Legitimating Multilingual Teacher Identities in the Mainstream Classroom

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This article explores the identities of a group of elementary teachers who participated in a professional development (PD) project on multilingual language learners.[1] We study how the participating teachers drew on different aspects of their identities to respond to encouragement to increase their attention to students' diverse multilingual repertoires in classroom practices. Drawing on research that has sought to open up more spaces for multilingualism in North American, English-medium schooling, the teachers were invited to create multilingual print environments (Lotherington, 2013), use group work to increase oral participation among multilingual learners, invite students to take on the role of 'language teacher' (Cary, 2008), and encourage students to author multilingual *identity texts* (Cummins & Early, 2010). As the teachers grappled with these ideas, we collected data in the form of classroom observation notes, interviews, assignments, and WebCT posts. Using Gee's (2001) framework for identity, our analysis sheds light on how the teachers enacted their professional identities as they worked to put the PD concepts and recommendations into practice. Our analysis reveals how the teachers' own linguistic histories strongly shaped their views about multilingualism in schools, but it also demonstrates that a formally sanctioned opportunity to experiment with multilingual pedagogies opened up new spaces for critical self-reflection about the links among languages, teachers' identities, and academic engagement for multilingual learners.

Keywords: teacher identities; multilingual language learners; professional development; mainstream classrooms

IN THIS ARTICLE, WE ANALYZE TEACHER identities to better understand the varied responses by elementary school teachers to a professional development (PD) program carried out in Honolulu, Hawai'i that sought to broaden their professional knowledge of how to serve their multilingual language learners. While the PD project had a wide scope, including teaching about key aspects of second language learning, pedagogical strategies, and assessment, the program regularly encouraged the participating teachers to make greater use of children's home and community languages in their instruction. Current research in multilingual education has demonstrated how the acknowledgment of students' linguistic repertoires in the forms of critical language awareness and multilingual pedagogies can enhance students' opportunities for learning (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, 2015; García, 2009; García & Sylvan, 2011) by building on their *funds of knowledge* (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and developing rapport that contributes to a more inclusive learning environment (Cummins & Early, 2010; Faltis, 2006). More than acting as a springboard for teaching diverse students dominant forms of academic English, multilingual pedagogies can be a form of "culturally sustaining pedagogy" (Paris, 2012, p. 93), or teaching that places

pluralism at the center of schooling. While multilingual pedagogies can include officially sanctioned approaches which assign different languages to particular subjects or activities within the school day, the multilingual practices relevant to our context are better described as forms of *translanguaging* (García, 2009), or the fluid use of multilingual resources in learning and teaching. Translanguaging has been shown effective as a means of including children in the mainstream activities of the classroom by making space for them to use their home languages as they participate and learn (Canagarajah, 2011; García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2016).

While a significant body of research has now been established that demonstrates the value of legitimating multilingual identities for students, we have found relatively little work in this area with respect to *teachers.* Even though the inclusion of multilingual learners in mainstream classrooms has been the practice for quite a while in the United States, research shows that many teachers abdicate their responsibilities toward these students (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004) and tend to be very resistant to making adaptations for them (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). In superdiverse settings like Honolulu, the site of the study, it is crucial to research the role of teacher identities in regard to multilingual forms of teaching in the mainstream classroom due to the rapidly changing nature of school demographics. In the two schools that this project served, 35% of the children were multilingual learners, and there were over 20 different languages spoken across the schools, including relatively concentrated numbers of speakers of Chuukese, Ilokano, Tagalog, Samoan, Marshallese, Japanese, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Korean. In addition to these languages, the children were also users of English and Hawai'i Creole, an English-lexified creole that is widely spoken in Hawai'i due to the state's legacy as a sugar and pineapple plantation economy.

Hawai'i ranks fifth in the nation for having the highest percentage of students designated as English language learners (ELL) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The five most-used home languages in Hawai'i are Ilokano, Chuukese, Marshallese, Tagalog, and Spanish. The result of this diversity is that multilingual educational policies and practices are in dire need of development in order to better serve the student population. As García (2008) argues, "[W]hen public school systems throughout the world are increasingly populated with multilingual children, it behooves teacher educators to put language difference at the center of the educational enterprise" (p. 393). At the two schools we worked with, sheltered English programs were the main source of support for students who were still acquiring English. Through our PD program, we sought to offer mainstream teachers alternative ways of supporting their multilingual learners while providing them with an encouraging space for experimenting with these ideas. In this article, we discuss how teacher identities were at the heart of the varied responses we observed in how the teachers took up our encouragement to implement more multilingual pedagogies.

TEACHER LEARNING AS THE PRODUCTION OF NEW IDENTITIES

Teacher identity refers to who teachers are and what sort of experiences they bring to the classroom setting. For many years, scholarly work on teachers' work and professional development treated teacher identity as unproblematic and singular in nature (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Moving away from this notion of teacher identity as being formed as an outcome of teaching skills or experience, Britzman (1992) cautioned that teacher identity should not be confined to teacher role and function. Expanding this notion of teacher identity, Connelly and Clandinin (1995) placed teachers' lives at the center of their work. They gave it recognition as an essential tool to understand the ongoing construction of teachers' narratives of their personal and social experiences and their influence in teachers' professional knowledge and the professional landscapes in which they live.

Recently, the teacher education literature has started to highlight the importance of identity in teacher development, particularly during the student teaching years of teachers' professional trajectories (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Since teacher learning is an ongoing process, we extend this interest in identity to education for in-service teachers. In alignment with the more socially oriented approaches to identity in education, we are particularly interested in examining the ways that teachers' professional identities interact with their personal and political histories, as uncovered through the process of engaging in PD.

Key Sources of Teacher Identity

Teachers' identities clearly shape the ways in which they engage in the PD itself, as their prior

teaching experience, prior PD experiences, life experience, and institutional affiliations influence the ways they interpret the training that they receive. Teachers may identify (and be identified) through out-of-school identity sources, such as their own experience with schooling, their upbringing, or their moral or political beliefs. Teachers' professional identities are also shaped through in-school sources, such as school policies and school curricula. We use Gee's (2001) framework to analyze four key intersecting sources of identity in educational contexts. First, Gee notes that *nature-based*[2] sources of identity, such as a teacher's gender or ethnicity, can become foundational to their teaching philosophy or teaching practices. This emerged in our study most clearly through the teachers' experiences with their own ethnolinguistic heritage, and the resulting perspectives that their own ethnolinguistic histories provided them when engaging with their multilingual learners. Second, identities can form in relation to an *institution.* In our project, one way this emerged was through one of the school's philosophies of "mindfulness," a slogan that was found on many walls and classrooms that asked the teachers and students to reflect on their actions in light of how it would affect others at all times.

Third, at the level of *discourse,* a teacher's identity can be shaped by beliefs espoused by colleagues or by ideologies about cultural groups that are represented in the school population and in wider society. Discourses are also formed in the micro-moments of interaction and in the circulation of texts. One discourse that we observed was a negative portrayal of Pacific Islander students from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Marshall Islands, and Palau. These students are often the most financially disadvantaged in their schools, and many of our participating teachers characterized them as lacking appropriate behavior for schooling. Finally, at the level of *affinity,* a teacher's identity can be formed with regard to how she or he relates to an institutional activity or group. For example, a teacher may be known as someone who is heavily invested in the school garden program, or as someone who takes part in teacher learning groups. In our project, teachers' prior affinities as former students in a Master's program in Teaching at the local university sometimes shaped how they responded to the PD, and how they aligned with one another. Some of these teachers positioned themselves as new teachers and used that identity as a basis to provide each other with more support than we sometimes saw among the veteran teachers. It is important to note that these sources of identity

do not function separately in practice, but rather that they may combine in different ways. For example, our PD program itself was a source of identity that encouraged teachers to take pride in their own forms of multilingualism, hence blending what Gee (2001) calls *nature-based* and *institutional* sources of identity.

Multilingual Teacher Identities and a Transdisciplinary Approach

Developing a PD program that encouraged teachers to learn about and draw on their students' multilingual repertoires required us to engage with the larger contexts surrounding their teaching and learning practices. In line with the *transdisciplinary* approach to second language learning and teaching described by the Douglas Fir Group (2016), we saw how identity intersects with language learning on what they term the micro level, meso level, and macro level in our work with the in-service teachers. At the micro level, identity informs how teachers and learners use linguistic and semiotic resources to use and learn language, including home languages. At the meso level, teachers' professional identities and personal linguistic histories shape the pedagogical choices they make in their classrooms and how they respond to ongoing teacher education. Finally, at the macro level, these identities and micro-level practices are in constant dialogue with historically shaped ideologies that have been formed in relation to political, economic, and cultural forces. In Hawai'i, and in many parts of North America, these ideologies include anti-immigrant sentiment and a protectionist stance that characterizes multilingual children's home languages as a burden on the system, rather than as a positive source of identity or as a benefit to a globalizing, diverse society. Multilingual pedagogies challenge these ideologies by asking teachers and learners to view their languages as resources for learning and to better acknowledge learners' linguistic repertoires as central to their identities. The Douglas Fir Group argues:

> Expectations about how L2 learners' various identities are enacted or expanded are influenced in part by larger sociocultural norms tied to the discourse communities within social institutions shaping their contexts of interaction. These expectations, in turn, shape learners' investments in particular linguistic practices and their motivations for seeking out and pursuing interactions with others. (p. 32)

Hence, the micro level of language learning is deeply interconnected with both the meso level

TABLE 1
Overview of the Malihini Project

August–September	September–December	January–March	March–May	June
Planning, design of interview questions, preparation for teacher observations	Teacher observations and interviews, planning of courses	Course on second language learning, field support visits	Course on multicultural education, field support visits	Final interviews, teacher observations, evaluations, final presentations

and the macro level, the ideological layer of the model, in which belief systems about the power and prestige of specific languages circulate.

We locate our study on the meso level, where teacher identity intersects with the micro level of classroom practices and the macro level of policies and politics. We focus on identities that were enacted among our participating teachers who expressed willingness to engage with components of the PD project that encouraged more multilingual awareness and multilingual practices in the classroom. Though all 15 participating teachers were encouraged to experiment with these ideas, only 7 of them committed to implementing more multilingual teaching approaches in their classrooms as part of the PD program. Using the framework established by Gee (2001),[3] we examine how these 7 teachers positioned themselves as they engaged with these ideas, paying attention to their nature-based, institutional, discursive, and affinity-based identities. We wanted to better understand what it was about their identities that made them able to take up our encouragement to make multilingualism a more central component of their classrooms through multilingual pedagogies. Contrary to most of the research done to date on teacher identity, which mostly focuses on pre-service novice teachers, our study examines the issue of teacher identity with in-service teachers.

THE MALIHINI PROJECT

The PD project we refer to in this study is the Malihini (Hawaiian for 'newcomer') Project, which we implemented for a full year, from the summer of 2008 through the summer of 2009 (Ponte & Higgins, 2015). The project provided a grant-funded opportunity for two university-affiliated researchers (the authors) to offer PD in the form of two college courses for a total of six credits that would boost the participating teachers' pay and enrich their teaching with regard to multilingual students. The project involved several phases, including planning, teacher observation, instruction, and evaluation of the PD (see Table 1). We collaborated to design two university-level courses for the teachers on second language learning and on multicultural education, which we taught on a weekly basis over the course of 5 months. During this time, two members of our PD team whom we called "field supporters" visited the teachers and collaborated with them to implement PD concepts the teachers found most useful several times per course.

The 15 teachers who joined the project were all in-service teachers who taught children from kindergarten through Grade 5. They participated in the project voluntarily, and as they were self-selected, our impression was that they were highly motivated and committed. While two teachers were English-as-a-second-language (ESL) specialists who mainly taught children in pull-out classes, the majority were mainstream classroom teachers who had little previous training about multilingual learners. The mainstream teachers served very linguistically and culturally diverse student populations with a range of home language backgrounds. After a period of preparation and observation, we began teaching a course on second language learning with the teachers in January of 2009. The course was designed from a sociocultural perspective built off of the general principle of *scaffolding* (e.g., Gibbons, 2002). The scaffolding strategies were taught as weekly seminar topics and included (a) using the home languages as a resource, (b) using home cultures as a resource, (c) involving parents and community members in schools, (d) expanding the use of group work, and (e) creating links between oral and written language (for more details, see Ponte & Higgins, 2015). In this article, we focus mainly on the first strategy and the teachers' engagement and alignment with these ideas with respect to their nature-based (ethnolinguistic), institutional, discourse, and affinity-related identities.

For each class meeting throughout the project, the teachers were asked to post reading reflections on a WebCT forum and to respond to their

peers. In addition, three teachers per week also signed up to lead a presentation on the readings and to relate the ideas to activities they had developed that could be used in the mainstream classroom. To further encourage the teachers to engage with these ideas in their teaching practice, the course requirements included choosing among several project options: (a) mapping the linguistic diversity of their classrooms, (b) interviewing other teachers about their successes with multilingual learners and then further researching a common theme that emerged from the interviews, or (c) observing the participation styles among the students and how they impacted multilingual learners' opportunities to use English.

In the PD seminars, we discussed how using students' home languages was not only important in terms of students developing a strong and healthy sense of identity and belonging, but that it also helped to support their development of English. In suggesting ways to incorporate children's home languages into learning, we turned to existing models in other similarly diverse schools. The Multiliteracy Project (http://www.multiliteracies.ca/) in Canada provided us with many examples of how children's home languages can be nurtured in classrooms in which students from diverse backgrounds learn side by side. The project paid special attention to Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity and sought to treat these as sources of strength by focusing on "multiliteracies," a term coined by the New London Group (1996) to highlight two related aspects of the increasing complexity of texts: (a) the proliferation of multimodal ways of making meaning, where communication is increasingly visual, auditory, and spatial and (b) the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity characterized by local diversity and global connectedness. A multiliteracies approach recognizes that many school systems fail to incorporate changing notions of literacy, as many classrooms focus rather narrowly on English, monocultural, and text-based literacies. Multiliteracies build on the linguistic and cultural resources students bring with them to school.

Drawing on the Multiliteracy Project and other work that has demonstrated the need for more teacher education for mainstream teachers who serve multilingual learners (Cary, 2008; Faltis, 2006), we approached the topic of treating students' home languages and cultures as resources for building classroom communities of practice that would enhance the children's learning and provide them with a more comfortable learning environment. We focus on four ways that we presented this topic:

Learning About Multilingual Students' Languages and Cultures

The teachers in the Malihini Project did not know what languages their multilingual learners spoke or what degree of literacy they might have had in their home languages. As a means of building rapport with students and gathering knowledge about them that can inform teaching, we encouraged the teachers to get to know their students through ice-breaker games that required knowledge of more than one language, case studies that involved learning about a single student's linguistic history and observing her/his participation in class, and through the construction of culture boxes (Cary, 2008) that showcase students' linguistic and ethnic histories and affiliations.

Constructing Multilingual and Multicultural Classroom Spaces

We discussed how one of the most accessible ways to honor the linguistic diversity of students is to create signs for classroom walls in multiple languages, representative of the languages spoken by students and their families. At a symbolic level, the posting of multilingual signs demonstrates an interest in the students' cultural heritages and language abilities, and it sets a tone for respecting languages other than English (Lotherington, 2013). It makes the classroom atmosphere more welcoming to multilingual learners and fits the bill of creating literacy-rich environments, a commonly shared value among elementary teachers.

Students as Language Teachers

Inviting students to teach their language and culture not only honors and respects their home language and culture; it also gives them a chance to feel like an expert for a change. We also shared ideas from research in other countries with heterogeneous populations such as France (Helót & Young, 2005), where parents volunteered their Saturday mornings to share language and culture lessons as a way of addressing interethnic tension and building cross-cultural understanding.

Bilingual Writing Practices

Drawing heavily on the Multiliteracy Project (Cummins & Early, 2010), we encouraged the teachers to find ways to invite their students to

engage in projects that would make use of their literacies across their linguistic repertoires, rather than focus on English only. Examples included co-authored, bilingual storybooks and bilingual homework assignments in which students were encouraged to write in their home language and English.

FOCAL PARTICIPANTS, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

Among the participating teachers, seven tried out multilingual pedagogies. They included a range of new and veteran teachers whose students spoke a number of different languages (see Table 2).

The Malihini Project was a form of collaborative action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Denos et al., 2009) in that it brought everyday teaching practices and investigative processes of research together so that teacher–researchers could plan, act, observe, and reflect more systematically to improve educational practices. Since action research is interventionist yet democratic in its values, this framework was well suited to researching how teachers engaged with the PD concepts and how they chose to implement the concepts they felt comfortable with. We used a number of qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. First, we conducted initial interviews with the teachers to gain insights into their knowledge of and stances toward teaching multilingual learners. Second, we took field notes during in-class observations prior to the PD courses to learn more about the teachers' usual classroom practices so that we could better identify changes in their teaching as a result of our PD program. Third, and with attention to nature-based, discursive, institutional, and affinity-based identities, we designed PD assignments for the teachers (WebCT postings, a case study assignment option, a classroom linguistic landscape assignment option) to obtain reflective accounts that would help us to see how teachers responded to the ideas we offered. We also collected field notes and audio recordings made by our field supporters who worked in the teachers' classrooms in order to ensure that we cross-checked our perspectives and provided ample time for the teachers to reflect on the outcomes of implementing the PD concepts in the form of conferences with the teachers.

We triangulated our analysis by comparing interviews, teacher assignments, classroom observations, and teacher conferences with field supporters. We repeatedly coded the data using deductive categorization (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), which allowed us to collect samples of the phenomena that we attributed to the teachers' engagement with the PD content. Using Gee's (2001) identity categories, we cross-examined our codes with attention to how sources of identity supported teachers' engagement with the PD content and with multilingual pedagogies. We also considered how the teachers' main PD assignment choices related to the identities they projected in their reflections and in their teaching.

TEACHER RESPONSES TO THE MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGIES

Personal Sources of Teacher Identity: Ethnolinguistic Histories

Through several activities and assignments, including the case study of a multilingual learner, the teachers became much more knowledgeable about their students' backgrounds. They also became more aware of both the children's and their parents' literacies in their home languages and English. This awareness encouraged the teachers to reflect on their own experiences with languages in the home. In considering what factors may have played a role in explaining why these teachers were more open to multilingual pedagogies than others, we observed that each of our seven focal teachers had a personal history of multilingualism and, frequently, had experienced the loss of her own heritage language(s). In fact, teachers who had witnessed language shift in their own families were the ones to express the most consideration for their students' home languages in the context of schooling. In this section, we will analyze the case of two such teachers: Amanda and Sonya.

Although the course readings did in fact persuade 5th-grade teacher Amanda to increase her use of Japanese in her classroom, it seems that her recognition of her own family's language shift to English played a central role in her engagement with the PD concept of using home languages as a resource. The case study assignment required teachers to study a multilingual learner in their classroom based on 3 weeks of observations and notes, use the concept of 'scaffolding,' and present their work in a 5–7 page paper and a poster. In her case study, Amanda wrote about how her own family history shaped her perspectives while she observed Reizo, a student in her class whose first language (L1) was Japanese. As Excerpt 1 from her report shows, though Amanda had previously valued maintaining one's home

TABLE 2
Language Repertoires of Focal Teachers and Their Students

Teacher (Pseudonym)	School	Grade Level	Languages Other Than English Known by the Teacher	Home Languages of Students
Amanda	Waihonu	5	Japanese, Hawai'i Creole	Cantonese, Mandarin, Hawai'i Creole, Japanese
Ashley	Waihonu	K	Japanese, Portuguese, Hawai'i Creole	Balinese, Cantonese, Hawai'i Creole, Hebrew, Japanese, Palauan, Portuguese
Amber	Lokokai	4	Hawai'i Creole	Chinese, Chuukese, Hawai'i Creole, Filipino, Visayan
Crystal	Lokokai	4	Hawai'i Creole	Cantonese, Chuukese, Filipino, Hawai'i Creole, Marshallese
Jenny	Waihonu	K	Japanese, Hawai'i Creole	Hawai'i Creole, Japanese, Korean
Mariko	Lokokai	4	Hawai'i Creole	Chuukese, Filipino, Hawai'i Creole, Mandarin, Samoan, Tagalog, Vietnamese
Sonya	Waihonu	4/5	Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Hawai'i Creole	Cantonese, German, Hawai'i Creole, Japanese, Thai, Tongan

language, the Malihini Project gave her more of a foundation for talking about the benefits for her students.

EXCERPT 1: Amanda's Case Study

After learning how proficiency in their first language is directly related to their proficiency in a second language, I have begun to use more Japanese in class. I have also asked Reizo to help me with Japanese phrases. I have always known that it was good to nurture and learn your first language. My grandmother is fluent in Japanese, and I have always been envious of her ability. I have asked my mother many times why she did not teach us to speak Japanese from a young age. She explained that my grandmother came from the school of thought that if you want to learn English, then you only speak English. And so, when my mother was a child going to a military-based school in Okinawa, she would be told to only speak in English. Because of that, unfortunately, her Japanese is not fluent. I have always told my bilingual students to keep up their first language, because I see the benefits in the career world. […] But it is fantastic to be able to tell them there are benefits they can reap now.

In conversations with the Malihini Project team about language, Sonya also commented that her family did not pass on Japanese to her generation, even though it was the first language of some of her family members. She explained her family's loss of Japanese within the context of anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States in a conference with Anne, the field supporter who regularly visited her classroom throughout the project, as seen in Excerpt 2:

EXCERPT 2: Sonya, Conference With Field Supporter

My parents grew up during World War II when you couldn't speak Japanese. And my grandfather was a Japanese school principal, but he could never teach his kids Japanese because they weren't allowed. He wasn't interned or anything but he was translating messages—you know, that was his trade-off so he didn't have to go away.

Later in the same conference session, we saw how Sonya's support for multilingual pedagogies was enhanced not only by her own personal ethnolinguistic history, but also by the institutional role of the PD project itself. Sonya described how parents continue to play a vital role in whether their children inherit their linguistic heritages. After being supported by Anne in her classroom to better understand the children's multilingualism, she commented that a German-speaking child, Lance, was the only student who could write in his home language, although many of her students lived in homes where English was not the only, or the dominant, language. This prompted Anne to highlight the pressures parents feel to raise their children in English only despite their own linguistic abilities, as seen in the exchange in Excerpt 3:

EXCERPT 3: Sonya, Conference With Field Supporter

Sonya: Well, Leonard, who came from Thailand last year, only could write his name [in Thai] at the time. I'm just shocked—why wouldn't you?
Anne: But most of the messages that their parents are getting are "your kid has to learn English." If your kid doesn't learn English, then?

Sonya: A lot of parents don't know that you can do more than one, and that they're capable of learning more than one [language].

It is likely that Sonya's personal family history and her own experiences as an adult language learner led her to feel frustrated with other parents who did not take steps to maintain their children's fluency in their heritage languages. Although she had acquired some Korean, Japanese, and Mandarin, Sonya often described her own language abilities as inauthentic, having been learned in a foreign language classroom. Despite her self-proclaimed limitations, however, her interest in and enthusiasm for linguistic diversity certainly contributed to promoting her students' multilingual development. At first, as seen in Excerpt 4, she struggled with finding ways to meld her personal enthusiasm for multilingual pedagogies with institutional constraints as she imagined taking on the identity of a teacher who embraces multilingual pedagogies.

EXCERPT 4: Sonya, Online Posting

I will definitely make the time to have my students reflect upon their languages and culture. […] I think it would be really exciting to do some dual language books with the students I have. However, I am fully aware of how much time and effort it takes to create a project of this magnitude and quality. I am wondering, where do we find time to do this in addition to all the other responsibilities (testing, etc.)?

Nonetheless, in the end, of all the teachers, Sonya showed the most dedication to developing a curriculum for bilingual storybooks and continued the practice well after the Malihini Project ended. Her trajectory thus provides a clear example of a teacher who passed through the phases of engagement, imagination, and alignment and who increasingly identified with the practices of the PD project.

Institutionally Aligned Identities

In our pre-observation interviews with the teachers and based on our many experiences in the two schools, we noted that multilingual users were consistently labeled by the teachers, principals, and staff with regard to their linguistic proficiency, and that their linguistic identities were the most salient in their academic personas. The institutional discourses of schooling tended to oversimplify the children's linguistic repertoires in ways that some teachers actually challenged. Here, we focus on the range of engagements

and alignments the teachers took with regard to these institutional labels, focusing on five teachers: Jenny, Ashley, Amber, Crystal, and Mariko. The examples we selected show how the PD activities and concepts provided the teachers with another perspective for engaging with institutional discourses and identities.

Jenny, a kindergarten teacher with Japanese language proficiency, used her knowledge of Japanese not only to get to know the student she chose to study as a case study, but also as a way of going beyond the official Department of Education's (DOE) limited assessment of students' linguistic repertoires. While the extent of the DOE assessment is to ask parents or guardians to fill out a form in which they check a box for "other language" and then write in which one, Jenny was able to draw on her own Japanese heritage language identity and knowledge to form a more sophisticated understanding of her student. In her case study of a Japanese L1 student, she reflected on the difference between the DOE categorization and what she was able to assess herself in her own classroom, as shown in Excerpt 5:

EXCERPT 5: Jenny, Case Study Report

I am unsure of [her] literacy skills in Japanese; however, according to the test given by the Department of Education, she is considered to be fluent in Japanese. She writes in *hiragana* and *katakana* when she spends time in the writing center in my classroom. There are times when the characters are backwards, just as children learning the English alphabet will form letters incorrectly.

Because Jenny herself possessed knowledge of Japanese, including the ability to read and write in the different writing systems, she was able to better assess her Japanese-speaking student than the institution had. Another example of teacher knowledge competing with institutional categorizations arose when Ashley, another kindergarten teacher, challenged a DOE-appointed representative who had been invited to the PD seminar to discuss the DOE's policy of how to support and assess English language learners: In front of all participants, she asked him whether the policy offered support for children who speak Hawai'i Creole, and when he acknowledged that it did not, she asserted that the policy needed to change. Her ethnolinguistic identity as a Hawai'i Creole speaker and her institutional identity as a veteran teacher who had taught many Hawai'i Creole-speaking children over the years appeared to give her the authority to challenge the official policy. At the same time, she reported to us that

she felt able to raise this topic only because the Malihini Project had created an opportunity to meet the DOE representative. The institutional setting of the PD gave Ashley license to speak out.

Other institutional identities ascribed to students were "limited English proficient" (LEP) and "no English proficiency" (NEP), labels widely used in the United States that tend to marginalize children who are still learning English (Skutnabb–Kangas, 2015). While other institutional labels have emerged, including the dubiously improved term "English language learner" (ELL), we were curious how labels circulated among the teachers and how that related to how they positioned themselves with reference to their multilingual students. As a PD in-class activity, we asked the teachers to watch *A Class Divided*, a documentary produced for Frontline, a PBS program (Peters, 1985). This documentary examined a now well-known experiment that third-grade teacher Jane Elliot carried out to teach children what it feels like to experience discrimination by grouping them according to eye color and treating them differently. One of the most important points of the film for schools was that the children who were in the eye-color group receiving discrimination performed worse academically and felt that they were doomed to be low achievers just because of their eye color. Our conversation with participating teachers then focused on these questions: (a) How did the negative and positive labels placed on a group become self-fulfilling prophecies? (b) How can labels limit the learning experiences of children? (c) In your view, how does this labeling relate to the experiences of multilingual children in schools? (d) What can educators do to minimize labeling at the classroom, school, and community levels?

In keeping with the ideas from *A Class Divided*, we wondered whether these labels were freely used in the classrooms in front of the students, likely stigmatizing them with a "deficient" identity, even if that was not the actual intent of the teachers. This was an even more important concern in the case of beginner multilingual learners who spoke languages such as Chuukese, which they could not write in. Occasionally, we heard these children described as "having no language" even though they were proficient in their home language. As the Malihini Project progressed, we kept track of these institutional discourses and were interested to see whether the teachers adapted their labeling practices of children and how they responded to the institutional discourse that children without written literacy in their home language had "no language."

We found that, although these labels persisted in usage, the teachers were much more attentive to how they referred to their students over the course of the project. More importantly, perhaps, the discourses attached to them were not tied to deficiency portraits of the students. Instead, as Amber illustrated in one of her assignments for the course (see Excerpt 6), the teachers sometimes used these labels as a justification for enacting multilingual pedagogies, an act which we interpret as made possible by the PD project itself.

EXCERPT 6: Amber's Scaffolding Report

Another quiet student in my class is one of my NEP students. She transferred here from China last year during the fourth quarter. She has befriended another Chinese girl in the class. Her friend is fluent in English and is able to translate for her. I scaffold for this child by having her sit next to her friend for comfort, and because the friend translates concepts that she may not understand. I feel that I am supporting this student's first language even though I am unable to speak the language […] Having another student that is readily available and can speak to her in Chinese is what has helped her to adjust to this new place. […] I know that she is making progress because when she first arrived she knew no English and is now able to participate by giving answers.

Another teacher, Crystal, questioned these terms altogether. She interpreted the lack of literacy skills in home languages among her students as disqualifying them for institutionally sanctioned "LEP" or "NEP" status (see Excerpt 7). Her view was likely formed as a result of her engagement with many of the readings and examples of multilingual pedagogies in the Malihini Project that focused on children's literacies in their home languages.

EXCERPT 7: Crystal's Scaffolding Report

Although seven of my students are labeled LEP and one NEP, I often find that my students are caught between two worlds and two cultures. They are not proficient in their home language or English. This idea was evident during a journal activity. The students were told that they could write their journal in their home language or English. Some students expressed enthusiasm for this idea; however they could not write in their home language.

Crystal's comments point out some of the limitations in our PD materials regarding how to support home languages for children (and many

parents) who lack the ability to read and write in those languages. Most of the scholarly reports and pedagogical examples of multilingual pedagogies are strongly focused on written literacy practices rather than oral modes of home language use. This was a recurring challenge in the teachers' engagement with these ideas.

As another example of text-based ways to honor the linguistic diversity of students, we encouraged the teachers to create signs for classroom walls in multiple languages, representative of the languages spoken by students and their families.

Several teachers attempted to put these ideas into practice while also tackling the challenge of representing home languages that some children were not able to write in. This led to creative solutions. For example, 5th-grade teacher Crystal posted signs in Japanese and Cantonese for "please" and "goodbye." These words were first taught orally by her Japanese and Cantonese-speaking students to the rest of the class, then posted on the walls for everyone to appreciate. Crystal made the choice to represent the languages in Romanized form because not all of her students knew how to write them using Japanese and Chinese writing systems. Later, Crystal extended this project to teaching and learning about the cultures represented in the classroom. Students were asked to gather information about their background culture, create a poster, and share the product with the class. Some of her students interviewed elders in the community; others talked with older siblings, uncles, and aunts.

Mariko also took up this opportunity. In decorative font with sometimes creative spellings, the students posted words for "good morning" or "hello" in Filipino (*Magandong umaga*), Vietnamese (*Thao Boisang*), Samoan (*Malo*), and Chuukese (*Raraneem*). Like many of her fellow teachers, Mariko found that Chuukese-speaking children often only had oral abilities in Chuukese. Rather than leave them out, the teachers asked their students to get help from their parents, who provided the answers in an array of spellings. The written Chuukese greetings on the classroom walls in turn validated this home language in new ways for children from Chuuk. In our seminar, the experience of these two teachers opened up discussions about how to encourage family literacy development, in home languages and English, among the Micronesian community in particular.

Other teachers also focused on oral abilities when they knew that their students did not have the ability to write in their languages. Amanda's end-of-project interview showed how she changed over the course of the Malihini Project to show more curiosity about her students' languages, often focusing on the knowledge they had, as demonstrated in Excerpt 8.

EXCERPT 8: Amanda's End-of-Project Interview

One thing that I took from this PD project was learning about how important it is to develop the students' first language. I always knew it was important for their future but now we know it's important for their education in English, so I kind of encouraged them in that way a little bit more. For example, because of the class, we had more conversations about language in my classroom, like "How do you say that in your language? How do you say that in Vietnamese, Mandarin, or Cantonese?"

In sum, we found that the teachers strived to make multilingual pedagogies possible in spite of institutional positionings that presented their multilingual students as lacking in English. The teachers resisted aligning with the institution and hence succeeded in finding ways to take on the ideas of the PD program.

Positioning Themselves Amidst Discourses

As the Malihini Project continued, we wanted to build on the momentum of teachers' interest in home–school connections and the role of their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) in learning at school. Making links between the knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and communities is particularly important for students who are multilingual or who have different cultural backgrounds since these funds of knowledge are often excluded from school curricula. We felt this was especially important for the teachers who had a number of Pacific Islander students, as these students are often discursively constructed in educational settings in Honolulu and society at large as low-achieving and underprepared for schooling (Talmy, 2010). The Malihini Project operated on the idea that when teachers see the cultural knowledge and expertise of families as assets, they are better able to understand their students and to minimize any existing incongruences between the home and school cultures (Tabors, 1997). Teachers can also build their instruction on students' background knowledge and can modify their teaching approaches to meet the needs of their students.

As a way to extend these ideas, we invited a Palau-born educational specialist with expertise in Micronesian languages and cultures to speak to the class. He provided some information on the history of migration to the United

States and discussed key cultural differences that shed light on differences in home language communication styles and school culture expectations. The teachers were able to ask specific questions about challenges they were facing, including discussions about why parents did not attend parent–teacher conferences and why students would make apparent promises to teachers that they would later not fulfill. They learned that many of these parents took the view that teachers are experts in the context of schooling, and hence parents should not interfere with teachers' activities. In addition, they learned that parents often agreed to invitations for conferences for the sake of maintaining face, rather than as a promise to attend a future event. Through comparing some of these cultural practices with their own practices and expectations, the teachers began to see Micronesian cultures as structured with their own norms and values rather than as deficient in comparison to mainstream U.S. cultural norms.

To create more understanding of home language and culture, we offered an option for a mini-project in our second course on Multicultural Education that prompted teachers to plan visits in the homes or communities of one of their students. This assignment took place several months into the project, and we believe that it enjoyed success only because some of the teachers had by then developed a deep interest in their students' languages and cultures. To take this knowledge one step further, we encouraged them to investigate their students' lives beyond the boundaries of school. We felt that this was a promising way to re-examine the hegemonic discourses that were often attached to students from Micronesia and the Pacific, which tend to characterize the students as unmotivated and lacking in discipline. Rather than trying to convince them of the cultural differences by reading about it, we believed that engagements in the community would be more effective at challenging these dominant discourses of deficiency.

Amber and Crystal chose to visit a church together attended by many of their students from Micronesia. Visiting the church instead of the children's homes appeared to be a comfortable alternative for the Lokokai Elementary teachers, who expressed some anxieties about visiting the students living in government-subsidized housing projects. Amber remarked how disciplined one of the children from Chuuk was at church compared to her school classroom, noting that in her classroom, the child got up and walked around

whenever he felt like it, despite the rules of the classroom. In Chuuk, it is not uncommon for children to experience a more flexible classroom, where attendance may not be taken and where schedules are much more fluid (Heine, 2002). This led to a useful discussion about how children from different cultural backgrounds often have different expectations or norms for behavior in school, which provided the PD seminar with a concrete example of how behaviors are not rooted in children but the product of their contexts and of socialization. More importantly for us as teacher educators, it also shed light on the trajectories by which teachers come to deeply reflect on PD content such as the idea of funds of knowledge and implications for cross-cultural differences in educational settings. The teachers had read about these concepts in the seminar, and they had listened to a guest speaker talk about the cultural basis for distinctly Micronesian and Pacific Islander behavior. However, it was not until the teachers witnessed for themselves how their students behaved in their church setting that they really acknowledged that the children were not simply misbehaving in school but, rather, had different expectations that were rooted in their past schooling experiences that shaped their behavior.

Affinity-Based Identities

The final source for teacher identity that we examine is that of affinities with groups. As Gee (2001) notes, taking part in the practices of a specific group may influence how a person is identified, and can shape how an individual makes sense of her own practices as well. On the one hand, it is important to note that, as a subgroup of teachers across the two schools, the teachers in the Malihini Project formed an affinity with one another through the seminar meetings. Most teachers will comment that they do not have any time to talk to and learn from one another, and so the project served as a means by which the teachers could actually collaborate for a change.

We also noted other affinities that emerged in and through the project. Jenny's affinity-based identities came into focus over the course of the Malihini Project in regard to embracing her kindergarteners' home languages in the classroom. At the beginning of the project, she had expressed that use of the L1 in class was "not encouraged" because she felt the focus should be on English and the students would find the use of the L1 confusing. She also commented to our in-class field support providers that parents who

do not speak English to their children are doing their children a disservice. However, 1 month into our seminar, Jenny seemed to soften her views greatly, and even to encourage bilingual writing and speaking at home and at school. It appeared to us that her own fluency in Japanese encouraged her to make use of her own bilingualism as a resource in her teaching. As her increased use of Japanese in the classroom encouraged more enthusiastic participation from her students and improvement in her multilingual learners' English, she expanded her interest in studying the benefits that were accruing for her one case study student, Mami, and shared her enthusiasm for supporting home language literacy development more widely. Her support for her children's home languages encouraged several parents to enroll their children in after-school Japanese language programs, and Mami's mother was invited to class to teach songs in Japanese. Although she was at first doubtful about the benefit of speaking Japanese in the classroom, she soon discovered that the children were eager to learn Japanese and to sing together. We saw Jenny's affinity for Japanese in and beyond the boundaries of schooling truly blossom over the course of the Malihini Project.

Another affinity-based identity that encouraged teachers to embrace multilingual pedagogies was due to a close relationship. Mariko and Crystal's strong engagement with their students' home languages could lie in these two teachers' very close friendship and professional relationship. Both of them taught similar grades (4th and 5th grade), they were both at Lokokai Elementary, and they were both enrolled in their first year of teaching together. They had also both graduated from a Master's program in Education and Teaching and had experienced a great deal of teacher education together in the form of extracurricular workshops oriented toward children from the Asia-Pacific context. These mutual experiences created the opportunity for them to become good friends. In our classes, we often observed that they discussed their challenges and successes together, and it was commonplace for Crystal to try out a strategy that Mariko had reported to have worked well, and vice versa. Their teaching relationship strongly resonated with our project's interest in creating a community of practice among the participating teachers.

Finally, both Ashley and Sonya's engagement with multilingual pedagogies strengthened as they worked with their student teachers. In Ashley's class, we observed her student teacher using vocabulary cards that had a picture and label in both English and Japanese, a teaching practice we had also seen Ashley employ. Sonya worked closely with her student teacher to continue her interest in promoting dual-language books the year after our PD project came to a close. Due to our continued relationship with teachers at Sonya's school, we know that this has been a successful transition that has maintained a focus on home languages as a resource in her classroom.

CONCLUSION

As more U.S. schools embrace their responsibility to provide teacher education regarding multilingual learners to mainstream, in-service teachers, it will be increasingly important to consider how teachers respond to PD that seeks to enrich pedagogical practices. In our work, we found it insightful to consider what identities led the teachers to be open to multilingual pedagogies, including identities that they had formed long before we began the Malihini Project. The teachers' own ethnolinguistic identities were key among the teachers who embraced the idea of finding room for home languages in the classroom, as they had themselves grown up in homes where languages other than English were spoken. Though several of those teachers had in fact experienced language shift in their own generations, they expressed regret for that loss, and this perspective seemed to be at the heart of their investment in promoting multilingual pedagogies. This led us to wonder about the other teachers who did not try out these approaches. Since they were not forced to experiment with multilingual pedagogies, it is difficult to know the answer. Several of the teachers who chose other options are monolingual English speakers, which could explain their reticence. However, the other PD options they had may have simply appealed to them more due to practical considerations or true interest. For future PD projects, however, we would recommend requiring teachers to attempt one of the approaches we have mentioned before. Given the benefits that the teachers and their students experienced as a result of their efforts, it appears to be one of the most worthwhile aspects of the PD program we delivered.

We found it inspiring that at least some of the teachers (e.g., Jenny) with whom we collaborated exhibited changes in their perspectives toward multilingual pedagogies, and we argue that it is important to consider the identity sources of these shifts for all teacher educators. We also noted how difficult it was in some cases for the PD content alone to encourage teachers to adopt identities informed by discourses on intercultural

awareness and cross-cultural sensitivity, no matter how abundant such discourses are in educational contexts. In the case of teachers who taught students from Micronesia, for example, they did not experience a discursive shift in their teacher identities until they witnessed the social foundation of cultural difference with their own eyes. We encourage other teacher educators to find ways to provide pre- and in-service teachers with more engagement with the communities that they are likely to be serving, as this was indeed an effective means of questioning, if not changing, these teachers' deficiency discourses toward their Pacific Islander students.

As a final comment, we echo the importance of affinity-based identities. Like many PD projects, the Malihini Project was grant-funded, and it ended after 1 year. However, it was heartening to us to observe how, despite our absence, new and old affinity groups continued to develop that encouraged the continuation of multilingual pedagogies. The participating teachers had formed a closer bond with one another as a result of the project and continued to share pedagogical ideas with one another when possible, including through social media. Waihonu Elementary took on an after-school bilingual book reading club that one of Christina's graduate students proposed, and several of the teachers traveled to an international conference to present on the Malihini Project with Eva. Several teachers also created new affinity groups with their student teachers and with colleagues who had not participated in the project, sharing ideas and working toward new projects that could embrace the students' languages. These affinities are essential for allowing the foundational concepts of the Malihini Project to 'live on' in the practices of the teachers, and for teachers to continually engage in and imagine new possibilities for their multilingual students.

NOTES

[1] In accord with García (2008), we use the term "multilingual language learners" in place of "English language learner" in order to acknowledge the students' home languages and to reframe their linguistic development as multilingual, rather than focused only on English.

[2] While the term "nature" to refer to identity might seem at odds with a sociocultural approach, Gee (2001) treats nature-based identity sources like gender, age, and ethnicity as features which can be drawn upon to carry out acts of identity. Despite their apparent primordial

quality, these sources of identity can also be contested and refashioned in and through discourse.

[3] We were inspired to use Gee's (2001) framework after reading McGriff (2015), which applies Gee's framework to a PD context meant to enhance mainstream teachers' understanding of students who are designated as "English language learners."

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