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Indigenizing to Making Schooling and Education One: A Bird’s Eye View of Yurok Nation’s Culture and Language Program in Northern California, US

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the interests and attitudes shown by learners and educators towards the inclusion of the Yurok Language and Culture program in schools’ curricula across Humboldt County, California, USA. The program aims at revitalizing the Yurok culture and improving the academic standards of Yurok and other native American Indian students.

The main theoretical frameworks used in this research are Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) and (1994) “Ecology of Human Development” and “Ecological Models of Human Development” respectively. Additionally, I used Epstein’s (2011) Model of Overlapping Spheres and Charleston’s (1994) True Native Education theories to further expand on the ideals that underpin Bronfenbrenner’s theories that were applied in this research. The significance these theories used in this case study is conceptualized in the notion that the school, family and community nexus can be effectively harnessed to boost the learning experiences of native American Indian students.

This is qualitative based case study, and I used narrative inquiries (to capture depth of stories told by respondents) and method of observation as tools to collect data. Purposive sampling method was used to select a sample of four. The sample includes three native American Indians, namely, the director of the Education Department of the Yurok Tribal Nation, one of the instructors of the Yurok Language and Culture program, and a female student. The fourth respondent of the sample is non-native American Indian (white). Ethical considerations were strictly followed and applied throughout the conduct of this research.

The analysis and interpretation of the findings showed that there was vested interest in the program by respondents and the rate of graduation of native American Indians has increased marginally since the program’s inception. Regardless, this research would not seek to suggest that the findings could be interpreted as panacea to the many problems that indigenous students encounter in the educational process. But rather, the findings of this research could be used to enhance discourses where “knowledge is drawn from many disciplines and integrated around a particular problem” (Craver and Ozmon 1985, p. 380) to shape pedagogy to benefit not only indigenous learners but to a larger constituent including non-natives learners as well.

Keywords: Mainstream education, Indigenous education, Cooperative learning, Reciprocal teaching, Sustainability, Organization
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1 INTRODUCTION

Understandably, education is not confined to one unique idea but rather it confines itself with “world of ideas and world of practical activity that helps an individual possess a wider and deeper perspective on human existence and the world around us” (Craver and Ozmon 1995, p. xvii). These are some of the ideals that indigenous knowledge creation and worldviews appear to demonstrate. Hence, the proper combination and harnessing of such ideals coupled with what mainstream ideologies have to offer have the potential to enrich positively the learning experiences of students, especially, native American and other minority students in the education process.

Yet, the notion that education appears to be one of the “greatest and most difficult problem to which man can devote himself” could never have been over stated (Craver and Ozmon 1995, p. 33). The complexity and difficulty lie inherently in the fact that the purpose and aims of education are not static but ones that are evolving and changing constantly. For instance, Craver and Ozmon (1995) submit further that in ancient times, the purpose of education was primarily centered on learning occupational-based skills, like fishing and hunting for survival. Over time, these ideals of the learning aim and purposes of education have either shifted or transformed into other concepts such as “better use of leisure time and refinements in social and cultural life” (p. xv). The time factor that may have caused the shift has also compelled policy makers in education to rethink the theories in education as learning processes and practices are continuously evolving. Yet, there has also been the difficulty about how to link these two phenomena; theory and practice in education. I agree and share Tennyson’s (2010) view that what is needed in enhancing pedagogy is not just about formulating better theories and methods but also making a concerted effort in linking the theories and methods to positively enhance the learning experiences of students, regardless of their cultural, ethnonyms, age, gender, and other related backgrounds.

Furthermore, the ideals of the systems of education that are fundamentally garnered towards the pursuit of truth, self-realization and self-actualization, and as well as character development are noble. These fundamental ideals, in my view, are not enough. Education should not only lay emphasis on the development of specialized skills of students but rather it should focus on issues and facts including other things that have lasting values. According to Craver and Ozmon (1995), the learning methods developed with underlying principles of the former ideals (i.e.
fundamental systems of education) have the tendency of making “modern students seem like robots surveying bits and scraps of everything, thereby obtaining an education with little depth, operating on the basis of rules rather than inner conviction” (p. 21).

Therefore, this case study seeks to explore the need for the Yurok language and Culture program as being instituted in mainstream educational settings across the County of Humboldt in California. It seeks to find the attitudes and interests that educators and students show towards the inclusion of Yurok language and culture in school curricula. The respondents were interviewed to seek their views on the program, and the resultant findings are discussed. Finally, I draw conclusions based off on my findings, and make recommendations for future studies which findings could form the basis for a compelling and effective policy and practice strategies to aid, especially, minority students to reach their potential.

1.1 Research Problem and Its Justification

Over the years, American-Indian communities have been faced with the quagmire of educational indebtedness with respect to Native American students’ achievement gaps. Some have attributed these under-achievements of Native American Indian students to the “attempt to educate Indian children in the value system of the dominant society” (Titley 1981), which has largely inured to the disadvantage of native students; hence, the poor results.

Some of these disadvantages as published by the National Conference of State Legislators (2008) show that native American/Alaskan Indians are about 237 percent more likely to drop out of school and 207 percent more likely to be expelled than their white colleagues. A more disturbing news in this report is the statement that “for every 100 American Indian/Alaska Native kindergarteners, only seven will earn a bachelor’s degree, compared to 34 of every 100 white kindergartners” (p. 5). The text further asserts that one of the underlying factors of this gap points to the fact that “most American Indian/Alaska Native students are not prepared to learn when they walk through the doors of their school” due to everything that occurs in the school environment. It also instrumental to note that it might not necessarily be the students fault to come “unprepared” to learn but rather the “systems” are not prepared adequately enough to teach native students (Leyba 1995, pg. xi). Thus, the school systems are designed for the “mainstream”, and that the systems are not resourced enough to accommodate the needs of American Indians-Alaska Native students.
Perhaps, this problem of unpreparedness on the part of the native American-Alaskan Indian students to learn has merit in the position that:

Mainstream educational models, curriculum, the set plan of action, that a program, or lesson encompasses, limits potential engagement of students while segregating whole thoughts and concepts into teachable categories offered in a hierarchical learning environment designed for large-scale instruction. Although the categorizing of knowledge is often problematic in relation to the Native education, the largest problem lies in education locked by pedagogy of practice that stimulate past unsuccessful methods. (Saunders and Hill 2007)

In my view, the above statement seeks to portray the fact that mainstream educational systems continue to promote competition instead of corporation among students. The problem with the former is that the status quo is either maintained or widened further in favor of the majority in society, and the minority continue to be marginalized in their educational adventures. Again, given these assertions, the problem remains as to how to effectively indigenize education in a mainstream setting to bridge the achievement gaps between Native American Indian students and their non-native Indian American contemporaries in the twenty-first century and beyond. Regardless, I submit that educational systems in terms of pedagogy and curriculum that support and facilitate multi-cultural projects (like the Yurok Language and Culture program) that simultaneously seeks to empower minority groups and enlighten the majority groups are core to any changes that made in the system to enhance the achievement gaps of at-risk students.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

I embark on this study to explore through narrative inquiry about some of the rich ideals that are enshrined in the Yurok Language and Culture program and how this program could be used to enhance the educational experience, especially of native American Indians in Humboldt County. The premise for this purpose lies in the notion that education is concerned with world of ideas, and that the creation of the knowledge forms that entail in these ideas are not the preserve of one set of groups of people or community. I submit that if the tenets that underlie the ideals of indigenous knowledge creation forms and worldviews are given the needed attention, they could serve as impetuses towards the formulation of theories of indigenous education that could be used in enhancing pedagogy, especially in minority communities in this era and beyond. Thus, the practical nature of indigenous knowledge could be used to expand and serve as a function of other theories of education and directed toward new possibilities (Craver and
1.3 Research Question

The research question is formulated as follows;

What are some of the interests and attitudes shown by learners and educators towards the inclusion of Yurok language and culture in school curricula across Humboldt County, California, USA?

1.4 Need for the Study

A thematic United Nations (UN 2014) working paper report by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples’ Issues indicates in general that “marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, face multiple barriers to education and are being left behind in terms of educational achievement” (p. 2). Similarly, Cummins (1994) suggests that these difficulties have far reaching implications for the wealth of the entire state of California in a period where “the intellectual resources are key to the growth in a highly competitive global economy” (p. 3).

Given these challenges call for developing a well-structured culturally and linguistically appropriate pedagogical programs for indigenous learners and other minority groups. I submit that when such an action is taken its impacts could be overwhelming as captured in the statement below:

Education of indigenous children contributes to both individual and community development, as well as to participation in society in its broadest sense. Education enables indigenous children to exercise and enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, and strengthens their ability to exercise civil rights in order to influence political policy processes for improved protection of human rights. The implementation of indigenous peoples’ right to education is an essential means of achieving individual empowerment and self-determination. Education is also an important means for the enjoyment, maintenance and respect of indigenous cultures, languages, traditions and traditional knowledge… Education is the primary means of ensuring indigenous peoples’ individual and collective development; it is a pre-condition for indigenous peoples’ ability to realize their right to self-determination, including their right to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development” (UN 2014, p. 3).
The statement above amply demonstrates the need for more investigations into the area of indigenous education due to the numerous advantages it offers indigenous people, and using these merits as strategies to oppose the high dropout rates of native American/Alaskan indigenous students per National Conference of State Legislators’ (2008) statement indicated above.

Hence, this research seeks to fill a gap in research investigation by exploring ways of enhancing the Yurok Language and Culture program to minimizing the high dropout rates and bridging the achievement gap especially of native American Indian students. Furthermore, this research has societal significance for Yurok students, the Yurok Community, and as well as communities beyond the boundaries of the Yurok Tribal Nation. For students, this study would help broaden students’ interest in understanding positive aspects of Yurok education; it would enhance students’ appreciation of worldviews of sustainability, spirituality and civic involvements; it will also help students gain lifelong learning skills. For Yurok Community, it is anticipated that this study will help create the needed awareness of the positives that are embedded in the Yurok Language and Culture program for the sustainability and continuum of the program; that there will be increased interest in the Yurok language and culture which invariably might have the prospects of increasing higher academic achievements and lowering the drop-out rates of students; this study may also serve as the basis for grant opportunity for curriculum (Yurok language and culture) enhancement. Finally, the community outside Yurok Tribal Nation would be exposed to the positive values that are enshrined in the Yurok language and culture which might boost enrollment in Yurok language users at the high school levels; and this research could serve as a guiding principle or a promotional material to school counsellors in selecting students to participate in the Yurok language program.

In addition, the intuitive appeal of the UN (2014) statement above should be a primary concern and a priority for all involved in education (governments, policy makers, communities etc.). More importantly, as the UN strives to realize the goals of the “Education for All” concept, the need to set an agenda to embark on case studies such as this to rethink our classrooms to make schooling and education one should be a priority.

1.5 Summary of Chapters

The overview of Chapter Two covers the theoretical frameworks that are used in this research. Three theories are discussed of which Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) and (1994) “Ecology of Human Development” and “Ecological Models of Human Development respectively are the main
frameworks of this research. The other supporting frameworks are Epstein’s (2011) Theory of Overlapping Spheres, and Charleston’s (1994) True Native Education. These two supporting frameworks are used as tools to expand the understanding of the ideas that underpin the main theory (Bronfenbrenner’s (1994 and 1974)).

Chapter Three reflects the related literature used in this study and aspects about some historical dilemmas of Native American Indians in general, and their worldview of knowledge creation. This chapter also includes the culture of the Yurok tribe of Northern California as story-tellers (Yurok Tribe 2006). Hence, the choice of narrative inquiry as a method in this research could not have been overstated.

Chapter Four focusses on the research methodology and strategy that describes brief profiles of the school and background of research participants. It also covers data collection and analysis of the data. The ethical considerations, research validity and reliability are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Five presents the findings of this research. Common themes observed in these findings are categorized and discussed. Next, I draw a relationship between the findings and literature of this research. This is followed by my recommendations for further study in this research area, and then I conclude by highlighting on the importance of finding ways to link mainstream and indigenous education to bridge the achievement gaps of indigenous learners, especially native American Indian students.
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

For purposes of this research thesis, I am using both Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) and (1994) “Ecology of Human Development” and “Ecological Models of Human Development” respectively as the main talking points to explain how everything in a growing person’s environment (especially a child or an at-risk student) affects the person’s development. To further augment, and have a deeper understanding of the Bronfenbrenner’s ecology of human development frameworks, I would reference other conceptual ideas by other authors that are related to the subject-matter. These primarily include but are not limited to Epstein’s (2011) internal and external structures of theoretical model on “School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools” Freng et al.’s (2006) discourses on “Model of Overlapping Spheres” and Charleston’s (1994) “True Native Education” model. These texts attempt to emphasize the proper coexistence of parents, communities and schools to function as one body with a core aim of enhancing the school experiences of students. The goal in this regard is to ensure that students are nurtured not to only know “how to choose the right option from bubbles on a multiple-choice test, but prepared to lead fulfilling lives, to be responsible citizens, and to make good choices for themselves, their families, and our society” (Ravitch 2010). The validity in Ravitch’s statement cannot be underestimated as it addresses the very purpose of education and what knowledge creation systems should aim at. Hence, effective collaboration of mainstream and indigenous knowledge systems would successfully achieve the above aims if these knowledge creating systems (like education) are well guided.

Finally, a summary of the unfolding theoretical frameworks as they relate to this case study is provided, after which I offer a personal critique and views on the theories used.

2.1 The Theory of Overlapping Spheres

The complexities and dynamics that surround the attempts to give meanings and understanding to indigenous worldview of knowledge creation make it difficult to ascribe a singular theoretical framework to indigenous knowledge creation per its acquisition and retention phenomena in the schooling systems. Freng et al (2006, p. 55) advance this argument and submit that researches in the education have explored the impact of culture and the linkage of families and communities to schools on student achievement among minority students. Yet, little emphasis has been placed on the family-community interactions with schools among culturally distinctive populations such as American Indians and students' perceptions of the educational process.
Given this statement, it suffices to submit that the holistic development of students in the schooling process per indigenous context is directly related to the kind of relationship that exists between the environment (community, family etc.) and the nature of schooling systems that such indigenous or minority students are exposed to, and or experience. Otherwise, the achievement gap of the indigenous groups will continue to be a problem. For instance, in Australia where literacy is measured by one’s level of Standard English has been reported to widen the achievement gap of indigenous students versus non-indigenous students. This is captured in Malcolm’s (2011) article that:

On the one hand, we have raised our expectations and made school systems accountable for language minority students, but on the other hand, we have failed to develop fair assessments that can distinguish what students know from the way in which English is used by plurilingual students.

In addition, whereas some educators hold the view that the failure rate of Native American Indians in the schooling system is largely dependent on the natives’ cultural and language differences, others strongly suggest through research that “it is exactly this indigenous culture, language, and family/community interaction that make students more successful” Freng et al. (2006). The long traditional views of holding the family, community and school as separate functions from each other in the development of the child come with their own limitations (p. 61). Epstein et al. (1997) argues that properly formulated interactions among the influencing organizations (school, family and community) could ensure a holistic, coherent, and successful education and development of the child.

The core concept of Epstein’s (2011) model is to seek to identify and explain the differences that exist among educational systems. Freng et al. (2006) suggest further that the model of overlapping spheres is premised on the increasing collaboration and involvement of augmenting factors such as families and communities in the schooling experiences of students in recent times. They are of the view that this recent phenomenon is a clear departure of the long standing “tradition of separate spheres” (p. 61). Separate spheres occur when there is a disconnection between, and or among the organizations that influence the child’s development (p. 60).

On the other hand, the model of overlapping spheres (Epstein 2011) as I have modified in Figure 1 below, portrays the child as the subject of influence by the three organizations namely; family, school and community. Intuitively, I submit that the child’s learning development process does not occur in a vacuum. The child’s development is largely influenced by the social, economic
and political forces that pertains at the time of development. These forces translate into “experience, philosophy and practices” (p. 32) which in effect forms the nature of each of the organizations. It is therefore expected that when these organizations interact, each comes with its own unique philosophy, experience and practices. All things being equal, I submit that the extent of development of the child would depend on how these unique factors of the organizations are harnessed and coordinated. Also, the extent of influence or outcome of the learning child in the development process is time, age, and grade levels of the individual. The measure of these influences that affect the student’s learning experiences are not unitary in dimension, but the measurement is multidimensional in concept (p. 45). The notion of multidimensional measurement describes the child’s development as a function of the experiences that the child encounters not only at school levels but also it includes the experiences that the child embraces at home and at the community levels at any given period, age or grade level.

Figure 1. A Venn Diagram Showing a Modified Theoretical Model Representing Epstein’s (2011) Overlapping Spheres of Family, School, and Community on Children Learning.

A logical representation (as below) describes the position of the child as an important component of the interactions and a subject of influence by actions or inactions of the three organizations.
a. $\{S\} \cap \{F\} = c$

b. $\{S\} \cap \{K\} = c$

c. $\{K\} \cap \{F\} = c$

d. $\{K\} \cap \{F\} \cap \{S\} = c$

e. $c \in S, F, K$. where $c$=child, $S$=school, $F$=family, and $K$=community

In Epstein’s (2011) model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, practically, four forms of matrices could be formed, namely:

a) model of overlapping School and Family spheres
b) model of overlapping School and Community spheres
c) model of overlapping Community and Family spheres
d) model of overlapping Community, Family and School

Figure 1 does expressively show the four forms of interactions between the organizations. All four interactions per the model have at the center “the child” as a subject of influence as deductively shown in the equation above (see statements a, b, c, d and e). Each of these models is underpinned by certain structures, which in addition to the factors mentioned earlier, influence the child’s development. For instance, the model of overlapping family and school spheres is underpinned by what Epstein (2011) describes as being both external and internal structures in nature. Epstein maintains that the external structure of the model could be overlapping or nonoverlapping spheres, and these structures represent the functions of the organizations involved with the degree of overlap among the functions of the organizations being tri-dimensional, namely, “time, experience in families, and experience in schools” (p. 31). The maximum overlap between schools and parents is likely to occur when there is a true partnership between the two organizations (p. 33). Here, true partnership could be explained as being a coherent and pragmatic effort between organizations to push towards a “frequent cooperative efforts and clear, close communication between parents and teachers in a comprehensive program of many important types of parent involvement” (p. 33).

Invariably, the opposite could be inferred to be the case when the chain of functions by these organizations is broken, and results in minimal interaction between the organizations geared towards the developments of the child. Epstein (2011) holds the view that there is not going to
be a total overlap among the spheres. If you take the school and family overlap for instance, it could be realized that “the family maintains some functions and practices that are independent of the schools’ or teachers’ programs, and the school maintains some functions and practices that are independent of families” (p. 33); hence, the difficulty in having a total overlap of the interactions of the influencing factors.

Second, the domain of the internal structure depicts two types of interactions and influences between and within the organizations (school, family, and community). The two levels of interactions; standard organizational communication and specific individual communication occurs because of the interactions. These communication parameters seek to demonstrate the relational and reflexive paradigm that establishes common structures for communications that make it possible for the organizations to interact. In furtherance to this, the apparent division of the model into external and internal structure does not seek to show that these structures are uniquely independent in or by themselves. In fact, they are intimately interrelated, complement each other, and simultaneously influence the development processes of the child (p. 34).

2.2 The Theory of True Native Education

In addition to the model of overlapping spheres, Charleston’s (1994) True Native Education model cited in Freng et al. (2006) basically demonstrates a “more traditional ways of education among American Indians” (p. 60). This model, among many models of indigenous education, seeks to explain further the idea that indigenous culture, language, family and school interaction nexus is what makes students, especially, indigenous students more successful in school. This is a counter notion to the other school of thought who say that American Indian students fail because of their cultural and language differentials (p. 58). The theory of True Native Education portrays three levels of native education (p. 59) and their respective inferences. These are identified, namely; Pseudo Native Education, Quasi Native Education and True Native education.

In these levels, one common core precept of the traditional ways of education is the use of culture and language in expressing “indigenous value of experiential and sacred knowledge” (Freng et al. 2006, p. 60) acquisition in the schooling process. Given that native Indian groups are more resistant to the values of the mainstream (Bigelow et al. 2001, p. 61), this model could be, in my view, a converging factor that enhances the success stories of indigenous students’ experiences in the schooling process. The native groups’ resistance could not be a self-imposed one. It has its antecedence largely in the histories during the colonization era as amply discussed
in latter Chapters in this research where the natives were basically forced to assimilate into a “unicultural society represented by monocultural, monolingual schooling systems that block opportunities for American Indians” (Freng et al. 2006, p 58). More importantly, the essence of Charleston’s 1994 model, could be viewed in binary terms as potentially being a deculturalization process and accomplishing the assimilationist goals (Spring 2010, pp. 2-13: Roberts 1995, pp. 369-378).

2.3 Theory of the Ecology of Human Development

Given the concepts of both Epstein’s (2011) model of overlapping spheres and Charleston’s (1994) true native education theory, I submit that these concepts correlate and form the basis of the principle that underlies Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) development theory. Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecology of human development theory presupposes that the development of a person does not occur in a vacuum. Thus, a person’s development is envisioned in everything that happens around that person with respect to the environment person is situated at any period (p. 3).

In Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) Ecological Models of Human Development (pp. 39-41), five levels of development are chronologically identified as I have depicted in Figure 2 below. They are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) Ecological Systems Theory.
**Key:**

**Microsystem:** Closest and immediate surroundings of the child like daycare, school or family

**Mesosystem:** Connections between the organizations such as parent-teacher interactions or parent-parent interactions

**Exosystem:** Structures that have indirect impact on the child’s development like parent’s workplace policies with respect to work schedules such as shift policies.

** Macrosystem:** The outermost layer that encompasses socio-economic, political, cultural values that has a trickle-down effect on all the layers below it. For instance, politically unstable, war-torn and very harsh economic environments may inhibit the smooth development of the child.

**Chronosystem:** The element of time that impacts the degree of development of the developing agent. For instance, a child who witnesses divorce between his or her parents at an early age is expected to be impacted more negatively in the development process than a young adult who faces similar situation, all things being equal.

The concentric model as shown in Figure 2 has the child as its locus of development. Thus, the characteristics and the qualities that the child acquires are functions of the multi-faceted environments the child encounters during the development process. The five phases identified do not function as separate entities in the process. The circles intersect, regardless of the position or period that confronts the child. Yet, the levels of experiences become much broader as one moves outward the epicenter as shown in Figure 2. The degree of development is dependent on the influencing factors that interplay in the child’s development, noting that “children are like wet cement, anything that falls on them makes an impression” Goddard, H. W., & Ginott, A. (2002).

First, the concept of the **Microsystem** phase of human development could be described as the period of development where the individual develops more direct relationship with the environment that is closest to that individual. In simple terms, Bronfenbrenner submits that it “is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, and or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in the immediate environment” (Bronfenbrenner 1994, p. 39). This phase could be considered as crucial period in the development process, especially in children. This is because, this is at a time when the child’s world of reality begins to be constructed (Bron-
The progression and sustainability of this constructed reality is dependent on all the elements in the child’s immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner 1994, p. 39). Some elements and pattern of experiences include but not limited to parents and or family members, school-mates, peer groups, teachers including other educators and school personnel that have direct relationship with the child, and the immediate community the child lives. The effect on the development of the child at this level of the systems could be bi-directional. This is because child’s growth is a measure of the interactions the child has with some of the elements identified above versus the reactions to these interactions by the child. Ideally, it is expected that the more positive interactions and relationships that are built at this phase, the more enhanced and positive development of the child results. Yet, this might not necessarily be the case. These factors may be necessary but not sufficient cause for the child’s development. Thus, given the same conditions, there is the likelihood for different results to evolve (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 137).

Mesosystem, which is the second phase in the developing process typifies the interactions between and among the elements in the developing child’s microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1994) defines this period as “system of Microsystems” (p. 40). Thus, it is “a set of interrelations between two or more settings in which the developing person becomes an active participant (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 209) in the developing process. Seemingly, there appears to be no apparent sharp deviation between the mesosystem and microsystem in the process. The unique essential feature in the mesosystem lies in the characteristics and nature of interconnectedness that are placed within and across the organizational environment which the developing subject is exposed. At this level, the child is exposed to a more multi-faceted participatory environment coupled with intersetting knowledge acquisition through indirect linkages (pp. 209 & 210). Thus, the child is not directly involved in the interactive processes but the microsystems surrounding the child. All things being equal, the assumption that the exposure of a developing individual to multifaceted settings has its consequences. Placed in perspective, one of the benefits between the interactions of the microsystems is when they are enmeshed in different ecosystems in a “cultural or subcultural contexts that are different from each other, in terms of ethnicity, social class, religion, age group, or other backgrounds” (pp. 212 & 213). Deductively, it could be inferred that the cordial interactions between and or among the various organizations at this level have positive impacts on the developing individual. Conversely, any adverse linkages would otherwise have a negative impact. Some of these interactions could be the child’s school and parent’s or family members.
Third in the series, is what is known as the **Exosystem** (see Figure 2 above). Unique to this level of the developmental process is that the developing individual may not be an active participant in the developing process. Yet, events that occur per interactions between and or among organizations at this level impacts on the child regardless. (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 237). Thus, the child’s reality of events as they unfold are necessitated by the linkages of the conditions precedent that are beyond the child’s control. Typically, the developing individual is not involved in the decision process but the resultant effect of such process impact on the child. The resultant effects are what could be considered as the product of two or more “distant quarters” devoid of the developing individual’s involvement. For instance, it could be assumed that as a parent’s job conditions deteriorate, there would be a trickledown effect that would impact the child’s development negatively. Thus, the likelihood of the poor socio-economic conditions of the parent would translate into poor supportive services for the development of the child. This demonstrates a decision-making process between two organizations (i.e. parent and parent’s workplace) outside the purview of the developing child, and yet, the resultant effect impacts on the child regardless.

The **Macrosystem** which appears to form the largest and dominant sphere among the previously discussed spheres is very distant from the epicenter of development as depicted in Figure 2 above. It is considered as an embodiment of the microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems as well as “any belief systems or ideology underlying” the consistencies that are enshrined in the other ecosystems discussed (Bronfenbrenner 1979, p. 258). This level of development has its own challenges just as the others. The extent of the levels of growth experienced in this phase is very much dependent on the opportunities in the various domains that are opened, or to certain degrees closed to the developing individual (p. 288). These domains are but not limited to the prevailing economic, cultural values, and political systems that the individual encounters in the process. All things being equal, it is expected that a child developing in a war and famine stricken environment would experience harsh conditions that would obviously have a negative impact than could be expressed otherwise.

Last in the discourse of the concentric spheres of the development process, is the concept of the **Chronosystem**. Critically, the chronosystem functions as a time derivative of the macrosystem. This element of time could influence change or not in the developing agent’s environment, depending on the direction of the factors that the developing agent is faced. These factors could be socio-economic changes, like parents’ employment or marital statuses overtime, including general political and economic cycles.
Given the above theories, I state that there is a strong correlation between the influencing elements and the child’s development. The concepts place the child as a subject of influence whose learning development is largely dependent on influencing organizations as family, school and community. One common denominator among all three models discussed is the environment. Whereas they are described differently in the models, they similarly portray the same exact content. What is crucial to indicate in the context of this research is the socio-cultural activities in the environment that surrounds the child in the development process.

2.4 Critique of Theories

A critical overview of all four theories discussed show the various ways they conceptualize the child’s development. These models strongly show how the interactions between the various elements (community, school and family) can enhance or undermine the child's development.

To enhance the understanding of how the various influencing elements of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) and (1979) models impact the child’s development, I used supporting models such as Epstein’s (2011) “Model of Overlapping Spheres” and Charleston’s (1994) “True Native Education” to augment the concept. Thus, the child’s development is a function of the interaction among the structures or organizations in the environment.

Summarily, I have demonstrated in the discussions of the three models that the strength of these models lies in the cohesive integration of the multifaceted influencing factors that aid the development of the learning child. First, the theories attempt to derail the perception that the expected learning outcomes of a child lies in the hands of school or educators since some argue that children spend most times of their learning experiences in schools than with their parents or at homes. What could be gathered from these theories are that the development of the child is shifted from “I” to the “We” concepts. Thus, there is a shared responsibility that the organizations have that creates complimentary supporting systems inured to the expected learning outcomes of the child. In addition, these theories provide for a position where the development of the child is directed from reductionist to holistic approach (Taylor 2016).

Second, since each person is unique and as a result responds differently to situations, these theories help provide for recognizing the importance of individual differences in the learning process. These differences provide for avenues to develop alternative techniques to help students with learning differences improve their academic skills (Cooper 1999). Furthermore,
these theories help the organizations involved in the learning development of the child rethink instructional techniques and methods, given the notion that one size does not fit all in the learning process since individuals respond differently to situations.

On the other hand, I submit that the notion of “cultural-academic paradox” poses as one of the main dangers to the proper institution of the organizations to function as a unit to aid the development of the child in the learning process. The inherent complexities and challenges this paradox poses lie in:

The experiences of cultural conflict between values emphasized at home and in their community and those stressed at school results in a collection of perplexing paradoxes for many Native students (Huffman 2010).

As a result, many theories (such as the Critical Race theories) have long been propounded to help address the many problems that indigenous students (American Indians in this regard) face in their schooling and educational experiences. Yet a theory, as described by Dewey, “is an idea of what is possible, and not a record of accomplished fact” (Craver and Ozmon 1995, p. xxii). Hence, I state that Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979 and 1994) theories among others discussed in this chapter could be a temporary device that could be used to understand the realities of the problems that underpin and inhibit indigenous students’ achievements in schools. Furthermore, these theories could not be the final arbiter in eulogizing all the problems, and at the same time putting forward all the solutions in bridging the achievement gaps of indigenous students. Huffman (2010) states:

… theories are inherently imperfect and incomplete. Nevertheless, they reflect temporary notions of reality. As imperfect and incomplete though they may be, theories help to organize notions of the world and the issues deemed significant to us

Lastly, I deduce that these theories as explained conceptually relates to factors that affect Native American Indians and their schooling. The relevance of these theories in this research show how a cohesive coordination of organizations (community, family and school) could be harnessed to help bridge the achievement gaps of native American Indian students.
3 RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, I first draw some links between indigenous worldview of knowledge creation versus mainstream education by looking at some similarities and differences between these two concepts. Next, are stories about the Yurok Tribal Nation that includes their relationship with neighboring reservations such as the Hoopa People. These stories are culled from excerpts of written documents that are mostly online-based on official websites of Yurok tribal Nation and Hoopa People. Others are sourced from reputable newspapers. These sources are duly acknowledged in the literature. It is important to note at this point that, I have also included my side of the stories as narrated to me by some elders and other native indigenes I have interacted with, especially on the Hoopa reservation where I have been living on and off since 2006. I have worked in schools on the reservation and other neighboring reservations. I am affiliated to the Hoopa reservation by marriage (my wife is an indigenous native American Indian from Hoopa). I used these sources because original source documents from which I could access information were not readily available.

3.1 Dynamics of Indigenous and Mainstream Education

Discussions such as the above (and including similar narratives to be discussed in subsequent chapters) on the indigenous world view of education versus the western (mainstream) world view of the same paradigm, merit my intention to pursue this research thesis.

In this section, I would first attempt to describe basics of what is Indigenous and mainstream education, and their respective knowledge creation and acquisition modes. Second, some similarities and differences between these two forms of knowledge systems would be established, and ways through which these features (similarities and differences) could be harnessed to produce a knowledge system that has the potential, especially towards enhancing the teaching and learning experiences of Indigenous students. Brayboy et al. (2012, p. 8) submit that the original basic principle underpinning the philosophy of schooling as propounded by the “colonialists” was to use schooling to serve as a vehicle where students could be trained to be “civilized”, and also acquire knowledge to become productive in society by mimicking the values and behaviors of the white middle class. This norm, according to the authors, was “antithetical to tribal desires to preserve the culture.” This in my view served as a disincentive, and a reverse order of the world view of Indigenous peoples’ knowledge creation. Thus, this kind of experience gave
the impression to Indigenous people that assimilating American Indian students into any mainstream form of education was to “rob” these indigenous students of their tribal cultures, and ultimately “kill the Indian and save the man” (p. 8). As a result, and according to Brayboy et al. (2012), all the educational programs instituted by the colonialists to bring “light” to the indigenes all failed. “Many of the original participants died; others simply left to return home for a way of life that was familiar” (p. 8).

Arguably, it could be submitted that the “white” man’s education made inroads over time, despite the many initial challenges that bereft its concept. Records indicate that the early 20th century saw some observable number of Native American students enrolled at the postsecondary school levels. The 1930s recorded 385 Native American students enrolled in postsecondary schools in the United States at this level, out of which about one-eight graduated (Brayboy et al. 2012). Some of the causes attributed to this low graduation rate in almost three centuries is what Brayboy et al., describe as “the cultural, emotional, and integration struggles these students faced and the inappropriateness of White education system available to them during this time period. But, in some ways, times are changing; in other ways, the experiences of present-day Indigenous students are not far removed from those of the past” (p. 7).

The benefits of education thereof could be the long-term effects of return on investment in education which adds value (that are both quantifiable and non-measurable in nature) to the student and his or her ability to contribute positively towards a meaningful Nation building. This section would be concluded by exploring attempts being made by the Yurok tribal nation (in particular) to help protect their cultural values through indigenous knowledge creation to enhance traditional ways of living together as a community and provide aspects of ways of teaching and learning experiences that bring “the benefits of helping to sustain indigenous knowledge and societies to all” (UNESCO 2010). These benefits are amplified in, Nakashima, Prott and Bridgewater’s (2000) assertion that “sophisticated knowledge of the natural world is not confined to science. Human societies across the globe have developed rich sets of experiences and explanations relating to the environments they live in. These ‘other knowledge systems’ are today often referred to as traditional ecological knowledge or indigenous or local knowledge. They encompass the sophisticated arrays of information, understandings and interpretations that guide human societies around the globe in their innumerable interactions with the natural milieu: in agriculture and animal husbandry; hunting, fishing and gathering; struggles against disease and injury; naming and explanation of natural phenomena; and strategies to cope with fluctuating environments”. This statement clearly demonstrates that the values,
benefits and importance that could be accrued through proper harnessing of indigenous forms of knowledge creation cannot be overemphasized. Hence, carefully incorporating such indigenous knowledge forms into “modern” educational curricula have the potential of preparing and sustaining students through the concept of life-long learning that might yield greater benefits for societies in general.

The rationale of this research case study would be inconclusive if an attempt is not made to outline some distinctive features, and or as well as differences between indigenous and mainstream education. These aspects are distinctively shown in Table 1 below which I have abridged and modified from the original version by United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (n.d). I modified this table to serve the purpose of this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational System</th>
<th>Indigenous Education</th>
<th>Mainstream Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldviews of Knowledge</td>
<td>• preserved orally and in cultural practices</td>
<td>• preserved in books and advanced technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Less appreciated in distant areas</td>
<td>• less appreciated in local areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>• incorporates critical thinking and cultural values in decision making</td>
<td>• Use of logical and critical thinking in making decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of Pedagogical Delivery</td>
<td>• Unorthodox mode of teaching through unscientific approach like the use of storytelling</td>
<td>• Orthodox mode of teaching through consistent scientific approach like use of structured text books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gain expertise through real life encounters</td>
<td>• Gain expertise through examinations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Some Features between Indigenous Education and Mainstream Education.

A careful observation of the above, Table 1, shows that the mode of knowledge formation between the two concepts depart remarkably from each other. For instance, whereas indigenous knowledge is less appreciable in distant areas, knowledge acquisition through scientific education worldview on the other hand is less appreciable in local areas. Yet, the purpose for both knowledge worldviews do not significantly depart from each other. One core common denominator that underlie these worldviews is the case of decision making process. Thus, indigenous
and mainstream knowledge views, as illustrated in the table above, emphasize the use of critical thinking in decision making process.

Regardless, it is instructive to point out that the distinctions drawn in Table 1 are not to suggest that one form of knowledge creation is better than the other. Indeed, in my view, the characteristics of both forms of knowledge demonstrate that they are not the end in themselves but rather they could both serve as means to an end. This statement is strengthened by the assertion that “knowledge does not itself conquer uncertainty but produces uncertainties that no one has had any historical experience dealing with before” and also given the fact that “all systems are false, that of Marx no less than Aristotle’s – however much truth both may have seen” (Burbules and Torres 2000). Regardless, it could be argued further that knowledge systems are in themselves inherently imbued with great values that cannot be over-emphasized. As a result, both traditional and indigenous knowledge systems forms could serve as complements to each other. The proper harnessing and integration of such values could in the end serve the purpose of being a greater good for knowledge production, especially in areas where contemporary dominant mainstream knowledge and minority knowledge worldviews exist.

3.2 Overview of the Assimilation Process: Some Historical Perspectives

There might be a great deal of missing links in any attempt to write and understand indigenous people’s way of life and knowledge acquisition across the globe without at least giving credence to some historical antecedents of such people. Therefore, in this section, I present stories that give perspectives of indigenous ways of life with respect to their belief systems and knowledge acquisition and retention.

Many indigenous native American Indians view “education” as a way of life. In other words, they embrace systems of knowledge creation (education) as life-long learning experiences where livelihood skills are not only taught to children as they would need when they became adults (Cooper 1999, p. 12) but also these children are taught and made to see themselves as not separate entities from their culture nor their natural environment that produces food and shelter. As a result, it has been suggested LaFrance (1998) that systems of knowledge that are inherently devoid of such principles have in the past been viewed by these indigenes as “foreign” to their belief systems. Hence, these indigenous people perceive western education sys-
tem as one that was modelled on producing individualism and basically emphasizes on formulas, theories, laws and what is presumed as facts, which are in the end tested to demonstrate how well students have grasped the contents and concepts of their schooling experience to educators.

By inference, the western kind of educational system as perceived by indigenous people, is a departure from what the indigenes consider to be educational experience. They are of the view that education should highly relate to the students’ ways of live (everyday life or culture). The indigenous peoples’ perception of education is what LaFrance (1998) indicates as the creation of “one mind.” Thus, an education that unites indigenous people as one people as opposed to other educational belief systems that produces many minds. To the natives, western education system has the potential for creating disunity among communities. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise as early indigenous people vehemently opposed the introduction of western forms of educational systems in tribal lands that were established to “civilize Indian children and teach them the white man’s way, including English, reading and writing, and the practices of Christianity” (Cooper 1999).

Cooper (1999) supports the above assertion in in reference to a Sioux chief, whom after he had been briefed by a White Army Captain’s idea to educate the children of the chief’s landed, retorted “the white people are all thieves and liars. We do not want our children to earn such things. The white man is very smart. He knew there was gold in the Black Hills and he made us agree to give up all that country, and now a great many white people are there getting out the gold” (p. 3). The chief’s frustration could be justified one way or the other in my view. This is because they had been forced to sign treaties that made them give most of their lands, including sacred forests away to the white man, and now the future of their children was at stake. It was about to be entrusted in the care of a stranger in the name of education; an education that ran parallel to indigenous tribal educational belief systems.

I have been told several and similar stories around the reservations. It appears it was not only the elderly or people of stature, like the chiefs, in the tribal lands who had their doubts about the white man’s education but also the children who were to be the overall “beneficiaries”. These children entertained their own fears as well. Given such experiences, and the stories that I have been told, I submit that these kids could not blamed or faulted in any ways for entertaining such fears. I can imagine anyone going into such trepidation at that age when forced to leave their tribal land behind, and taken far away from their families and the only homes they had
known and loved. Cooper (1999) tells a story of an eleven-year-old boy (Ota Kte) who could think of nothing but to express his worse fears as he journeyed to attend one of the white man’s boarding school. Ota Kte, according (p. 1), remarked he “could think of no reason why the white people wanted Indian boys and girls except to kill them, and not having the remotest idea of what a school was, I thought we were going east to die.” For the children, it appeared moving away from their families came with its own consequences, in addition, to problems they encountered getting assimilated into their new environment. To some of the children, learning English as a foreign language was an arduous task and very frustrating. They had to study English for years to know enough to be able to take other courses in math, art, hygiene and history. Their frustrations could not be overemphasized as expressed in statements such as “for a whole week we youthful warriors were held up and harassed with words of those letters. Like raspberry bushes in the path, they tore, bled, and sweated us- those little words like rat, eat, and so forth – until not a semblance of our native dignity and self-respect was left” (p. 54). Besides attempting to speak the strange words, some of the students expressed their frustrations in not being able to make many words including troubles they had in pronouncing the letters of the alphabet. Indeed, it seemed like they would ever learn (p. 52).

The greatest dilemma probably these students encountered was being made to believe that everything that these children had known previously (as taught them by their culture) was inferior to the white man’s way of life. The following narrative by a student’s experience about the main lesson taught in every class supports this belief system that the indigenes were being exposed to;

The white people are civilized. They have everything and go to school, too. They learn how to read and write so they can read the newspaper. The yellow people they half civilized, some of them know how to read and write, and some know how to half take care of themselves. The red people they big savages; they don’t know nothing (Cooper 1999, p. 55)

The above and other experiences that these Indian students went through amply demonstrate the state of confusion that these students were thrown into in the name of civilization and learning the colonialist way. Mihesuah and Wilson (2004) maintain that scholars continue to document some of these atrocities that were meted out to indigenes during the colonization of native America. Yet “many professors, administrators, publishing houses, authors, and committees comprised of scholars are still contributing to the oppression of Natives”. They further argue
that “by purposely ignoring Indigenous voices, publishing repetitive monographs that offer little to tribes, hiring unqualified faculty, graduating unprepared students, and devaluing Indigenous programs and concerns on campus, many scholars and universities are still supporting, promoting, and acting upon many of the same colonial ideologies” (p. 31).

Given the above scenarios, I share that years of perpetuating indigenous peoples’ ways of life with a “foreign” worldview, eventually had its toll on these indigenes. Seemingly, these indigenes were prepared to no longer accept worldviews of knowledge creation that transcends beyond what has been passed on to the indigenous people by their forefathers and elders. According to Reyhner and Eder (2004):

Many Indian parents had been to school in their day, and what that usually meant was a bad BIA boarding school. And all they remember about school is that there were all these Anglos trying to make them forget they were Apaches; trying to make them turn against their parents, telling them that Indians were evil. Well, a lot of those kids came to believe that their teachers were the evil ones, and so anything that had to do with “education” was also evil – like books. Those kids came back to the reservation, got married, and had their own kids. And now they don’t want anything to do with the white man’s education. The only reason they send their kids to school is because it’s the law. But they tell their kids not to take school seriously. (pp. 3-4).

Per the aforementioned, it is pertinent to note that any attempt made to write stories or make statements about indigenous ways of living and knowledge creation might be inconclusive without understanding the broader historical antecedents that might have one way or the other infiltrated their very core cultural fabric that bound indigenous people as one group or society in their knowledge creation process.

Historically, and just as might have happened in many parts of the globe with respect to the advent and era of colonialism, the indigenous people of Northern America had their fair share of the impact of the European colonists as well. For instance, Brayboy et al. (2012) submit that “for the European colonists, the lure of America was, in part its reportedly wide-open, uninhabited land. The presence of Indigenous people on the American contents held little significance for the colonialists, because they viewed the Native people simply as savage, heathen, and uncivilized. By constructing American Indians in this way, the stage was set for White colonists

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2 BIA refers to Bureau of Indian Affairs
to colonize the eastern seaboard rapidly and later expand further West, pushing many Indigenous people westward as well.”

Therefore, I conclude this section and submit in context that these rich historical anecdotes add depth to this research and enables the reader embraces some of the negative impacts of deculturalization, and the urgency to revitalize some of these great knowledge creation forms of the indigenous groups such as the Yurok Language and Culture project.

3.3 The Hoopa Yurok Connection

The history of the Yurok Tribal Nation, who are the primary focus of this research, is marked by key events among other similar tribal people (especially the Hoopa Tribe) described below. The importance of Hoopa in this context is that after the destruction of Fort Terwer where the Yurok children were forced to learn English, these children were sent to boarding schools on the Hoopa Reservation to continue with the process of deculturalization (New world Encyclopedia, 2013). Subjectively though, I infer that greater part of the reorientation of the Yurok children through the assimilation process took place on the Hoopa reservation. Regardless, the wanton eradication of the Yurok language predate the twentieth century (Romney 2013). According to New World Encyclopedia (2013), the 1800s witnessed several attacks by the federal soldiers on tribal reservations in the northern coast which the Yurok tribal nation was no exception. The Yurok whose reservation was established in 1855, had first contact with Spanish explorers, and by 1849 during the gold rush era had had a great number of settlers. And by mid-1864 the “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” had been signed between the tribal people of Hoopa and the US government. Like many other indigenous societies across the globe and Native American Tribes in the US, these tribes are endowed with rich unique culture, history and natural resources. Demands for sovereignty as a nation from the federal governments and “colonialists” were not achieved on a silver-platter, and in other instances saw indigenes losing their lives in the name of fighting for independence from federal governments. It is instructive to also note in this instance that the Hoopa Tribal Nation demand for independence came with some of the struggles as noted above, their “freedom” and maintenance of their own reservation was finally met in 1988. Yet, the federal government agents had no or little regard to the indigenes value of life and culture which they had developed over a long-time span of history. Some

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3 Reservation references typical rural settings that inhabits indigenous people
of the new culture introduced by the federal government, like, transforming from their professions of hunting and gathering based subsistence farming to a more modern mechanized primary agriculture were readily accepted by the indigenes. Other portions of the new culture were met with resistance. Nelson (1978) asserts “the Hupa strove to maintain their traditions at a time when Federal policy was the eradication of indigenous culture and complete assimilation into the "mainstream" society.

Reyhner (1992) strongly reemphasizes the above by suggesting what he termed “rapid change” over the last 200 years. A period where federal government might have got good intentions to include the Native Americans in the mainstream educational system rather appeared to be a system of exclusion. According to Reyhner (1992), “despite federal efforts to assimilate Indians, to terminate their nations, and even exterminate them, they have tenaciously and sometimes perilously held on their distinct ways of life. Unfortunately, the American education system has, at times, participated in these harmful policies to the detriment of American Indians.” He goes further to demonstrate how punishments were meted out to Indian kids who had their hair cut because they were long and punished for speaking their own native language. These and others are some of the pointers that go to show how western culture in the form of education affects indigenes sovereign principles of living.

Several stories of these punishments have resulted in dire consequences one way or the other as such stories have been documented by authorities in the field of indigenous research. One of such stories depicts a native Indian named “Kee” whose schooling experience could be termed as a rule rather than an exception (Reyhner and Eder 2004). These authors submit that “Kee was sent to boarding school as a child where – as was the practice – he was punished for speaking Navajo. Since he was only allowed to return home during Christmas and summer, he lost contact with his family. Kee withdrew from both the White and Navajo worlds as he grew older because he could not comfortably communicate in either language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar 2010). He became one of the many thousand Navajos who were non-lingual – a man without language. By the time he was 16, Kee was an alcoholic, uneducated, and despondent – without identity” (p. 62).

Similarly, Reyhner and Eder (2004) assert further that there was an Indian school which at the time had its motto as “Tradition Is the Enemy of Progress.” Guided by this motto, students in this institution were forced to speak only English and “sometimes had their mouths washed out
with soap for speaking their Native languages (p. 6). Instructively, a seemingly common consequence of such ‘punishments’ meted out to Native students could only result in what (p. 5) describe Clyde Kluckhohn, an anthropologist as saying, “Navajo culture is becoming an ugly patchwork of meaningless and unrelated pieces, whereas it was one a finely patterned mosaic.” This description could be summed up in one phrase: the effect of white culture and education on native tribes.

The consequences of such punishments are not farfetched. There is a sense of loss of identity to these young men and women, as captured in Reyhner and Eder (2004) assertion that:

Our youth are apparently looking to urban gangs for those things that will give them a sense of identity, importance, and belongingness. It would be so nice if they would but look to our tribal characteristics because we already have all the things that our youth are apparently looking for and finding in socially destructive gangs. We have all the characteristics in our tribal structures that will reaffirm the identities of our youth. Gangs have distinctive colors, clothes, music, heroes, symbols, rituals and “turf.” …. We American Indian tribes have these too. We have distinctive colors, clothes music, heroes, symbols, and American Indian life at early age, so they know who they are. Perhaps in this way we can inoculate them against the disease of gangs. Another characteristic that really makes a gang distinctive is the language they speak. If we could transfer the young people’s loyalty back to our own tribes and families, we could restore the frayed social fabric of our reservations. We need to make our children see our languages and cultures as viable and just as valuable as anything they see on television, movies, or videos (p. 5).

Obviously, the consequence of such “punishments” as Kee experienced was not unique to only indigenous people of Northern America. These punishments were pervasive and permeated across the length and breadth of the globe where Indigenous people lived and were colonized. These punishments occurred in many forms and shape. Yet, one of the effects that was prominent in such situations was to underscore the fact that anything associated with the Indigenous people was inferior to that of the colonialists. Welch (1998, p. 205) corroborates this with his assertion that the Aboriginal people of Australia were a replica of:

Men of Sodom, sinners exceedingly. And the prevalence of those diseases which... constitute the established retribution awarded by the Creator as the just punishment of such abominations--conclusively establish the existence of those crimes of which they are the legitimate fruits.
In my view some of these punishments and labeling could in the long-run have dire psychological consequences on indigenous people like what similarly pertains to the Sami people of the Scandinavian regions (Finland, Norway and Sweden) and Russia. Arguably, I state that the low academic performance rates in such regions (Indigenous nations, and or minority groupings) could be attributed to some of these psychological after-effects of schooling that these group of people experienced. These experiences might fall in the domain of the psychological theoretical frameworks of what is perceived as ‘foreign education’ that has been passed on to generations, and has become endemic in the larger Indian and minority communities alike, and as a result affecting these group of students’ attitudes which reflects negatively on their academic performances.

In addition, the notion of inferiority complex results in such instances I have described above, and potentially perpetuates into such minority groups, and put these groups in the lowest ebb of society and cannot be de-emphasized. Inferior complexity references the situation where indigenous communities who were colonized through conquer, subjugation, segregation feel inferior to the dominant forces predates history. Hence, these dominant forces see education failures as a “natural consequence of the minority group’s inherent inferiority” (Reyhner 1992). Furthermore, Welch (1988), stresses on this inherent inferiority complex syndrome by stating that “for the colonist participating in the process of dis-possession, it was psychologically desirable, at the very least, to persuade himself that Aborigines were inferior beings, pests and nuisances who deserved their fate” (p. 204).

3.4 The Yurok People: A Synopsis

Next, I will move on to describe the terrain of the Yurok reservation, its population dynamics and Yurok tribal story from online documented sources, and those transmitted via oral traditions.

The Yurok reservation is in the County of Humboldt, California. According to the 2010 U.S Census population, the county’s total population is slightly diverse. Out of a total population of 134,623⁴ population, Whites could be considered as the dominant ethnonyms, representing about 82 percent of the population. The American Indian and Alaska population is about 6 percent, and the rest 12 percent is spread out among the other ethnic divides (see Table 2).

⁴ https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF
Ethnicity | Percent Representation
---|---
American Indian and Alaskan Native Alone | 5.7
Asian Alone | 2.2
Black or African American Alone | 1.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone | 0.3
Others (including two or more races) | 9.0
White | 81.7
Total | 100.00

Table 2. Population Dynamics by Percent Ethnicity Representation
Humboldt County - California

Consequentially, the population dynamics, in terms of ethnic divide, follow similar trends on the Yurok Tribal Reservation, although the Native American Indians population appears to be slightly dominant on the reservation. Out of 1,238, American Indian and Alaska Natives make up about 51 percent of the population, and the remainder of about 49 percent are non-natives (see Table 3).

---

5 https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/humboldtcountycalifornia/PST045216
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaskan Native Alone</td>
<td>51.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Alone</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American Alone</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (including two or more ethnic groups)</td>
<td>7.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>40.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Population Dynamics on Yurok Reservation by Percent Ethnicity Representation

The story of the Yurok People cannot be better told by anyone else than the Yurok people themselves. Most of the information produced below are direct quotes that combines stories from source documents such as encyclopedias, the Yurok Tribal website, and articles from established newspapers. Most of these stories have also been corroborated (through traditional knowledge) by some elders and tribal members I have interacted. At this point, it is instrumental to note that I am married to a tribal member from Hoopa nation. I have also been living on the Hoopa reservation since 2006, and I have taught as substitute teacher on the reservation and other neighboring reservations. In what follows below are the brief descriptions of Yurok territory, Yurok ways of life and efforts being made by the Yurok to revive a nearly extinct language (Romney 2013).

3.4.1 The Yurok Territory and Jurisdiction

The territory of the Tribe consists of all Ancestral Lands, and specifically including, but not limited to, the Yurok Reservation and all other lands that are or have been acquired by the Tribe, within or without Ancestral Lands. The Yurok people are in the northwestern corner of California along the lower Klamath River by the Pacific Ocean.

The jurisdiction of the Yurok Tribe extends to all its members wherever located, to all persons throughout its territory, and within its territory, over all lands, waters, river beds, submerged
lands, properties, air space, minerals, fish, forests, wildlife, and other resources, and any interest therein now or in the future. (Yurok Tribe 2007: Yurok 2008)

3.4.2 The Yurok People and their Ways of Life.

Our people have always lived on this sacred and wondrous land along the Pacific Coast and inland on the Klamath River, since the Spirit People, Wo-ge’ made things ready for us and the Creator, Ko-won-no-ekc-on Ne-ka-nup-ceo, placed us here. From the beginning, we have followed all the, laws of the Creator, which became the whole fabric of our tribal sovereignty. In times past and now Yurok people bless the deep river, the tall redwood trees, the rocks, the mounds, and the trails. We pray for the health of all the animals, and prudently harvest and manage the great salmon runs and herds of deer and elk. we never waste and use every bit of the salmon, deer, elk, sturgeon, eels, seaweed, mussels, candlefish, otters, sea lions, seals, whales, and other ocean and river animals. We also have practiced our stewardship of the land in the prairies and forests through controlled burns that improve wildlife habitat and enhance the health and growth of the tan oak acorns, hazelnuts, pepperwood nuts, berries, grasses and bushes, all of which are used and provide materials for baskets, fabrics, and utensils.

For millennia our religion and sovereignty have been pervasive throughout all of our traditional villages. Our intricate way of life requires the use of the sweathouse, extensive spiritual training, and sacrifice. Until recently there was little crime, because Yurok law is firm and requires full compensation to the family whenever there is an injury or insult. If there is not agreement as to the settlement, a mediator would resolve the dispute. Our Indian doctors, Keg-ae, have cared for our people and treated them when they became ill. In times of difficulty village headmen gather together to resolve problems affecting the Yurok Tribe. Our people have always carried on extensive trade and social relations throughout our territory and beyond. Our commerce includes a monetary system based on the use of dentalium shells, Terk-n-term and other items as currency. The Klamath River was and remains our highway, and we from time beginning utilized the river and the ocean in dugout canoes, Alth-way-och, carved from the redwood by Yurok craftsmen, masterpieces of efficiency and ingenuity and have always been sold or traded to others outside the tribe.

Our people come together from many villages to perform ceremonial construction of our fish dams, Lohg-en. Our traditional ceremonies the Deerskin Dance, Doctor Dance, Jump Dance,
Brush Dance, Kick Dance, Flower Dance and others have always drawn hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of Yuroks and members of neighboring tribes together for renewal, healing, and prayer. We also have always traveled to the North and East to the high mountains on our traditional trails to worship the Creator at our sacred sites, Doctor Rock, Chimney Rock, Thklamah (the stepping stones for ascent into the sky world), and many others.

This whole land, this Yurok country, stayed in balance, kept that way by our good stewardship, hard work, wise laws, and constant prayers to the Creator. Our social and ecological balance, thousands and thousands of years old, was shattered by the invasion of the non-Indians. We lost three-fourths or more of our people through unprovoked massacres by vigilantes and the intrusion of fatal European diseases. The introduction of alcohol weakened our social structure, as did the forced removal of our children to government boarding schools, where many were beaten, punished for speaking their language, and denied the right to practice their cultural heritage.

The above is a story as told by the Yurok elders at their tribal council meeting on November 1993. At this meeting, a Resolution (#93-62) was ratified and passed to adopt a constitution that established the Yurok tribal government (Constitution of the Yurok Tribe 1993). This basically outlines structures in the geopolitical nature of the Yurok people as a nation. (The Yurok Tribe 2007: Yurok 2008).

3.4.3 The Yurok Education

Western education was imposed on Yurok children beginning in the late 1850s at Fort Terwer and at the Agency Office at Wauk-ell. This form of education continued until the 1860s when the Fort and Agency were washed away. Yurok children, sent to live at the Hoopa Valley Reservation, continued to be taught by missionaries. The goal of the missionary style of teaching was to eliminate the continued use of cultural and religious teachings that Indian children’s families taught. Children were abused by missionaries for using the Yurok language and observing cultural and ceremonial traditions.

In the late 1800s children were removed from the Reservation to Chemawa in Oregon and Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. Today, many elders look back on this period as a horrifying experience because they lost their connection to their families, and their culture. Many were not able to learn the Yurok language and did not participate in ceremonies for fear
of violence being brought against them by non-Indians. Some elders went to great lengths to escape from the schools, traveling hundreds of miles to return home to their families. They lived with the constant fear of being caught and returned to the school. Families often hid their children when they saw government officials. Over time the use of boarding schools declined, and day schools were established on the Yurok Reservation. Elders recall getting up early in the morning, traveling by canoe to the nearest day school and returning home late at night. The fact that they were at day schools did not eliminate the constant pressure to forget their language and culture. Families disguised the practice of teaching traditional ways, while others succumbed to the western philosophy of education and left their traditional ways behind.

Eventually, Indian children were granted permission to enroll in public schools. Although they were granted access, many faced harsh prejudice and stereotypes. These hardships plagued Indian students for generations, and are major factors in the decline of the Yurok language and traditional ways. The younger generations of Yurok who survived these eras became strong advocates (as elders) for cultural revitalization (Culled from Yurok Tribe 2007).

3.4.4 Language and Culture Revitalization

The use of the Yurok language dramatically decreased when non-Indians settled in the Yurok territory. By the early 1900s the Yurok language was near extinction. It took less than 40 years for the language to reach that level. It took another 70 years for the Yurok language to recover. When the language revitalization effort began the use of old records helped new language learners. However, it was through hearing fluent speakers that many young learners’ fluency level increased. When the Yurok Tribe began to operate as a formal tribal government a language program was created. In 1996 the Yurok Tribe received assistance from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA). With the development of a Long Range Restoration Plan a survey was completed and the results showed that there were only 20 fluent speakers and 12 semi-fluent speakers of the Yurok language. After a decade of language restoration activities, the Tribe most recently documented that there are now only 11 fluent Yurok speakers, but now have 37 advanced speakers, 60 intermediate speakers and approximately 311 basic speakers. The Yurok Tribe continues to look to new approaches like the use of digital technology, internet sites, short stories, and supplemental curriculum. The Tribe continues to increase the number of language classes taught on and off the Reservation, at local schools for young learners and at community classes.
Onitsha (2014) on the other hand depicts how the language has evolved over time in the following statement:

Like all languages, Yurok is changing, though its turbulent history has made the of change fiercer. From Berkeley’s rich archives of Yurok, recordings show how the language has evolved from the 20th century, when many Yurok spoke only their own language, to the last decade, when remaining the remaining fluent speakers, whose main language was English, died.

This chapter amply showcases the strengths that are embedded in indigenous knowledge. Regardless, years of abject poverty that surrounds especially Native youth, educational progress continues to be hindered (White House 2014) among these youths. For instance, graduation rates are low and “suicide is the second leading cause of death—2.5 times the national rate—for Native youth in the 15 to 24-year-old age group” (p. 5).

Furthermore, I submit that there is an eminent need to invest in educational reforms that garnered towards these at-risk Native youths. To be able to achieve positive results per these educational reforms, the above theories discussed, and related ones could serve as platforms for policy makers to explore in attempt to solve the mirage of problems facing indigenous communities as ascribed in the statement by Barack Obama (2014), the President of the United States below:

“Let’s put our minds together to improve our schools -- because our children deserve a world-class education, too, that prepares them for college and careers. And that means returning control of Indian education to tribal nations with additional resources and support so that you can direct your children’s education and reform schools here in Indian Country. And even as they prepare for a global economy, we want children, like these wonderful young children here, learning about their language and learning about their culture, just like the boys and girls do at Lakota Language Nest here at Standing Rock. We want to make sure that continues and we build on that success” (p. 3).

8 Tribal Nation refers to Native American Indian territories within the US that have been federally acknowledged by the US government, and these nations have sovereignty and self-governance.
4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this research study is to explore some of the rich ideals indigenous knowledge forms (in the Yurok Culture) that could be harnessed in mainstream educational settings to enhance the educational experiences of Yurok students, other minority groupings and the Yurok community at large. As a result, I embark on a qualitative research case study using list of questions I had prepared based on my observations and field notes. These questions were also shared with respondents prior to the interviews. I shared the questions with the respondents to forestall any controversies or unforeseen circumstances that might impact negatively on the results in particular and this case study as a whole. Responses from respondents were orally recorded after which an inductive strategy was used to analyze data enumerated from the respondents. These strategies I employed to collect data were informed by the following research question:

What are the attitudes and interests shown towards the inclusion of Yurok language and culture in the school curriculum at the High School by native educators and students (native and non-native)?

Additionally, the context is introduced by providing a brief profile of the High School (a mainstream public school), introducing the research participants, and explaining the data collection and analysis strategies. Finally, ethical consideration is made, including discussion of the validity and reliability of data.

4.1 Brief Profile of the High School

Per ethical considerations of this research, I will omit the name and other information of the high schools students attend and or where instructor(s) teach. Henceforth, I will refer to this institution as the “The High School” (THS). THS prides itself in their ability to offer its students a relevant education that equips its graduates to be global citizens. The student population by ethnicity is as in Table 4 below.

THS is inspired by the concept of global citizenship which guides its faculty to embark on have a shared responsibility to expose their students to real-life opportunity programs that would have positive impacts on its graduates after high school. THS is an accredited institution by Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and one of the largest comprehensive high schools on the North Coast of California. I have summarized THS’s faculty in Table 5 below.
that comprises of teachers (that includes native American Indians), counselors, school psychologists and school administrators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaskan Native</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Data</td>
<td>8.0⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Total Student Percent Population by Ethnicity (THS - California)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Percent Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>87.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Administrative Personnel and Faculty by Percent Representation (THS - California)

The High School’s academic program is no different from other public schools in the US. The information I provide thereof are typical, and based on my affiliation with the school systems in Humboldt County where I have worked as substitute-teacher in several school districts. THS’s curriculum is programed in tandem with the Advanced Placement courses such as Biology, Environmental Science, Calculus, Statistics, English Literature, English Composition,

⁹ Estimated from source data
Government, U.S. History, World History, Music Theory, and Spanish. The classes are organized in a traditional and regular six period a day, with most students taking six classes, and with many college bound students taking extra classes each day. THIS provides a breadth of comprehensive and rigorous academic curriculum not very common in other public or private high schools in Humboldt County. As a result, this very unique feature of the High School’s curriculum makes room for the Yurok Language and Culture program to be recognized as an academic course and taught in the school system. The Yurok Language and Culture course, according to the instructor, is “a hands-on approach in developing a holistic individual”.

The diverse nature of the county’s population dynamics (see Table 6) has a trickle-down effect on the school’s environment including the Yurok Language and Culture classes which are all diverse in nature. The program is structured into three levels, namely; beginners, intermediate and advanced. The instructor posits that out of the 55-student population in the Language and Culture program, 38 percent are of Yurok descendants, 29 percent are of other Native American descent, and the rest, 33 percent are non-native Americans, comprising of Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and Whites as summarized in Table 7 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaskan Native Alone</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Alone</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American Alone</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (including two or more ethnic groups)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Population Dynamics Humboldt County by Percent Ethnicity Representation

https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF
Table 7. Percent Student Population in Yurok Language and Culture Program by Ethnicity (THS - California)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descendants</th>
<th>Percent Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yurok</td>
<td>38.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Native American Indians</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Natives (whites/blacks/Hispanics/Asians)</td>
<td>33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Research Participants

There was a total of 4 participants in this study. Table 8 below references some of the backgrounds of respondents in this researched and summarized. The information in Table 8 were gathered during the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Ethnonym</th>
<th>Residence (Humboldt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director of Education</td>
<td>Native American Indian</td>
<td>Opposite Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>Native American Indian</td>
<td>On Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female - Freshman (Beginner - Yurok Language)</td>
<td>Native American Indian</td>
<td>On Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Year Student (Advanced - Yurok Language)</td>
<td>Non-Native American Indian (white)</td>
<td>Off Reservation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Summary Background of Respondents.

The nature of this case study (qualitative-based and non-probabilistic) makes it possible for me to apply the concept of purposive sampling to select the participants. The choice of this strategy (purposive sampling) was used to support the objectives of this research where a small sample
size is needed to be understudied to explore and have deep understanding about their ways of life (Paly 2008, pp. 697-698: Amedy 1999, p. 21). As a result, Amedy (2008) points out that, a small group of people who are selected to be observed or participate in studies that fall within the groups’ context exhibits the characteristics of purposive sampling.

I planned for this research in early March 2016, when as a licensed Substitute Teacher in the State of California, I had the opportunity to teach in the Yurok Language and Program class few times. After my first meeting with the students in this program, I began to formulate ideas about this thesis. I used subsequent visits to the class as a sub-teacher to test the field by observing and making field notes about the attitudes and interests students showed when they attended classes. Finally, when the idea was well-hatched and formulated with directions from my thesis supervisor, I initiated a formal meeting between the instructor and me, and subsequently extended this meeting to the director of Yurok Tribal Education Department (YTED) to discuss my interest in using the Yurok Language and Culture Program as my academic research focus. As a protocol, these two respondents, as representatives of the Yurok Tribe, requested to see my proposal first and had an input in the list of questions I was going to ask. Although, they did not alter any of the questions I presented to them, the idea was ensure that the list of questions I had provided did not implicitly or explicitly connote to solicit information that both the director and instructor deemed ran parallel to the tribe’s cultural practices. These, and other laid down protocols from the tribe were duly followed before the Tribal Nation accepted to work with me.

Additionally, I followed other protocols to ensure the rest of the respondents (the students in this case) had no issues with the semi-structured list of questions I was going to be used for the interview. The respondents were also asked to share any reservations about the interview questions and process (use of tape recorder) if any. Seeking views of respondents, especially of indigenous native-American background is crucial to get them to participate fully in researches such as this one. Therefore, I chose to seek the input of my respondents to benefit from the “Common Rule” of research that involves tribes. This common rule notion is explained by Myoseth (2017) that:

> When discussions of research ethics are inclusive of tribal perspectives and when research policies, such as the Common Rule, acknowledge tribal authority to steward research on their lands and with their peoples, the likelihood of conducting research in a way that is meaningful, ethical, and appropriate increases.
Also, to add depth to the subject-matter area, I decided to interview those who were willing to share their experiences as far as the language program was concerned. Both the director and instructor of the Yurok Language and Culture program enthusiastically opted to participate in this research project when I requested of them. Again, I requested the instructor to select the two students for the narrative interviews. This request was to satisfy the objectives of this research case study and the fact that the instructor had good information about the students than I did. The instructor hand-picked two learners of the language and culture program who were willing and eager to voluntarily share their experiences; one was a Native American and the other was a non-native American Indian. The underlying philosophy for embarking on this selection criterion was to fit the purpose of this study and get some information from a diverse source with the view to enrich this study.

4.3 Research Design, Data Collection and Analysis Strategy

I used interviews, narratives and observation methods to collect data. The selected participants were carefully chosen for the purposes of this research. An audio recording tool was used to record narratives by respondents. These data collection strategies I used were to enable me capture as much information as possible both per responses to the questions on the questionnaire and the narratives that were told. Set of questions asked were varied depending on background and classification (learner or educator) yet the content of questions asked were designed to achieve the research objectives regardless of background. Prior to the interview, I gave the two students list of five open-ended questions apiece (see Appendix A, interview guide for students) they were to answer. This was to enable students to familiarize themselves with questions that might be asked, feel at ease, and not to entertain any form of anxieties that might ensue during the interview process. I reiterate that the questions given to these students had also earlier been vetted by the educators and they had had no issues with questions as I had earlier indicated in the process of fulfilling the tribe's protocol and research ethics. The two educators (the director and instructor of the program) answered sixteen questions apiece (see Appendix B). I adopted the face-to-face and the telephone (with the instructor) interview tactics as a platform to hear in-depth stories as told by respondents. Face-to-face interviews with students and instructor took place in the classroom environment where the language is thought, and was conducted in the morning of June 13, 2016. Interview with the director of the program via telephone took place on February 24, 2017.
The reason why there is a time lag between when the instructor and students versus the director was because of the director’s loaded and heavy work schedules. Hence, the director’s interview had to be slotted on a later date as indicated. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I did transcribe all interviews conducted with both students. On the other hand, I employed the services of a licensed and professional transcription service, Word of Mouth, based in Van Nuys, California to transcribe interviews with educators.

It is imperative to mention at this point, that the initial plan of this research was to interview only Native-Americans. The idea of encompassing a non-native side of view in the sample was after the field observations. All things being equal, I had earlier conceived the idea that the Yurok Language and Culture program class is designed for only native American Indians. This idea shifted when I visited the classes for the first time, and realized that the program enrolls students from diverse cultural backgrounds at all three levels (beginners, intermediate and advanced classes). This discovery therefore hatched the idea to include a non-native point of view in the research.

The interviews of the student respondents were scheduled during official school hours. I ensured, with the help of the language instructor that time and place allotted for the interviews were convenient to both parties and would not interfere with any other officially assigned school tasks of the students. Interview with the language instructor also followed the same routine as described for learners. Also, the interview with the director of the YTED followed the same format as students and instructor except the mode of interview had to be done via telephone which was convenient to the director and me at the time of interview.

The research question “What are the attitudes/interests shown towards the inclusion of Yurok language and culture in the school curriculum at the High School by native educators and students (native and non-native)” amply guided the framework of the interview questions.

In addition, the importance of the use of observation tactics could not be over-emphasized. I used my position as a Sub-Teacher to write-up a concise field notes which described in detail the effort and extent to which students and instructor of the program engaged in class activities.
4.4 Schematic Approach of Research Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology/Epistemology</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretivism/Constructivism Approaches</td>
<td>a. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology of Human Development</td>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>i. Narrative case study using selected group of native American Indians and a non-native American Indian in Humboldt County, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Epstein’s Model of Overlapping Spheres</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Observation taking detailed field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Charleston’s Theory of Native Education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The choice of interpretivist and constructivism approaches as the basis for the ontological and epistemological paradigms respectively in this research is largely based on Walsham’s (2006) work on “Doing Interpretive Research”. Walsham (p. 320) argues that “our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human actions, is a social construction by human actors…” By inference, everyone, each community or group of people construct their own reality with respect to knowledge creation and acquisition which over time become a belief system to these groups through social processes. In Walsham’s view, this social process “is not captured in hypothetical deductions, covariances and degrees of freedom. Instead, understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it.” Based on this view, the choice of qualitative approach with its attending methods by way of collecting data through narratives as outlined in Table 9 were ideal for this research.

I used narratives drawn from interviews as a method to capture much depth from respondents. For the purposes of this research, I used this data collection tool because of its inherent positives as enshrined in Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2015) position that narrative interviews help to collect people’s own experiences. Augmenting this position is Jovchelovitch and Bauer’s (2000) view that narrative interview “envisages a setting that encourages and stimulates an interviewee… to tell a story about some significant event in their life and social context”. Thus, narrative interviewing gives depth and relevance to the subject-matter being discussed such as this research case study.
I used the observatory method to test the field and also used this observatory strategy to make detailed filed notes. More importantly, the use of the observation method was to enrich the data collection method through watching the interaction between teacher and students, as well as their behaviors as events unfold in their natural setting (classroom). Although this method might have demerits such as being susceptible to my own bias, the advantages that this method brought to this study cannot be underestimated.

First, the method of observation enabled me to collect data as at when the teaching and learning was taking place. Second, it also offered an added opportunity for me to gather information regardless of willingness or unwillingness of respondents to provide information. At this point, I submit that this method was overt. In other words, both students and instructor of the language program at a point were made aware of the reasons of my frequent visits to the class including my official assignments as sub-Teacher.

Lastly, this method enabled me to have first-hand information by directly seeing what the students did in class including their interest in the language and culture classes rather than solely relying on what students said they did.

4.5 Ethical Consideration, Validity and Reliability of Study

4.5.1 Ethical Consideration

Ethical protocols were observed throughout this research to ensure the safety of the respondents of this interview were protected. I duly took into consideration all issues of concern raised by respondents prior and after the interviews. For instance, names of reservations, school and students were expressively held in confidence by me. Names of instructor and educator were mentioned in this research because the latter did not express any reservations when asked, and encouraged me to voluntarily use their names in the research studies when needed. Again, an oral consent was applied to get both parties (respondents and I) agreed to the use of a tape recorder during the process of the face-to-face and telephone interviews.
4.5.2 Validity and Reliability

According to Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008) validity references the extent to which any measuring assessment tool measures what is purported to measure (p. 2278). As a result, I ensured that the validity of this study was maximized. This was done through the application and use of the most relevant literature on the subject matter. Validity was ensured using strategies that check and balance between my observation in relation to the theoretical frameworks that are developed thereof. These strategies include but not limited to triangulations, member checks, observation, and the object of bias I bring into this case study as the researcher (Carlson 2010: Creswell and Miller 2000). For instance, the use of multiple data collection strategy connotes to the method of triangulation where the data I gathered from respondents came from variety of sources (use of narratives and observation methods) taking into consideration my bias among others, with a view to strengthen the conclusions or issues that arise out of this case study.

In addition, the degree of coherence, consistency, openness that was ensured in this study was done to help with the reliability of the study. The consistency in themes such as cultural identity, the importance and value of Yurok language and Culture program that ran through the list of questions asked, face-to-face and telephone discourses cannot be overemphasized. To augment the concept of reliability, trustworthiness was applied in the research methods I employed in this case study. Thus, throughout this research, I did make clear and transparent my biases with regards to the positives that were inherent in indigenous education and its attending knowledge creation forms. Also, I was very transparent and clear with my research subjects from the beginning of the research process through to the reporting of my findings. In addition, I did keep a very comprehensive field note accounts in my research diary in documenting issues such as challenges of the research, and other issues that helped maintain “cohesion between the study’s aim, design and method” (Noble and Smith 2015). These were done to obtain data which is credible, and from which I could analyze to get an outcome which is generalizable and applicable in other similar contexts, in the least, and are acceptable by the readers or users of this research case study.
5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, the responses that were gathered from the respondents during the interview will be presented. First, the students’ views are presented, then followed by the instructor, and lastly, the educator. For purposes of strict ethical considerations adopted and applied to this research, names of students and schools they attend would be expressively left out. The first student would be identified as a “Female Native Tribal Student” and the second as a “Male Non-Native Tribal Student”. The school students attend would be referenced as “THS”. Likewise, I will use pseudonyms to reference all other schools mentioned in this research. The female student’s reservation would not be disclosed in the findings for ethical purposes. Although both the director and instructor gave me expressed permission to use their names wherever needed in this research case study, for purposes of this chapter, I chose to refer to these respondents as “the director” and “instructor”. Yet, the instructor’s name would be mentioned where appropriate, and names of Yurok reservations in the instructor’s responses would be mentioned also since the instructor gave expressed permission for me to use the names of the reservations as well.

In the subsequent sections, I would cover recurring themes in the findings, discuss relationship of findings to literature, give recommendations for further studies, and finally give my concluding remarks of this research.

5.1 The Interviews: Students’ and Educators’ Perspectives

5.1.1 Female Native Tribal Student

The face-to-face interview (see Appendix A, interview guide for students) took a question and answer format. I asked leading questions and female native student responded accordingly. Female native student and I took turns to introduce ourselves to each other. After the introductions, I went further to reiterate the purpose of the interview. The next question was to find out from female native tribal student’s motivation for taking the language and culture class. Female native tribal student’s response was in twofold; female native student identified herself to the program because it is her heritage and it was an expressive way to show her cultural identity in a mainstream environment. Female native tribal student added that the main reason for her to attend THS was because there was no high school closer to her reservation where the Language and Culture program is taught. This informed the female native tribal student’s decision to commute by bus through the 40km distance daily on school days.
On the question of what the native female tribal student considers to be the advantage versus the disadvantage of the language and culture program, student described one advantage being that the language program “prepares me for life”. On the disadvantage, student described the language being in near extinct, and as a result, not many people speak the language even on her reservation. This makes it harder to learn and speak from a native’s perspective.

With female native tribal student expressing such difficulty in learning and speaking the language, my follow-up question was to find out from female native student how far she was willing to take the class. Female native tribal student responded by saying “I am willing to take this class as far as I can. I want to be skillful in writing and speaking the language, so I can help revive it by teaching others”. The final question was to find out the differences and similarities of the knowledge the program provides versus what female native tribal student thinks is mainstream education. Her response was intriguing. The female native tribal student maintained that the language and culture program “prepares you for life. It gives you a life-skill, an asset you can have forever”.

5.1.2 Male Non-native Student

This is a non-native student who is white, and lives in a municipality which is near to the THS. Therefore, he mostly walks to school each schooling day. The non-native American Indian student is a senior preparing to graduate this academic year (June 2017), and he is also in the advanced language and culture class.

The interview format with male and non-native student was not any different from the female and native student (see Appendix A, interview guide for students). It formally began with both the non-native American Indian student and I taking turns to introduce ourselves to each other by way of talking about our family backgrounds. I also ceased the opportunity to share the aims of the interview again after the formal introduction.

After the formal introduction, I asked the next question to seek the non-native American Indian student’s motivation for taking the language and culture class. Student shared the story that after exhausting all other options to enroll in other competing language courses like German and Spanish, he had no option than settle for the Yurok language and culture class. In other words, student ended up with this class by accident. It was not on student’s plans at all. Yet, by the time he settled in with the Yurok class, he realized that the class had something unique to
offer. But he could not figure out what that “something unique” was initially neither did he regret opting for the Yurok class, though.

The non-native American Indian student’s responses to the earlier question preempted the follow up question which was to seek what the student considered to be the advantages and disadvantages of the language course. He outlined a plethora of responses one of which I have paraphrased in the following statement. First, he asserted that whereas Spanish is used in a lot of places in the county (Humboldt) and across the length and breadth of the country, German is not used much here in the county. However, with Yurok you may go to the “supermarket” and run into a Yurok and you can talk to the person. His view of the disadvantage(s) of the language is that because the language is a “small and almost extinct, it is hard to go from basic learning to fluently speaking it. This is because there is a handful of words know and there is no instruction or curriculum to help people”. With regards to how far student was willing to go with the course, student indicated that he was ready to continue learning at the higher education level, given the opportunity. He further noted that, “I would actually love to attempt to learn and become fluent.”

One remarkable departing difference the non-native American student indicated between the Yurok class versus other formal language classes was that “you can teach algebra in English, German, Spanish et cetera, you cannot teach algebra in Yurok”. He student indicated that although the class is not outdated, it appears the language is out of the “loop”, and there should be a way to teach the course differently so “students would get it”. The uniqueness of the class, according to the non-native student, is enshrined in the fact that “this is a class where your teacher does not necessarily know everything you ask. So, you sit with your teacher to invent a way to learn together. It is hands-on and adds to your life-long learning experiences”. He further noted that a dictionary for the language course was recently created and made available to students. In conclusion, when asked what in student’s view could be done to improve the course and program, student remarked:

Yurok being such a small language and not necessarily endangered now, I think it makes it either more difficult to learn because you do not have much to draw from. However, this flaw makes people want to have the drive to want the language back.

In effect, he wants the language to be developed further and make it easier to learn than it is currently.
5.2 Educator’s Perspective

5.2.1 The Director (interview via telephone conversation)

The interview (see Appendix B, interview guide for educators) via telephone was the only option available and convenient to both the director and I due to the latter’s schedules, time availability and distance from where I live and the residence and or place of work of the director.

Prior to the interview, I reiterated the purposes for the interview and asked the director, a native American Indian, if he had any reservation or comment before the actual interview began. The director stated he had “no reservation nor comment” and added further that “I am fine with the interview”.

I asked the director a follow up question to talk about his background, some of which are captured in Table 8 above. Besides being the current Director of Education of the Yurok Tribal Education Department, he holds two master’s degrees; one in School Administration and the other in Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPS). He also mentioned that he is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) in the state of California, USA.

In his responds to the next question about the Yuroks worldview of education and schooling, the director indicated he held the notion that the worldview of the Yurok people is “somewhat informal. You learn by watching. You learn by doing and being around the community members, taking part by doing”. He further shared what he termed “project-based learning” as being core to the Yurok people when it comes to education. He explained that project-based learning is an ideology that gets more people to participate in an activity. This concept runs across the length and breadth, especially of “native Americans’ concept of education, according to the director.

I posed the subsequent question to seek an explanation why the push for Yurok language and culture in schools across Humboldt County? The director explained away that the push for the program predates history. He said ‘there was an attempt to exterminate Yurok people in the 1800s that was almost successful. Nearly ninety percent of tribes in California were wiped out”.

These exterminations were done through “bullets, starvation and diseases” said the director. He further indicated that as at current, the Yurok people are the “largest tribe” in California. They (Yurok People) have worked hard over the “last fifty years to try to bring that back, restore and revive it”. According to the director, the language is taught in four major public schools namely,
“DNCH”, “THS”, “MHS”, “HHS” and “CEMS”, all in California, and in addition to three early education (preschool) centers where the language is being taught. A remarkable achievement, said the director, was that it (Yurok language) is one of the language options beside Spanish and French that University of California and California State University recognizes for admission. The director also indicated that “we have more college graduates each year persistently than ever before” since the inception of this Language and Culture Program. He continued and said “29 college graduates this past year from the Yurok Tribe”. He concluded on this subject by submitting that “so the thinking behind it and the philosophy behind is to retain our culture, retain our history, our prayers, and our way of living”.

On the questions on advantages and disadvantages of the language program, the director started off by saying that one of the advantages is that students do have a sense of their own culture and their own identity. As a result, “we feel this helps school attendance and giving our Yurok students another reason to go to school. Overall, Yurok students have had trouble with attendance, daily attendance, as well as graduation rates”. One other important positive impression about the language is that it is attracting non-natives as well. The director indicated that ‘some of our classes are up to forty percent, even fifty percent who are not Yurok”. The director remarked “some of the best student speakers have been Caucasian students, and they enjoy it”. In attempting to talk about some of the disadvantages, he rehashed genocidal and historical trauma in the 1800s that did “virtually cripple the language and culture”. The director intimated that those feelings are still around. According to the director:

There is still a lot of impressions in the community, a lot of unemployment, apathy that still lingers, family issues. And it comes to bare in behaviors like substance abuse or self-destructive behaviors and depression. One of our communities recently declared a state of emergency due to the high number of suicides in the young people that are in the reservation here”.

The director also noted that “having the language in schools is a beacon of hope, an anchor of identity of the culture here to give the people something to hang on to”. He agreed with the view I made that it appeared successes realized so far through the program has not reached the apex yet. The director added that the tribe need to consider all other factors that are yet to be accounted for in bridging the achievement gap of native American Indian students.
In the next question, I asked the director to state his views on the position of parents and or guardians’ involvement in the student-education experiences since the Yurok language and culture program began. First, the director indicated that the parent-guardian coupled with the family influence cannot be left-out of the “equation” as I have earlier depicted on pages 13 and 14 above in this case study. He noted further that the program sometimes gets visiting elders of the Yurok communities into campuses to give lessons on history of the Yurok people. According to the director, it is a strategy that has been adopted by the connoisseurs (Yurok People) of the language to reinforce the credit-worthiness of the stories the students read from books and those that have been passed on through oral tradition. Per the director’s position, the correct application of the family-school and family-community connections undoubtedly have the potential of influencing the development of the child. Finally, the director re-stated that “we have more graduates each year consistently than ever before. 29 college graduates this past year from the Yurok Tribe” and hence, this Yurok Language and Culture program is a contributing factor to this achievement (graduation).

5.2.2 The Instructor

The instructor is a Yurok. He teaches the Yurok Language Program at schools including THS, and also, he is the Yurok Cultural Coordinator at the Yurok Country Visitor Center. In addition to these career positions, he has a two-year college education, 10 years Yurok teaching experience, and 12 years of Advanced Linguistics Trainer (Yurok Language division) of University of California, Berkeley. See other details in Table 8 above.

Interview questions for the instructor were same as the director (see Appendix B, interview guide for educators). We also discussed the student population dynamics with respect to native American Indians and non-native American Indians from other descents in the program at the THS. I have summarized the answers the instructor provided in Table 7 on page 42 of this report.

First, I asked the instructor to briefly tell about himself and share what he understood by Yurok Nation’s worldview of knowledge creation and acquisition. The instructor thus began (in the following brief dialogue that ensued with the introduction of the instructor, I will use the instructor’s name since the instructor granted the permission to do so when I asked);
With a sense of loss expressed on my face, I asked the instructor to translate the above into English so that I would have a good understanding of what was said. A request the instructor quickly obliged, explained and wrote both the Yurok (as above) and English translation on paper as follows;

My name is James Gensaw.

I am a Yurok and come from the villages of Rek’-woy, Sa’aahl, and Stoo-wen.

I also am Tolowa and come from Yontocket”.

The instructor continued by saying that knowledge creation and acquisition to the Yurok People began right at birth. It comprised of continual living on the reservation, visiting grandparents and stories that were told by them, learning how to do things by understudying the elders in society, among many others. He indicated that he was educated in Native American studies, and working for the tribal government did also inform his level of knowledge acquisition as far as Yurok knowledge acquisition.

The next question was posed to find out from instructor the philosophy behind the institution of the Yurok language program at School. The instructor indicated that his philosophy slightly differed from the administration of THS. The instructor thought that whiles the administration wanted students to take more regular language courses like Spanish, German, French et cetera that offered students more opportunity to gain admission into four-year universities, the instructor’s vision as an “indigenous person” was teaching a language which was on the “verge of extinction; it is a critically endangered language”. Additionally, he stated that he had the strong view not to teach student for a short period just to enable the student gain admission to college. “My goal is to inspire people and to educate and open peoples’ mind. That is what this class is about”.

The subsequent discussion centered on why the program was at the THS which was more cosmopolitan area than the Klamath which was the ancestral land of the Yurok. The instructor
started by conceding that the Klamath was indeed an ancestral land with a sizeable number of native population, yet, the cosmopolitan areas surrounding the Klamath region have a high density of not only Yuroks, but other Native-Americans as well coupled with the fact that “more people move away from the reservation because of job opportunities” to these cosmopolitan areas.

The follow-up question sought views about the success stories and challenges surrounding the program since its inception. According to the instructor, the success stories were many and varied but the instructor mentioned that giving people (natives and non-natives alike) the opportunity to learn their own culture or another culture is a great achievement. What was unique about the language and culture class, according to the instructor, was the “truth-laden value in linguistically telling the history and story of the Yurok People. Nothing is compromised, and the stories are told as they are”. To the instructor, this enables them (learners) to have another “perspective”.

On the other hand, the instructor indicated that one initial, but major issue of the program was the unpopularity of the Yurok language course itself among students on campuses. According to him, students kept posing questions such as “what is Yurok; what is Yurok language”? The instructor did not hide his suspicion of these and similar questions asked by the students. He remarked “so what the counselors were doing at the very beginning, they were just picking kids and just putting them in the class, right?” To the instructor “these are kids who do not have a choice and do not know what they are doing. Put them in, put them in Yurok”. To him these kids might be “troublemakers”. It is interesting to note at this point that what the instructor had initially thought to be a challenge had turned out in the end to become part of the success story. According to the instructor, his “resilience” plus the tenets embodied in the course, inspired students to “working hard” and getting “A’s and B’s in my class whiles they were failing other classes”. Because these kids failed other courses, they were not allowed to progress to take advance Yurok classes. The consequence is that they “end up dropping out of school. Because they are not allowed to take Yurok, and Yurok was the only reason they were going to school”, said the instructor. Another challenge that the instructor noted was the perceptions attached to the value of the Yurok language course itself versus other Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Interestingly, the instructor noted that the motivation to take other AP courses come from “gos-sips” on campus that other courses other than Yurok “will look better on your resume”.
The follow up question was to seek to find out from the instructor what in his view were the advantages and or disadvantages the Yurok language course offered students? The first statement made by the instructor was that the course initiates students into “getting another world view” of issues. He continued by adding that “when you make people multilingual, you make them multicultural, and hence make people more open-minded”. On the disadvantages, the instructor’s initial comment was that the language program is still grappling with curriculum issues. He remarked, “I had to create all my own curriculum. You can easily go get a Spanish or German curriculum book but not a Yurok. I had to write a whole dictionary. As a Yurok language teacher, I had to work hard and that can be very challenging”. Another disadvantage that the instructor mentioned was the unpopularity of the language which appears to be a hindrance for “someone trying to get into maybe a four-year university”. He stressed the fact that many university recruiters and administrators have little or no knowledge of the Yurok language course deepens the language’s issue with popularity further. Finally, on the question of the language program’s sustainability, the instructor indicated that there have been activities which started in the 1960’s by Yurok Tribal Nation members with a view to revitalize their cultural and language that identifies them as a people. A movement which has “lived on up till date, and generations would continue to propagate the good message of the Yurok People”.

Given these responses from the respondents, it is fair to conclude on this section that the Yurok language and culture program had made some positive inroads but there are still more work to be done to mitigate some of the challenges that the respondents have enumerated in their narratives.

5.3 Thematic Recurrences of Findings

This research aims to explore some of the rich ideals that indigenous knowledge creation has to offer in a mainstream educational setting that could be inured to enhance, especially, minority educational experiences. Therefore, in the next section the recurring topical themes which I have termed as, experiential and development of critical-thinking learning skills, language sustainability, cooperative learning would be discussed first. This would be followed by some of the challenges that also recurs in the findings.
5.3.1 Experiential and Development of Critical Thinking Skills

First, narratives given by educators and students showed that they have interest in the Yurok language and Culture Program. The common denominator that underlies these interests expressed by the respondents is enshrined in the fact that the power and capacity of learning exists in the holistic “integration of critical thinking and cultural values” (see Table 1, pg. 24 of this report) as a basis for knowledge creation which according to the respondents is a characteristic of Yurok Language and Culture Program. For instance, the instructor asserts that knowledge acquisition to the Yurok People is initiated at an early age. Hence, the continual stay on the reservation interacting with family and friends on the reservation coupled with learning to think to do things by understudying the elderly in the society help the Yurok acquire hands-on experience, and through critical-thinking the learning agent becomes skillful over time.

5.3.2 Language Sustainability

Second, learners’ quest to learn the language is influenced by their zeal to have communicative and writing competencies which in the end might impact positively on the sustainability of the Yurok language. For instance, whiles the male student indicated he was in the program to learn to become “fluent to speaking it”, the female student shared she was ready to learn to become competent in the language to “teaching” it. These responses show the extent of importance to which both learners attach to the language and culture program. In addition, the diverse population (including non-natives) and the positive levels of engagement I observed per my visits to the classroom, including the director’s remark that “some of the best student speakers have been white students, and they enjoy it” demonstrate the interest students, both native and non-natives alike, attach to the program and how far they might want to study the language. The language sustainability is strengthened by the fact that both University of California – Berkeley and California State Universities recognize Yurok language as one of the language pre-requisites or a requirement (for admission purposes) among other competing and widely-recognized languages such as French, Spanish and German as amplified by the director in his interview.

Also, the notion of the current revitalization of the Yurok Language amidst its historical antecedents of near extinction by colonialists cannot be overlooked. Yet, the collective efforts by the elders and people of the Yurok Tribal nation, according to the educators, have begun to show signs of positive results. These positives are derived from the extent to which the Yurok
language and culture program is being taught in schools, from pre-schools to tertiary institutional levels across as I have earlier indicated. Furthermore, these achievements have impacted positively on the college graduation rates. Some of these achievements are as captured in the director remarks, such as “we have more college graduates each year persistently than ever before since the inception of this Language and Culture Program….29 college graduates this past year from the Yurok Tribe”.

Obviously, these narratives amplify the vested interest in the sustainability of the language by the stakeholders I have mentioned. Inductively, I submit that these success stories are indication that as more people are exposed to the language, there is the likelihood that the program will go a long way to stand the test of time.

5.3.3 Cooperative Learning

While Slavin (2014) describes cooperative learning as a symbiotic learning process where students work in groups together to help each other learn, Davis and Menges (1995) adds that “regardless of the subject matter; students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats”. These are some of the common features that characterized the responses in the findings. For instance, the male student’s assertion that the program is such that nobody sometimes knows everything in the language (including the instructor) forces them to learn as a group to get understanding of what is being learned or thought. The positive output in such a process is the long-life learning experience that is realized by this concept of cooperative learning. In addition, the director’s concept of project learning rhymes with the idea of life-long learning experience. Project learning is the idea of getting students to participate in an activity together as explained.

Cooperative learning is underpinned by elements such as positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual and group accountability, developing interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing that allows for reflections on how well members are in a group are achieving their goals (Chen 2012). Hence, I submit that these elements, among others, are the pillars that underpins increased interests, especially among students in the program.
5.3.4 Challenges

Despite the above successes as narrated by the respondents, and the language’s intuitive appeal, I posit that, there are also few serious problems that confront the program as pointed out by at least a couple of the respondents. The respondents indicated that teaching a language course without a clear-cut curriculum is difficult. For instance, the male student shared the view that “you come to this class and your teacher doesn’t necessarily know everything. You will have to invent a way of doing it.” On his part, the instructor’s submission that the language program’s curriculum appears to be work-in-progress, and hence, “I had to create all my own curriculum” reinforces the unstructured nature of the program, and as a result, making it difficult to learn as expressed by the students. These among others, might be some of the reasons (I perceive) that make the language “unpopular” among students on campus because of the levels of difficulty in learning the course.

On the other hand, it has been argued that the “most important factor in education at any level is to teach students to think” (Craver and Ozmon 1995, p. 24). The literature and the findings of this case study show that indigenous knowledge has rich and compelling assets and it is characterized by this core value of critical thinking in education. In as much as a well-defined curriculum for the program is essential, the assets that characterizes indigenous education are critical to the success of the Yurok language and culture program. As a result, developing a concrete curriculum (with emphasis on the rich assets of indigenous education) could be blended in well with mainstream education to mitigate some of the drawbacks facing indigenous languages, including their cultures and communities. For instance, the notion of “cultural ambivalence” (state where minority students perceive that the negative messages about their language and culture emanate from school and society) would be minimized if not erased completely (Leyba 1994). Thus,

A strong primary language component in school can mitigate against these negative images, validating language minority students’ home language and culture and helping to develop a strong sense of self-identity as these students adjust to life in a new country, a new language, or a new school culture (Leyba 1994, p. 139).

In addition, one of the big challenges would be how to harness this Yurok language and culture program to succeed in an academic environment where competition has been the norm over several years, and students have largely been rewarded for individual efforts. Concepts such as
cooperative learning may not come easily for all students. Some would embrace the concept easily whereas others would struggle.

Regardless, I submit that the positive findings in this research are invaluable. Hence, pragmatic action needs to be taken to refine the program to realize the program’s aims and purposes.

5.4 Discussion – Brief Relationship of Findings to Literature

Evidently, the findings of this study demonstrated a relationship to the literature in areas of faith in the Native American (Yurok) cultural identity and their ways of life with respect to knowledge creation.

First, the director’s idea of project learning, as a way of knowledge acquisition corresponds with what Leyba (1994) termed “cooperative learning” and submits that;

Encouraging students to working in small groups has been hailed as a great improvement over solitary, individual learners who struggle and compete in a classroom. Learning to work together collaboratively while pooling talents, knowledge, and skills has drastically altered environment of many classrooms (p. 197)

In addition to the element of cooperative learning, the director’s notion of the “equation” which comprises of the family, the school and community participation in the developmental process of the child is worth noting. Also, given that schools including universities around the state of California have recognized the Yurok language program, coupled with the fact that the Yurok community itself is being proactive in institutionalizing (use of community elders as teaching resources) the program rhyme with Epstein’s (2011) Model of Overlapping Spheres and Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) Ecological Models of Human Development. In Epstein’s (2011) model, the notion of the equation depicts that the development of the child in the learning environment happens in a universe where the nature of the family-school-community nexus is core to extent to which the child would be developed, all things being equal. Thus, a well-coordinated and harnessed partnerships within these organizations have the likelihood to impact positively on the child’s learning development, whereas the opposite, would be detrimental to the development of the child. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) theory indicate that everything around the child’s universe namely, socio-cultural, economic and political impacts the child’s development in a given time period. Therefore, it could be deduced from the ecological systems theory that in families where a child is exposed to divorce or single-parenthood at an early age in the development process, the impact over time would be more adverse if the interactions
within the organizations (especially the family-school and family-community relationships) that formulate the development in child’s universe are not well coordinated.

Second, the instructor’s linguistic prowess gives him the ability to make his class interesting as noted by the non-native student. In general terms, the instructor’s ability to adopt and apply “reciprocal teaching” techniques (Leyba 1994, p. 197) make the classroom environment appealing to his students which in effect helps these students to work hard to acquire and retain knowledge in the educational processes.

Third, the instructor’s determination to work hard to ensure the success of the program rhymes with the theory of resiliency; that innate character that exists in individuals that help these individuals to confront and overcome challenges in their endeavors cannot be underestimated (Reich, Zautra and Hall 2010). If well-harnessed, it has the potential to help at-risk students to rise above their challenges to succeed in their academic experiences. I share the notion of the theory of resiliency with reference to my background. Thus, I grew up in a developing country where challenges facing indigenous native American students on reservations such as economic, social and political among others, are similar. Yet, having inculcated the innate character of resilience, and with some support from family and other relatives, I was able to overcome some of these challenges to progress academically. This notion of resilience is one of the characteristics of the Charleston’s (1994) theory of True Native Education which I used as part of my theoretical frameworks in chapter 2 of this case study report.

Furthermore, the element of resilience, which is an innate feature of individuals, if well harnessed, has the tendency to help individuals overcome adversities. Zimmerman (2013) describes the underlying theory of resiliency as “a conceptual framework for considering a strengths-based approach to understanding child and adolescent development and informing intervention design”. The theory of resiliency creates the platform to examine why some adolescents grow up to be healthy adults regardless of exposure to unfriendly environments. I agree with Zimmerman’s notion of what he called “positive contextual individual variables that interfere with or disrupt developmental trajectories from risk to problem behaviors, mental distress, and poor health outcomes” (p. 381). Zimmerman (2013) references these positive variables as promotive factors that counteract risk factors, and help youth, such as at-risk students (native American and other minority students) overcome negative effects of risk exposure.

Reciprocal teaching refers to an oral language and cooperative activity aimed at improving listening, comprehension and retention of material skills of learners.
Given the positive characteristics of the concept of resiliency as I have described, I suggest that native language speakers, language and culture students, and above all, the indigenous communities, need to develop this innate character of resilience (which is determinate yet flexible) to enable them excel in their endeavors.

Finally, I submit that individuality or solitary forms of learning which appears to characterize mainstream education is foreign to native-American Indians and their ways of knowledge acquisition and retention. Also, I am not attempting to indicate here that one form of knowledge creation is better than the other. Both mainstream and indigenous forms of knowledge creation are, in my view, means to achieving some levels of desired ends. They are not ends by and in themselves. They create the platform and provide for guiding principles that prepare and position an individual in a vantage point to make meanings of the individual’s surroundings. Thus, the individual who undergoes such process, through critical thinking and logical reasoning is expected to positively contribute her or his quota to make life meaningful, not only to such individual but also to all whom this individual associate and or interact with. As illustrated above, it is apparent to note that both concepts (mainstream and indigenous education) have great values that could be helpful in the holistic development of indigenous students, and all students at large.

5.5 Recommendations for Areas of Further Research

Per the above findings, I recommend the following as some of the research areas that could be considered for future studies;

a) Focus on studies that would evaluate and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Yurok Language and Culture program and seek solutions to strengthen the weaknesses as the program aims to expand to other schools in the long-run.

b) Conduct a case study to determine the percentage of High School graduates who took the Yurok language course and are attending college. A very favorable result could be used as a tool to make a case for the program, and could be replicated by other Native-American groupings or minorities who are struggling with educational related achievements.

In addition to the recommendations, I also submit that this research could not be deemed as a finished product; it is a research that opens the concept of indigenizing education to making schooling and education one. Thus, the philosophy that underpins the methodology applied in
this research was to “help to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not only the products of scientific enquiry but the process’ (Brannen 2005, p. 182). Brannen (2005) continues to assert that

A multi-method strategy should be adopted to serve a particular theoretical, methodological and practical purposes. Such a strategy is not a tool kit or a technical fix. Nor should it be seen as a belt and braces approach. Multi-Method research is not necessarily a better research. Rather it is an approach employed to address the variety of questions posed in a research investigation that, with further framing, may lead to the use of a range of methods (p. 183).

Given these assertions and for a good valuation, the use of mixed methodology research approach in exploring the concept of this research further would be useful. Mixed methods would help “increase the breadth and depth of inquiry results and interpretations by analyzing them from the different perspectives of different methods and paradigms” (Botha 2011, p. 8) about some of the problems confronting indigenous education.

Additionally, my quest for a mixed method research approach to further understand challenges facing indigenous Native American Indians students and the achievement gaps is grounded in the ideals that:

Numbers provide a sense of control, a sense of precision and the appearance of objectivity. Stories are more easily remembered than numbers and connect with human emotions. Without narratives to back them, numbers can easily be manipulated, used to hide bias or to intimidate those not in the loop. Stories that are not anchored to or connected with numbers can veer into fairy tales leading to unreal valuations” (Damodaran 2017).

Given the above, I emphasize the need to use mixed-method research approaches for future research in this area. It could greatly bring to the fore some of the factors inhibiting progress of education among minority groupings, and simultaneously offer hints on how some of these factors could be eliminated or minimized to enhance the education of indigenous tribal nations like the Yurok People of northern California.

5.6 Conclusion

I have demonstrated through the analysis of the findings of this research that the respondents (educators and students) have strong positive attitudes and interests towards the Yurok language and culture as a program taught in some schools in northern California. I have also dictated
some of the challenges that hinder the successful implementation of the program. This goes to show that attempting to bridge the achievement gaps of native American Indians through indigenous programs will not be an easy task. This might be due to the complexities that underlie the concept of education in terms of its delivery when attempts are made to distinguish one form of education from the other on comparative analysis basis.

John Dewey describes education as a necessity of life, and that education is when children are helped to think and put into practice what they learn as opposed to what Dewey referred to as “mere training” (Craver and Ozmon 1995). Dewey supposes that the environment (school) where this form of education should take place should be the place where other environments like the “family environment, the civic environment, the work environment, and others, are coordinated in a meaningful way for the child to study” (p. 145). The above correlates with all theories I have used in this case study namely; Bronfenbrenner’s Human Development Models and Ecological Human Development Model (1979 and 1994), Charleston’s (1994) True Native Education and Epstein’s (2011) Model of Overlapping Spheres. These theories seek to suggest that the environment which provides the platform for the child to be educated, if not well-harnessed, the environment has the potential to derail the aims and objectives of education.

Hence, I submit that the Yurok Language and Culture program would realize its long-term objectives and benefits (making schooling and education one to help increase the educational achievement of native American Indians) if the right environment, including but not limited to, a well-developed and comprehensive curriculum, learning materials among others are made accessible to enhance teacher-learner relationship in the program. Otherwise, the function of education (the Yurok Language and Culture) which is to help people “direct, control, and guide personal and social experiences” (Craver and Ozmon 1995) might not be operable to achieve its intended goals.

Finally, understanding the theories of indigenous education and mainstream education and attempting to draw parallels to entirely distinguish one from the other would be quite convoluted and add to the already established complexities in education. Furthermore, attempts that seek to make any comparative analysis by isolating mainstream education from indigenous education would be tricky. Mainstream and indigenous forms of knowledge creation are, in my view, are vehicles that help in achieving some levels of desired academic goals. They create the platform and provide for guiding principles that prepare and position an individual in a vantage point to make meanings of the individual’s surroundings. Thus, the individual who undergoes
such process, through critical thinking and logical reasoning is expected to contribute positively to society, all things being equal. As illustrated in this study, I submit that indigenizing to making schooling and education one has the potential to increase the achievements gaps, especially of native American Indian students. Nevertheless, a cohesive and the correct application of mainstream and indigenous education have great values that could be effectively coordinated to ensure the greatest and holistic development of native American Indian students in the learning process (including all other students) with the aim of attempting to reach the goals and fine ideals that are enshrined in education as this case study has demonstrated.
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“I Live Somewhere Else but I’ve Never Left Here”: Indigenous Knowledge, History, and Place


Appendices

APPENDIX A: Interview Guide for Students

Formal Face-to-Face Interview Questions for Students.

Prepared by Amankwah, Francis.

Introduction and Demographic Information

1. Briefly tell me about yourself.

2. What grade level are you?

Attitude towards the Program/ Yurok worldview of Knowledge Creation.

3. What is your motivation for taking this language course?

4. How far would you want to study this course?

5. What are some of the similarities and differences of the knowledge forms that this language and culture program provide versus that of mainstream education (knowledge creation that provided for the dominant/majority in society)?

Closing Comments

Is there anything else you might like to add that you think is missing in this discourse?

Is there anything else you might like to add that you think is missing in this discourse? I appreciate you time and contributions today. As discussed earlier, this interview strictly follows the University of Oulu’s ethical procedures to keep this information confidential and it would only be used for this thesis. I will only make information available per express permission from you. I will also make available transcript of my findings for your review.

Thank You.
APPENDIX B: Interview Guide for Educators

**Formal Face-to-Face Interview Questions for Educators.**

Prepared by Amankwah, Francis.

**Introduction and Demographic Information**

6. Briefly tell me about yourself.

7. What is your educational background?

**Attitude towards the Program/ Yurok worldview of Knowledge Creation.**

8. Who is a Yurok?
   i. how different/similar is the Yurok’s cultural identity different from other Tribal Nations?
   ii. what in your view is Yurok’s/Tribal Nation’s worldview of knowledge acquisition?

9. What does it take to teach the Yurok language/culture in the State of California?
   i. have you received or experienced any form of tribal education? If so, how is it different or like mainstream education (education as expressed by the dominant society)
   ii. who needs to learn the language/culture?

10. What are the worldviews of education and schooling to tribal Nations (Yurok)?

11. What is the philosophy behind the institution of the Yurok language class in the High School?
   i. why was this concept initialed outside the Klamath region where the larger Yurok population resides?
ii. what are the expectations of this program?

12. When was this model started, and what do you consider have been the success story so far?
   i. what do you also see as the challenges?

13. What are some of the advantages/disadvantages that this program offers students?

Other Related Questions – Sustainability of Language Program

14. Given the historical trauma that virtually crippled the native languages and culture, and made it somewhat “endangered species”, what efforts are being made to revive these languages and culture?
   i. do you see the Yurok language concept at the High school being sustainable, and hence, should be replicated by other tribes in other mainstream schools/colleges?

15. In your opinion, what should Tribal Nations, and the communities at large do to carve a space where indigenous values and knowledge would be accorded the respect it deserves?

16. What is your opinion about the following statement? How well this statement could be harnessed without compromising the spirit of inclusiveness with respect to pedagogy?

   “Contestations over which methodologies should be used to write about Indigenous peoples remains one of the most important problems in Indigenous studies. Dissertations without Indigenous voices continue to receive approval. New PhDs who never speak to Indigenes are hired. Indigenous scholars compete with each other for fellowships, and those who win often are those with recommendation letters from non-Indigenes who do not use Indigenous perspectives in their works. Awards are seemingly presented either to non-Indigenes who write about Indigenous topics (not to those who write about their tribes), or to poets and novelists (not to Native activists or our allies who champion tribal rights). Not enough is being written about tribal needs and concerns, but an inordinate amount of attention is focused on fiction. American Indian/Na-
tive American studies programs are still based on curriculums not designed with Indigenous peoples’ interests in mind. Grant and fellowship money continue to be doled out to scholars who have no intention of assisting tribes. Many indigenous scholars are hired only because of their race and their ability to politic” (Mihesuah, Wilson 2004; p 2-3).

**Closing Comments**

Is there anything else you might like to add that you think is missing in this discourse? I appreciate you time and contributions today. As discussed earlier, this interview strictly follows the University of Oulu’s ethical procedures to keep this information confidential and it would only be used for this thesis. I will only make information available per express permission from you. I will also make available transcript of my findings for your review.

Thank You.
APPENDIX C: Yurok Village Map