



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 16
Issue 3 *September*

Article 6

September 1989

The Impact of Americanization on Intergenerational Relations: An Exploratory Study on the U.S. Territory of Guam

Amanda Smith Barusch
University of Utah

Marc L. Spaulding
University of Guam

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons, and the Sociology of Culture Commons

Recommended Citation

Barusch, Amanda Smith and Spaulding, Marc L. (1989) "The Impact of Americanization on Intergenerational Relations: An Exploratory Study on the U.S. Territory of Guam," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol16/iss3/6>

This Article is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Impact of Americanization on Intergenerational Relations: An Exploratory Study on the U.S. Territory of Guam*

AMANDA SMITH BARUSCH

University of Utah
Graduate School of Social Work

MARC L. SPAULDING

University of Guam
Department of Sociology

In-depth interviews with a sample of 60 elderly from the indigenous (Chamorro) population and the immigrant (Filipino) population examined their current lifestyles, with emphasis upon intergenerational relations. Results underscore the dramatic lifestyle changes experienced by Guam's elderly in the wake of Americanization. Among these is an intergenerational "language gap", wherein a majority of the grandchildren do not speak the native language of their elders. Ethnicity, mixed marriage, and length of residence on Guam are discussed as possible determinants of the language gap. The language gap is associated with lower life satisfaction for elders, as well as reduced family contact and less intergenerational assistance.

During the last 40 years, the U.S. territory of Guam has undergone rapid modernization, accompanied by a deliberate attempt to "Americanize" its population. This effort was successful in producing a generation of young people who share American ideals and aspire to an American life style. This pilot study examined the relationships between these young people

*Research reported here was supported in part by a grant to the Micronesian Area Research Center, from the Department of Public Health and Social Services, Government of Guam.

and their grandparents. Findings are interpreted with reference to the impact of Americanization on Guam's families.

Prior to Americanization the care of elderly Chamorros (native Guamanians) was enmeshed in a complex set of extended family relations defined by values of cooperation, mutual assistance, and respect for the elderly. We suspect that the exposure of younger generations to new patterns of language and values has changed the structure of Chamorro families, and that this change has significant implications for the care and well-being of Guam's elderly. This study offers only historical data to show the disruptive power of the external forces of Americanization; however, four aspects of the internal dynamics of the family were explicitly addressed. These included: family cohesion, ethnicity, length of residence on Guam, and frequency of mixed marriage.

As Magdoff (1972) notes, the study of imperialism and colonialism raises serious questions ". . . about the political, economic and social effects of domination by imperialist powers on colonies, semicolonies and spheres of influence (p. 1). The social effects of colonialism can be both amorphous and far-reaching. When intergenerational bonds are weakened the indigenous culture of a region can be virtually eliminated.

Although not the first to colonize Guam, the United States exerted the most control over the island and so had the greatest effect upon its culture and people (Nevin, 1977). To a large extent, the neo-colonial efforts of the U.S. to control Guam and the rest of Micronesia typically came in the form of social and economic assistance. A primary means of establishing an American presence was the institution of an educational system which sought to create a base of common language and American values among the native populations.¹ This process supported U.S., efforts to secure the land necessary for Western Pacific military bases and to exert influence in a region that was, as history had shown, a crucial link in the control of military and economic activity in the Far East.

In the next section we more fully describe the efforts of the United States to establish American-style schools on the island of Guam. We also shed light on the changes in intergenerational relations which have accompanied Americanization. A language

gap between elderly Guamanians and their grandchildren typifies these changes and is explored in detail.

Guam: Cultural and Historical Background

The geo-political region known as Micronesia has undergone several periods of colonial conquest since its discovery by Spain in 1521. By the mid-1800s several European nations, including England, Germany and France, had sent traders, missionaries, and anthropologists to the island to expand the power and influence of those countries in the Pacific region. Later, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Japan and the United States would play a dominant role in attempting to exploit the strategic importance of the region and its abundant marine resources.

The colonization of Guam began when the island was discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. Guam's involvement with world affairs may be dated from its discovery and characterized by the following periods which designate Guam's political control by foreign administrations: a) Spanish: 1565–1898; b) American: 1898–1941; c) Japanese: 1941–1944; and d) American: 1944 to present (Carano and Sanchez, 1964). The government of Spain controlled Guam from 1565 until it was ceded to the United States after the Spanish-American War (1898). American possession was interrupted by the Japanese administration of Guam during World War II which extended from 1941 until the island was retaken in 1944.

This cultural and historical overview focuses upon the American, rather than Japanese or Spanish, period of Guam's history because the economic and political development of the island is largely the result of concerted efforts by American interests to utilize the island as a Pacific base for military activity. In order to understand U.S. dominance in Guam's cultural affairs it is necessary to remember that Guam has been an American territory since 1898 with, of course, the interruption of the Japanese occupation of the island from 1941 to 1944.

As a U.S. territory, Guam has been subject to the dictates of a developmental scheme planned and implemented by the U.S. Naval Administration which controlled island affairs from 1898 until the early 1960s. In January of 1899, John D. Long, Secretary

of the Navy under President McKinley, stated that “. . . the mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation, substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule” (Carano and Sanchez, 1964, p. 184). Later in February of that same year Lieutenant Vinedon L. Cottman wrote,

If the Government [U.S.] intends to make Guam a self-supporting island and a creditable colony it will be necessary to commence immediately and use heroic measures. The following are suggested as some of the necessary means to this end . . . 6. Establish Public Schools and compel all children to go to school and teach them English, . . . (Carano and Sanchez, 1964, pp. 181–182).

The American policy of rapid acculturation of the Guamanian population was to be “benevolent” and pursued aggressively through education of the children.²

While U.S. Naval administrators who were charged with the direction of Guam’s people recognized the importance of education, especially instruction in English, as one important means of control over island affairs, early efforts to establish American schools on Guam met with meager results.³ Although instruction in English was available from the onset of American intervention, most Guamanians did not have access to public educational facilities until after World War II and, in the case of secondary education, until the early 1960s. The first class in English was taught in 1899 by William Edwin Safford who was also Guam’s first Naval Lieutenant Governor. By 1901 there were several private schools which specialized in the instruction of English and public instruction began in the town of Agana in October 1901. The three schools were forced to close in 1902 for lack of funds and were not reopened until 1904 (Carano, 1964, pp. 15). Prior to the invasion of the Japanese in 1941 there were 32 public schools on the island. Secondary education was begun in 1917 but the island’s first high school—George Washington High School—was opened in October of 1936 and graduated the first class consisting of eight students in 1940, the second class graduated in 1941 and the third class in 1945 after the Japanese occupation (Carano, 1964). As late as 1956 there was only one high school on Guam (George Washington) with an enrollment of about 2,000 students. As a result, the elderly on Guam have

limited formal education averaging about 5.8 years in school (Kasperbauer, 1980, p. 20).

In the early 1960s the Kennedy administration stepped up U.S. efforts to bring the entire region of Micronesia, which includes Guam, under its control.⁴ Peterson (1979/1980) notes that in 1963 the Kennedy administration established a task force whose job it was to lay down a plan to "permanently" bring Micronesia under U.S. dominion. Colletta (1976), in his studies of education on the island of Pohnpei, establishes the leading role of American education in dismantling Micronesian culture and indoctrinating the Micronesian people to an American way of life. The use of educational programs fostered by the U.S. was clearly part of a planned effort to expand American influence in Guam and in the rest of Micronesia. Colletta's (1976, p. 113) work confirms that since 1962 the United States has increased its efforts to expand American-style education in Micronesia as ". . . part of a systematic program of development and acculturation".

During the centuries prior to the influx of American education Guamanians learned skills, knowledge, beliefs and language in an informal way through the extended family network. This smooth, informal transmission of culture from one generation to another was disrupted by Americanization. In addition to the teaching of English, Guamanians were indoctrinated with American ideas and accustomed to the American life style. As the push toward greater U.S. involvement in Micronesian affairs was felt in the early 1960s, students in Guam (as well as in the rest of Micronesia) began, like their counterparts in America, to see education as the key to success in the new way of life. Henny (1968) notes that the process of "credentialling" became increasingly important during this period and that the credentialling process relied heavily upon the use of standard American-designed achievement tests like the California Achievement Test (CAT). Henny (1968, p. 404) states, however, that these achievement tests were culturally-biased and, ". . . actually measure[d] proficiency in the English language rather than general achievement . . .".

Thus, over the past 40 years the younger generations of Guamanians have learned to compete for jobs and leadership in an

Americanized world in which English was a crucial tool for success. Within the last 20 years it has become virtually impossible for a Guamanian student to excel in school and, later, work without complete command of the English language.⁵

No other generations of Guamanians have experienced this kind of pressure to put aside their language and culture and adapt to new and foreign ways. Because it is only within the last 20–40 years that English has become the language of commerce on Guam, individuals who went through adolescence prior to 1944 are generally not proficient in the English language. Those who were born and raised on Guam after World War II and especially those born since 1960 have nearly complete proficiency in English; many of these are fluent in English only and unable to communicate in the language of their elders.

Intensive efforts to Americanize the island since World War II have clearly changed the lifestyle of Guam's elderly. Within 40 years the island has developed an infrastructure which resembles that of any small town in America. These physical changes are obvious. But the social consequences of Americanization are elusive to the casual observer. This study represents an initial attempt to describe the impact of Americanization on family relations, particularly those between the elderly and young family members.

Method

In-depth interviews were conducted with 60 individuals, ranging in age from 55 to 94. Most interviews (56%) were conducted in respondents' homes and senior centers (34%).

Interviews were conducted by research assistants of Chamorro and Filipino backgrounds. The longest interview took four hours. Usually interviews were completed in two sessions, ranging in length from one to two hours. Interviews were conducted in Chamorro, or a Philippine dialect (either Tagalog, Visaya, or Ilocano), depending upon the respondent's preferred language.

Sample

The nonpurposive sample of 60 was drawn from a variety of sources: Senior Centers located in central Guam (62% of sample); Guam Memorial Hospital (12%); caseworkers serving the

homebound elderly (16%); and volunteers from the community (10%). The sample was chosen from diverse sources to insure representation of elderly with various levels of functional impairment. Because the sample was not randomly selected, this group cannot be considered representative of the entire population of elderly on Guam. Nonetheless, this diverse group does offer insight into the lives and needs of Guam's elderly.

For the present analysis of intergenerational relations, only those of Filipino or Chamorro background who had both children and grandchildren were included. This subsample of 48 had an average age of 72. Compared to the general population, men were somewhat over-represented in this group, making up 42% of the subsample. Thirty of the subsample (62.5%) were Filipino, and 18 (37.5%) Chamorro. Within the Filipino group, the mean length of residence on Guam was 12.5 years, with a range from less than one year to 39 years. Guamanian and Filipino elderly were chosen because these groups comprise about 90% of all the elderly on Guam (Kasperbauer, 1980, p. 21).⁶

The experiences of Filipino elders serve to demonstrate the effects of American intervention *across* cultures. By considering family relations in two groups, each having distinctive cultural patterns, we are in a better position to judge the dynamic relationship between dominant (American) and subordinate (Guamanian, Filipino) social systems.

Survey Instrument

The instrument used was modeled on an exhaustive tool development by California's Multipurpose Senior Services Project (MSSP). The interview schedule was modified to be appropriate for local conditions. It included six major sections. The first assessed the strength of the person's family and social networks. The second examined significant life events and daily activities. Third, general health status was considered, as was mental status. Fourth, a series of questions designed to address functional status considered the need for and receipt of assistance with ADL (Activities of Daily Living) and IADL (Instrumental Activities of Daily Living). Fifth, the individual's health habits and life satisfaction were examined, as well as income and expenses. A final section addressed utilization of and satisfaction with the formal services available in the community.

This article presents selected findings from the first section of the instrument.

Findings and Discussion

Both qualitative and quantitative findings shed light on changing patterns of family relations. Within this group we have observed shifting patterns of intergenerational assistance and communication.

Shifting Patterns of Intergenerational Assistance

Direct intergenerational assistance is still more prevalent on Guam than on the U.S. mainland. Shared residence can be viewed as a form of intergenerational aid. In 1980, 24% of Guam's elderly lived with their children (Kasperbauer, 1980). Authors of a 1984 study conducted on the U.S. mainland estimated that 16% of U.S. elderly live with their children or grandchildren (Mogey, 1988). Guamanian elderly also report close relationships with slightly more relatives. In this sample 22% reported feeling close to six or more relatives. This compares to 19% in a California sample (Lubben, et al., 1987). Elders in this sample also reported a higher degree of family contact than is usually the case on the U.S. mainland. For example, among those who have children, 86% reported that they usually saw them at least once a week. This compares to 73.8% (for those 65–79) and 81.3 (for those over 80) in a recent California study (Lubbin & Becerra, 1987). By U.S. standards Guam's elderly report a high degree of family contact. But Guam's elderly do not hold U.S. standards of family interaction.

Members of this sample were raised with very different expectations from members of the same age cohort on the U.S. mainland. Born around 1913, they grew up prior to the post World War II expansion of American involvement on Guam. During their adolescence and young adulthood, family life on Guam was embedded in a system of reciprocal obligations. For example, Tan Maria told our interviewer of her vivid recollections of family support and assistance in times of need. She described a house which was constructed in one day by family and friends of its future occupants. She also observed that this could not happen today, "It is just not like before. Children are

all working . . . they have no time. Education is so important . . ." When she was little all she had to learn was how to write her name and read a little. Tan Maria also acknowledged the comfort of modern conveniences. She compared today's automobiles favorably to the carabao cart which was the sole means of transportation in her youth.

Guamanians surveyed by Workman (1983) also described shifting patterns of family relations. One respondent described the situation by saying the children and grandchildren have "lost inheritance to the land" (p. 14). Another, like Tan Maria, noted that family interaction was less than it should be because adult children must work and "keep up with financial responsibilities" (p. 14). Workman also found that some families rejected the notion of filial obligation. Describing tensions and conflicts between a young couple and their kinship network, he reports that the young couple felt that "a family unit should be separated from the extended family and its influences. They felt that a family "needed to prove its own survival without help or assistance from other family members" (p. 15).

Marvin Sussman (1979) observed that in complex societies differentiation in occupational systems, as well as social security and health care programs have "eclipsed the importance of the single family modus operandi for guaranteeing the well-being of older members" (p. 232). The testamentary power accorded to the elderly once enabled them to control most family wealth by controlling the distribution of land.

On Guam, inheritance of land has lost much of its importance. Within our sample we have observed shifting occupational patterns, which reflect an increasingly complex economy. The proportion of farmers appears to have dropped considerably, from 35% of the parent generation to 8% of this sample. Evidently many sons of farmers entered the unskilled trades (laborer, domestic helper, dishwasher). The proportion involved in these occupations increased from 3% to 18% in the two generations. Increases were also seen in government work (from 3% to 12%) and skilled trades such as carpentry, masonry, weaving (from 13% to 20%). However, women in our sample were about as likely to have been housewives as their mothers were. The majority of these women (76%) listed this as their

primary occupation. The same proportion reported this was their mother's primary occupation.

Members of the middle generation in this sample are increasingly involved in occupations which restrict their ability to provide intergenerational assistance, and diminish the importance of land inheritance. A decline in aid to the parent generation is seen in our sample. Among today's elderly 82% reported that they had provided help to their parents. This generally involved either money, or in-kind contributions such as food and other goods. But only 10% reported that their children gave them financial or in-kind assistance. Even when we allow for a tendency to exaggerate one's role as a provider rather than a recipient of aid, this drop is striking.

Exchanges, between Guam's elderly and their adult children continue to exceed those normally found in the U.S. Guam's elderly are more likely to live with their children, to feel close to younger generations, and to see their children at least once a week. But the process of Americanization, has dramatically altered the island's economy. Subsistence farming, once a primary occupation, has been replaced by paid employment. Jobs reduce the time available to provide help to the elderly. They also reduce the importance of land inheritance, thereby diminishing the elder's ability to provide a resource in exchange for assistance.

Shifting Patterns of Intergenerational Communication

The vast majority (83%) of respondents in this sample speak rudimentary English. The English language is, however, a second language for most, if not all of this sample. As indicated earlier, the average number of years of formal schooling for Guam's elderly is 5.8 years. Thus, it is not surprising that our respondents chose not to use English for their interviews. English is clearly not the preferred language of most elderly on Guam (Kasperbauer, 1980).

In this sample, 65% reported that their grandchildren speak only English and are unable to communicate with the elders in their preferred language. This "language gap" is especially prevalent within the Chamorro population, where 78% of the elderly indicate that their grandchildren do not speak the native tongue. Within the Filipino community the figure is 55%.

Possible Consequences of the Language Gap

Bengtson and Robertson (1985) identify four functions widely attributed to grandparents: "being there", "family watchdog", "participant in the construction of family history" and "arbitrator". Inability to communicate directly and smoothly with grandchildren can interfere with three of these functions. The grandparent in this situation is certainly "being there". That is, serving as a sort of mortality buffer by standing between death and the next generation. But the other functions are adversely affected by a language gap. The family watchdog function involves being alert and ready to provide assistance, if needed. Since communication is an important aspect of perceiving need and providing assistance, the language gap is likely to impair a grandparent's ability to fill this function. The construction and interpretation of family history is also impaired to a limited extent by the language gap, though grandparents might use their older children as translators to participate in this process. As arbitrators, grandparents transmit values and negotiate value differences between their children and grandchildren. In this role grandparents are likely to serve as "generational allies" to the third generation. Value transmission relies heavily on shared language. It is difficult if not impossible when the grandparent speaks only rudimentary English and the grandchild does not speak the native tongue.

How does this language gap affect the older generation? This study was not primarily designed to explore this question, but, by comparing participants who do experience the language gap with those who do not, we can offer direction to future studies in this area. Results suggest that the "language gap" between generations may be associated with negative consequences for life satisfaction and emotional health of the elder. It is also associated with less intergenerational assistance.

Life satisfaction was measured using a scale developed by Wood, Wylie and Shaefer (1960). It consists of a series of 19 statements, indicating either positive or negative outlook. Response options were "agree", "disagree", or "undecided", with the total score going from zero to 36 (see Lubben, 1984 for a more detailed description of this measure). Failure of grandchildren to speak the grandparent's tongue is related to some-

what lower scores on the life satisfaction index. The mean score for those whose grandchildren do speak their language is 26.2. For those whose grandchildren do not the mean is 24.3.

Emotional health was measured using the MSSP Mental Health Index. The index consists of a list of 11 emotions. Respondents indicate how frequently they experience each (see Lubben, 1984 for a more detailed description of this measure). On the Mental Health Index, those whose grandchildren speak their language reported experiencing boredom less frequently. Twenty-two percent of those whose grandchildren speak the language experience boredom sometimes, compared to 41% of those whose grandchildren do not.

Further, those whose grandchildren speak their language report that they experience restlessness less often. Sixty-nine percent of those whose grandchildren speak the native tongue report never experiencing restlessness, compared to 48% of the other group. Those whose grandchildren do not speak their language are more likely to report that they sometimes experience restlessness.

Because of the importance of the extended family as a support system for old age in both Chamorro and Filipino cultures, we were especially interested in the consequences of the language gap on intergenerational assistance. The measure of family assistance used was a 19 point scale indicating the tasks with which the person received assistance. The tasks included: laundry, housework, transfer from bed, walking, wheelchair use, stair climbing, bathing, toileting, incontinence care, dressing, grooming, shopping, meal preparation, eating, money management, telephoning, medication management, foot care, and transportation. One point was given for each task with which an individual received family assistance, so the index ranged from zero to 19.

Thirty percent of our sample reported receiving some assistance from their grandchildren. When overall scores on our assistance index are compared, there appears to be a small difference between those whose grandchildren do and those whose grandchildren do not speak their language. The average for those in the first group is 1.0 tasks; for those in the second, .65. When assistance is treated as a dichotomous term,

reflecting not the extent of help, but whether or not it is available we find that the likelihood of receiving assistance is influenced by language for the Filipino subsample only. In this group, 18% of those whose grandchildren do not speak the language receive assistance, compared to 31% of those whose grandchildren do. Another significant difference appears when we consider maximum scores on this assistance measure. Filipinos whose grandchildren do not speak their language report receiving help with a maximum of one task. Those whose grandchildren do speak the language report receiving help with a maximum of five tasks. This difference was smaller in the Chamorro sample, where the maximums were eight and seven, respectively. Chamorros, on average receive somewhat more assistance from grandchildren (mean=1.33 tasks) than do Filipinos (mean=.47 tasks). Thus the immigrant population receives less aid from grandchildren, and that aid is more likely to be contingent upon a shared language than is the case with the indigenous population.

A common language may be more important in receiving assistance with some tasks than it is with others. If this were the case we would expect an association between grandchildren speaking the respondent's language and the respondent receiving assistance with particular tasks. Of the 19 tasks we considered, 10 showed this association: medication management, transportation, telephoning, stair climbing, walking, footcare, grooming, toileting, bathing, and eating and feeding. In each case, grandchildren speaking the native tongue increased the assistance received. Only three of these associations approached statistical significance, however.⁷ These involved grooming, bathing and eating and feeding, all personal care tasks, involving fairly intimate contact.

Possible causes of the Language Gap

The language gap on Guam is determined by two distinct kinds of cultural processes. In the first case the family, as a network of social support for its members, seeks to maintain the basic tools for meeting needs and solving problems. One of the most fundamental of these tools is language. There must be effective communication in order for the family to meet the needs of its members. Thus, the family exerts a certain internal pres-

sure on all members to speak the same language. On the other hand forces external to the family network, especially in societies undergoing rapid social change, disrupt the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. In the case of Guam, this disruption has entailed a conscious effort on the part of the U.S. to change the language spoken by the native population. This program was and is being carried out by teaching school-age children the English language and not providing sufficient opportunity for learning their native tongues.

Family cohesion, as measured by frequency of visits, is associated with grandchildren learning the native dialect. The elderly whose grandchildren speak their language tend to see other relatives more often. They report seeing 5.5, as opposed to 4.9 relatives in the month prior to the interview. Indeed, these elders may have more social contact in general, as they report feeling close to more people, 7.1 compared to 6.0. These data suggest not only a positive relationship between family cohesion and intergenerational communication, but also a possible association between general sociability and such rapport.

Ethnicity is clearly a strong predictor of fluency in the third generation, with Filipinos much more likely to have grandchildren who speak their language than are Chamorros. As reported earlier, only 55% of Filipinos report that their grandchildren do not speak their language, compared to 78% of Chamorros.

Length of residence on Guam may determine the extent of assimilation into the predominantly modern American culture. The average length of residence is 33 years. Those whose grandchildren do speak their language have lived on Guam an average of 7 years less (mean=27) than those whose grandchildren do not (Mean=34 years). This supports the view that the intergenerational language gap is a result of Americanization.

It also explains to some extent the difference between Filipino and Chamorro families. Many Filipino elderly have recently immigrated to Guam. In part this migration reflects a tendency of elders to follow their children to a new place of residence. Weeks and Cuellar (1983, p. 371) offer evidence of this tendency when they state, "[i]n 1977, parents of U.S. citizens migrating from Asia outnumbered immigrant parents from any

other area of the world, with those of the Philippines leading . . .". Because Guam is a major port of entry for Filipino immigrants into the United States, we feel secure in our assumption that many recent older immigrants are following families who have also recently moved to Guam so that the younger generation of Filipinos remains more closely connected to the language and traditions of their own culture.

But length of residence does not explain all of the difference between Chamorro and Filipino families. The effects of Americanization can evidently be buffered by cultural characteristics. Chamorros who have been on Guam for longer than average (89% of Chamorros) are more likely than Filipinos who have been on Guam for longer than average (16% of Filipinos) to experience the intergenerational language gap. Eighty one percent of Chamorros who are long-time residents report that their grandchildren do not speak their language, compared to 40% of Filipinos who have been on Guam for a long time.

The presence of mixed marriages in the parent generation was expected to be a strong predictor of grandchildren's language. There is a dramatic difference between Filipino and Chamorro populations in the frequency of middle generation mixed marriages, with 23% of the average Chamorro's children married to someone of another ethnic group, and 8% of the average Filipino's children in mixed marriages. This suggests that the difference between the two ethnic groups might be largely attributable to different rates of mixed marriage. When the relationship between mixed marriage and grandchildren's fluency is examined, however, no significant effect emerges. This may reflect a weakness in the data, which do not enable us to identify grandchildren with their parents. (Each generation is treated as a separate entity.) Comparison of grandchildren of mixed marriage with those of unmixed marriage, might reveal a strong language effect.

Summary and Conclusions

Traditionally, the elderly of Micronesia have occupied positions of high status within their families and communities (Mason, 1982). Even in the face of rapid modernization islanders maintain that the extended family network cares for its elderly

members. To the casual Western observer it is all too easy to succumb to the pastoral, mythic quality of this view that, even today, the needs of Micronesia's elderly are being met by the family.⁸ This study identifies subtle changes which have occurred in Guam's families during the lifetimes of today's elderly. Qualitative findings reveal the elders' perception that patterns of intergenerational assistance have changed. This is consistent with Marvin Sussman's statement that a complex socio-economic system reduces the importance of intergenerational exchange, in part by reducing the value of land inheritance. Results also reveal a language gap created by the intervention of American educational policies on Guam.⁹

This study suggests that the language gap is a significant aspect of family life for both native and Filipino residents currently living on Guam. We were able to describe some of the effects of cultural influence by studying both Chamorro and Filipino populations. In this way, we could be confident that the appearance of a language gap in both groups signaled the influence of external forces (e.g., schooling in English) rather than some internal cultural dynamic of family life which produced the language gap between elders and grandchildren. Both elderly Chamorros and Filipinos reported a language gap. To some extent we can explain the smaller number of Filipino elderly who reported a language gap by reference to the length of time they have resided on Guam.

The fact that a significant number of elderly Chamorro and Filipinos do not communicate effectively with their grandchildren does not mean that the family is completely unable to respond to the needs of the elderly. In many cases it is the children, not grandchildren, who are primarily responsible for assisting the elderly and the children of Guam's elderly are more likely to be able to communicate in the elder's native tongue. Instead, the language gap between grandparent and grandchildren is likely to deprive both younger and older generations of support and socialization. These results, while not definitive, provide a new direction for future research into the long-term effects of colonization.

As Mark Lusk (1984) points out, "The dynamics of societal development and aging are sometimes paradoxical" (p. 11). This

is certainly the case on Guam. Americanization has brought improved nutrition, sanitation, and health care, even as it threatens intergenerational assistance and communication. When the inability to communicate threatens intergenerational bonds it also undermines cultural integrity. The language gap is not only a clinical concern for social workers serving the elderly and their families, but a policy issue for educators and legislators. It must be addressed if Micronesia is to enjoy the benefits of Americanization and maintain its unique cultural heritage.

References

- Bengtson, V. L. & Robertson, J. F. (Eds.). (1985). *Grandparenthood*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Carano, P. & Sanchez, P. C. (1964). *A complete history of Guam*. VT: C. E. Tuttle Company.
- Colletta, N. J. (1976). Cross-cultural transactions in Ponapean elementary classrooms. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, #9, 113–123.
- Colletta, N. J. (1977). Ponape: cross-cultural contact, formal schooling and foreign dominance in Micronesia. *Topics in Culture Learning*, August, 441–49.
- Coker, D. R. (1982). Transition in paradise: historical and educational change in Micronesia. *Clearing House*, 56, 156–169.
- Gale, R. C. (1978). *The Americanization of Micronesia: A study of the consolidation of U.S. rule in the Pacific*. Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Henny, L. M. (1968). Education and the Americanization of Micronesia. *Sociologische Gids*, #15, 402–407.
- Kasperbauer, L. F. (1980). Demographic and Social Characteristics of Elderly on Guam. Community Development Report No. 5. Agana, Guam: Community Development Institute, University of Guam.
- Kramarae, C., Schultz, M., & O'Barr, W. M. (1984). *Language and power*. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.
- Lubben, J. (1984). Health and psychosocial assessment instruments for community based long term care: The California Multipurpose Senior Services Project experience. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of California at Berkeley.
- Lubben, J. E. & Becerra, R. M. (1987). Social support among Black, Mexican, and Chinese elderly. In D. Gelfand, & C. Barresi, (Eds.), *Ethnic dimensions of aging* (pp. 130–144) NY: Springer Publishing Co.
- Lubben, J. E., Berkanovic, E., Clark, V., Goldstein, M., & Hurwicz, M. L. (1987). *Differences between elderly who enroll in a Medicare HMO and other*

- populations of elderly*. Paper presented at the 115th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, New Orleans.
- Lusk, M. (1984). Aging, development and social welfare strategies. *International Social Work*, XXV, #II (4), 10-29.
- Magdoff, H. (1972). Imperialism: A historical survey. *Monthly Review*, #24, 1-18.
- Mason, L. (1982). Growing old in Micronesia. *Pacific Studies*, #6, 1-25.
- McHenry, D. F. (1975). *Micronesia: Trust betrayed*. NY: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Mogey, J. (1988). Households of the Elders. In S. K. Steinmetz, (Ed.), *Family Support Systems Across the Life Span* (pp. 213-324). NY: Plenum Press.
- Nevin, D. (1977). *The American touch in Micronesia*. NY: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Petersen, G. (1979/80). Breadfruit or rice? The political economics of a vote in Micronesia. *Science and Sociology*, 43, 472-285.
- Shimamoto, Y. (1984). Aging in Palau. *Journal of Gerontological Nursing*, 10, 13-16.
- Sussman, M. B. (1979). The family life of old people. In R. H. Binstock & E. Shanas (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (pp. 218-243). NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Weeks, J. R. & Cuellar, J. B. (1983). The influence of immigration and length of residence. *Research on Aging*, 5, 369-388.
- Wellman, B. and Hall, A. (1986). Social networks and social support: Implications for later life. In V. W. Marshall (Ed.), *Later Life: The social psychology of aging* (pp. 191-232). Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Wood, V., Wylie, M. L. & Sheaffer, B. (1969). An analysis of a short self-report measure of life satisfaction: Correlation with rater judgments. *Journal of Gerontology*, #24 (4), 459-469.
- Workman, R. (1983). *Persistent and changing patterns of the family on Guam: Insights versus myths*. Paper presented to Guam Association of Social Workers. Tamuning, Guam.

Notes

1. In imposing its language on Guam the U.S. was not unlike other colonizing powers. Kramarae and Colleagues note that: "part of the colonization process is generally the imposition of the colonizer's language as the "high" language of the dominated culture" (1984, p. 18).
2. See Carano and Sanchez (1964, pp. 404-438) for a more comprehensive history of education on Guam.
3. The history of the United States' involvement in Micronesia is a fascinating area of study for those interested in military strategy, foreign dependence on U.S. aid and the political economy of the world system. For those who wish to know more about American involvement in Micronesia we recommend the following: David Nevin's (1977) *The American*

Touch in Micronesia, Roger W. Gale's (1979) *The Americanization of Micronesia*, and Donald F. McHenry's (1975) *Micronesia; Trust Betrayed*.

4. Colletta (1976, p. 41) views a similar situation in Pohnpei with great distaste when he states, "In short, the indigenous forces of enculturation have been challenged by the alien acculturative phenomenon of schooling. Schools have become the primary instrument of foreign dominance and control."
5. During informal discussions about the Americanization of Guam Chamorros told us that teachers would punish students who were caught using their native languages. During school hours it was standard policy to allow students to speak only English.
6. Kasperbauer estimates that approximately 68% of his sample identified themselves as Guamanian and 21% said that they were Philipino. As of the 1980 census, Guam's civilian population was 105,979, with 2.8% over 65 years of age.
7. In view of the exploratory character of this study, and in recognition of the impact of our relatively small sample size, results which only approach the traditional .05 level of significance are presented.
8. Shimamoto (1984, p. 14) makes exactly this error during her brief contact with geriatric nurses from Palau.
9. While we were only able to examine the elderly on one island, we suspect that, to varying degrees, a language gap exists and is growing on other Micronesian islands, currently undergoing socio-economic development.

