific family heritage and identity in order to merely survive in the educational environment. A 2008 study that appeared in the *Journal of Social Science Welfare*, interviewed nine focus groups composed of forty-one Micronesian students in Oahu. Interviewees specifically responded to questions regarding racial pressures and ecological factors experienced in school. Here is an excerpt of some of their responses in relation to questions about peer treatment in the school setting in Oahu:

D.M.: Okay, so what are some things that people say?

CF: They say “microscope.”

CF: Or they go, “Microsoft.”

CF: Yeah, you know how irritating that is...

MF: They look down on us.

D.R.: How do they do that?

MF: Say I see something and I pronounce it wrong and they still tease Micronesians for it. Whatever.

MF: Or by the way we dress.

MF: I can be so “Micro.”

MM: Yeah, and when we try to talk to each other people just come around and [say] “Hey, speak English. Speak properly.” (Okamoto 10).

As this excerpt indicates, one of the primary ways that students from Micronesia are mocked by their peers at school lies in a distortion and disruption of place-based identity. Micronesia is not acknowledged as a rich geographical space of specific islands, peoples, and languages but rather is associated with American products and objects (microscopes and Microsoft) and a sense of smallness or unimportance (the term “micro”). What this distortion of the name “Micronesia” does is pressure Micronesian migrant students to feel devalued for their connection to the regions they call home. A connection to family and specific place is not a ready form of cultural and social capital in the Oahu school environment, and, therefore, many students feel that they cannot be successful students and writers unless they become something distinctly separate from “Micronesian.” Even in speaking to one another and practicing the familial model of Micronesian community learning and support on their school campuses students feel pressured to speak and communicate in a very specific language form and within a particular set of values (Americanized English) rather than in the ways that they feel most empowered and connected.

### **Promoting Familial Learning in the Context of Beginning College Composition**

The very real pressures of geographical, institutional, and cultural displacement that students from Micronesia face as they advance toward tertiary education are indeed daunting. However, the point of illustrating these pressures in the preceding sections is not to present a lost or hopeless cause. The point, is, rather to illustrate where educational gaps do indeed exist, in order to then propose where educators at the college level can better address those specific gaps. As a teacher of composition at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, the specific solutions that I am primarily interested in and will focus on in the rest of this paper start within the beginning college composition classroom and extend outward from there. Furthermore, the solutions that I present here are not intended to be a fix-all, but rather to be a resource guide of suggestions offered by

Micronesian students and administrators themselves – a resource that currently does not exist in the context of tertiary education for Micronesian students. Ultimately, this resource can work to foster a powerful educational *movement*, one in which college writing educators work to encourage students from Micronesia to connect writing and speaking with their indigenous families and family values; to see composition as an act of movement, not away from family, but rather from and within it.

### **Writing from Family Learning Values**

In order to resist the displacement and discouragement often enacted in the tertiary education contexts for students from Micronesia, students from these regions indicate that it is essential to emphasize family learning and pre-existing knowledge bases in the beginning writing classroom. Jennifer, a student from Palau, now attending college at Chaminade university in Oahu, indicates in a personal interview conducted in April 2014 that composition is an act that involves multiple speakers and writers sharing (at least in part) their own distinct ancestral knowledge with others (Personal interview 2014). In this response, Jennifer highlights that composing is an act that is intricately bound with what Margarita Cholymay (as mentioned earlier in this essay) defines as a learning about and among family members – it is a process of *tumuneoch* or “caring for the home” (83). Thus, within this indigenous framework, composition can be understood as an act involving multiple speakers and writers sharing family values and knowledge rather than merely interacting individually with pieces of paper.

Furthermore, as Jennifer highlights, composing in relation to her Chuukese family is not solely defined in written terms, but in terms of the written and oral. In defining composition as a shared process of multiple generic forms meant to deepen cultural understanding and knowledge, Jennifer is specifically drawing upon a previous knowledge base rooted in familial place and indigenous understanding of what good writing is and should be. It is this knowledge base that Sandra Kaneshiro urges educators to actively acknowledge and build upon when encouraging and empowering Micronesian students in the classroom (22).

A pedagogical model that builds from Jennifer’s insights would, thus, approach the classroom as a site for multiple forms of active expression and dialogue. This type of pedagogical approach, ultimately, works toward greater understanding of diverse viewpoints rather than trying to make all students agree with each other, or with one dominant set of cultural standards. In fact, as Mary Louise Pratt emphasizes in her pedagogical model of the contact zone, as students are encouraged to engage in active and continual dialogue with each other, students who may have been previously marginalized in other academic settings – i.e. like Micronesian students in pre-college and college contexts – are encouraged to speak more readily. And through their speech acts, they can challenge the status quo or standards of inequality that may exist in the writing classroom and beyond simply by being encouraged to speak and to speak with confidence (Pratt 39). Thus, within a “contact zone” classroom, students from the Micronesian regions can begin to break down the pedagogical walls that have previously worked within the classroom to separate them from writing about their own values of family and familial learning in Micronesia.

Beginning composition instructors can foster this positive resistance and growth by more purposefully integrating collaborative speaking and writing into their syllabi through assignments that allow students to draft a piece of writing by talking and walking it out to a partner or set of partners while moving throughout the classroom (Hecker 3). This type of activity values bodily movement, speech, and writing as integral parts of the composition process. Furthermore, students

can present their papers in oral presentations and workshops, which require detailed oral and written feedback from their classmates, again positioning composition in relation to collaboration and oral discussion among their classmates.

Now this discussion is not always easy, in fact the term “contact” indicates that it is a space wrought with struggle and wrestling with divergent ideas. This divergence is to be expected even in terms of Micronesia alone where students come from very diverse regions with distinct region-based family politics. However, “contact” can also take place as students from Micronesia dialogue with students who come from non-indigenous backgrounds, have a limited understanding of the cultures and values of the Micronesian regions, or who feel offended or angered even by a challenge to previous standards of writing and competitive learning modeled in prior writing classrooms. Nonetheless, it is essential to remember that the goal of the collective speaking and writing in the classroom is not necessarily agreement, but rather a deeper valuation of diverse ancestral and familial knowledge and perspectives (as Jennifer, herself points out). Working toward this goal of a greater understanding of specific familial values – not necessarily an assimilation into or complete agreement with them – allows students, both from Micronesia, and from other distinct places to feel empowered to write about what they know while also challenging them to become critically aware of where that knowledge can move and how it can be used to move and influence others outside of a specific family lineage.

### **Connecting Writing with Family Development**

Additionally, to encourage students from Micronesia to become more critically engaged and empowered in the writing classroom, composition can also be more intimately connected with writing about the family. As Zara, a university student from Palau mentioned in a personal interview that I conducted with her in 2014, students from Micronesia (like herself) start to lose interest in writing when they are moved away from writing about their families and helping their own people and regions (Personal interview). Writing, then, becomes another means of displacement and disconnect rather than a means of contributing to family development in the writing process.

Composition and rhetoric scholar, Ellen Cushman writes that for inner-city students living in New York it was essential to connect writing in the classroom with issues and writing forms and practices relevant to their daily family lives – housing forms, welfare documents, and bills, for example (Cushman “Introduction”). It was only when placing writing within this larger writing context that educators could better understand both the tools that students employ in their writing as well as the struggles that take place when trying to use those tools – sometimes they work and sometimes they don’t depending upon the audience.

Cushman’s work is useful to the discussion about Zara’s call for more family-oriented writing here because it points out the importance but also some of the critical complexities of implementing a pedagogy of writing in relation to family development for Micronesian college students. Family and family development are not defined the same way by those within a particular indigenous population and without it, therefore, the tools that Micronesian students use to communicate in relation to family contribution may not be as readily received or understood within the O‘ahu or continental U.S. classroom. A fear of writing work that is then lost in translation is often a reason that students from Micronesia may not write about their families and where they are from – for fear of being misunderstood. As Jennifer expressed later in our personal interview conducted in 2014, a fear of being misunderstood by her teachers – for being judged as inadequate

or incapable or wrong – often pushes her to maintain silence in the classroom and to keep her deepest and most critical thoughts in relation to her family life and sense of community to herself (only to be recorded in private journals) (Jennifer Personal interview).

In order to combat this very real fear, teachers must work to actively acknowledge the role that not only tools but struggles play in writing for family in relation to Micronesia. Within the writing classroom, teachers can assign writing reflections throughout different stages of drafting a paper that focus on making students more aware of not only the writing tools they are using to inform and convince their audience about family issues and changes within their regions, but also the struggles that occur when trying to use those tools to convince an audience who is unfamiliar with them. Furthermore, writing instructors can also encourage students to view family and family development not just in terms of their specific islands, but also in terms of the issues encountered by their larger extended family networks that now live throughout Oah‘u, the Pacific, and the United States.

Nonetheless, even with plentiful opportunities within the classroom to write about their own families, students from Micronesia may still struggle to connect their writing with real action – especially since these students are settlers and have been pushed away from their families and regions for much of their educational careers. Thus, an additional level of support is needed in the beginning writing classroom. Students from these regions need to see that their writing has power in terms of their actual families back home and among the extended family networks of Micronesians across the Pacific. One way to foster these connections, is for writing instructors to provide resources and opportunities for students from Micronesia to talk to and learn from other students and leaders from their own regions. There are a few ways in particular to do this. Particularly, I will suggest here a few of the ways that are specific to where I live and work (Oah‘u), although the suggestions are broad enough that they can be readily applied to institutions across the Pacific and continental U.S., as well.

Students from Micronesia writing in Oahu can connect their writing to a sense of purpose and family engagement, through composition resources outside of the classroom that work to connect students with an extended network of writing mentors and role models from their own regions and sometimes even their own families. For example, at the University of Hawai‘i in Hilo the Pacific Islander Student Center employs mentors and tutors from indigenous Pacific islander backgrounds (Chuukese, Palauan, etc.) to help students from those regions feel more connected on campus (Raaitor Personal Interview). The director of the Center, Vid Raaitor, is from Chuuk and is therefore, very familiar with the educational gaps mentioned earlier in this paper, and is working carefully with the Center to fill them (Personal interview).

Applying what is taking place at the Center to other campuses across the Pacific – including Oah‘u – instructors and administrators can work more closely with their own departmental writing centers to create Micronesian family support networks within these spaces. Current writing center pedagogy is particularly attune to the growing population of international and migrant students who are seeking writing support outside of the classroom setting (Hall 5). This should come as no surprise, just considering the increase in the migrant population from Micronesia in the last decade. According to a recent article in the *Writing Center Newsletter*, writing centers who employ a diverse range of international writing tutors serve as valuable spaces of “mediation” as mentors serve as “cultural informants” (Balester 9). It is through this more culturally specific and diverse writing center space that students, are provided with a safe space where they can negotiate connections between where they are writing from, who they are writing to, and how to most effectively move between the two (Balester 9). Thus, as Micronesian writing mentors serve as

guides in navigating specific cultural and compositional issues, an extension of the indigenous family network is created in the writing center in order to provide a community learning support across island spaces – very much like the extended family network that Francis Hezel calls a “resource to turn to when need arises” (28). In this learning environment, students from Micronesia are encouraged to develop renewed confidence in writing about, for, and *within* a family structure that he or she has previously been removed from throughout the education process.

This increased confidence in writing from within a Micronesian concept of extended family networks and learning practices is refined even further as students receive support from an even larger body of students from Micronesia, as well. Students who have moved from Micronesia to Oah‘u and other regions have to battle with a sense of disconnect and disembodiment that is often reinforced in their writing classes (as was discussed earlier in this paper). Therefore, one of the most important ways for students from Micronesia to feel that their college level writing has agency is to put it into conversation with the writings of other students from Micronesia. Right now this type of support takes place on a cross-institutional level as Chaminade University and the Pacific Islander Student Center at Hilo have worked to host conferences that bring together student leaders and speakers from Micronesia who have moved to Hawai‘i. In my own work, writing my dissertation project, I have also worked across writing departments, at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and Chaminade University to connect students and start conversations across writing programs. Students from Micronesia can be connected to other students from these rich regions through the hosting of cross-institutional writing events – poetry slams, conferences, open mic readings – that bring together multiple writing departments and resources. Furthermore, through the use of technology, students can also be connected with students currently attending college back in Micronesia, as well. For example, students from Chaminade are currently able to connect with and learn from students attending the satellite campus of the Community College of the Carolina Islands through the use of technologies like Blackboard online, email, and Skype.

Fostering these sorts of cross-departmental, cross-institutional, and cross-regional networks of connection and sharing provides students from the Micronesian regions a space within tertiary education – in particular the composition classroom – to see the very real power of their own families and familial constructions of composing and learning. Furthermore, these networks, also provide a means of taking writing outside of the classroom, allowing students who have often been told to separate family from the writing process, to see and enact the mobility of writing about, for, and within their indigenous families – to connect with extended family networks of students, to educate and encourage future family leaders, and to foster familial collaboration and action.

Ultimately, it is the goal of this essay to foster this sort of familial change and action, as well. A change is needed, an educational *movement* is necessary, to reverse the damaging trends that have been set in motion in primary and tertiary education for students from the regions of Micronesia. Through pedagogy within the writing classroom that fosters composition embedded in speaking, writing, and sharing about family and family values, students from these regions can build off of what they know (both about family and about composing) and become more critical about how to more effectively communicate what they know to diverse audiences across spaces. Furthermore, through cross-institutional and departmental networks of writing support for migrant students from Micronesia, students can work across the multiple layers of distance that they encounter in tertiary education (geographical, cultural, etc). Working across these layers of distance, students can create extended family networks that work to once again connect writing

with indigenous family learning values and the power to effect positive community change for those families.

What I have found in my time spent sitting and sharing with students attending Chaminade University and the children who currently reside in Kaka'ako is that there are powerful voices emerging from the Micronesian regions that are being silenced within the writing classroom. As instructors and administrators and writing center facilitators, we can either continue patterns that are maintaining silence or we can start a different *movement*: one that creates a college writing environment that encourages students from Micronesia to speak with confidence and empowerment and offers them multiple spaces in which to be clearly heard.

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