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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE IDENTITY EXPERIENCES OF MAYA Q'ANJOB'AL AMERICAN YOUTH AND
MAYAN LANGUAGE LOSS: A POST-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE,
CULTURE AND IDENTITY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Juanatano Cano

January, 2022

James R. Dellaneve, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Juanatano Cano

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to American-born Maya children, my wife, Ana, and my three children: Leonel, Alan, and Nova.

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I acknowledge that it is an honor and a privilege, especially for a Maya Q'anjob'al from Aldea Paikonob, Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, to complete this doctoral degree. This would not have been possible without my committee chair, Dr. James Dellaneve. Thank you, Dr. Dellaneve for your patient and impeccable support. To my dissertation committee members, Dr. June Schmieder, and Dr. Alan LeBaron, thank you for all the feedback. To Neal Stotts and Elisa Contreras for supporting with edits.

To the research participants, thank you for your trust, and vulnerability.

To the members of Pastoral Maya, thank you for allowing me to develop my Personal Leadership and for allowing me to synthesize my leadership experience.

To Dr. Nova Meza, thank you for the unconditional encouragement to finish my master's degree and doctoral degree.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to my wife, Ana, for the countless nights she stayed by herself with our children, Leo, Alan, and Nova.

VITA

EDUCATION

- 2021 Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, USA
Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership
- 2016 California State University, Northridge, California, USA
Master Degree in Educational Leadership
- 2004 National University, California, USA
Professional Clear Teaching Credential
- 2003 California State University, Northridge, California, USA
Preliminary Teaching Credential
- 2002 California State University, Northridge, California, USA
BA in Mathematics
- 1988 Instituto Normal Mixto Alejandro Cordova (INMAC), Guatemala
Elementary School Teaching Credential

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Board Member of Maya Heritage Community Project at Kennesaw State University
- Collaborator with the Pastoral Maya National Leadership Team
- National Advisor and Consultant to different Maya Organizations in the United States

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Educator and Coordinator with the Los Angeles Unified School District
- Adviser, Testing Coordinator, English Learner Designee
- Chairperson Parent-Teacher-Outreach Committee
- Member of the School Site Council and School Governing Board

PUBLICATIONS

- Supporting the Maya children of Tumul K'in in Toledo, Belize. (2018, December)
The Journal of Global Leadership.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- A regular presenter at Kennesaw State University since 2007
- Presented at the 7th Annual Tekakwitha Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico—
Maya Culture, July 28, 2010.

- Co-Presented with Dr. LeBaron
"El Compromiso Social de las Académicos y la Defensa de las Derechos de las Migrantes en el Estados Unidos ". Foro Binacional. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: Centro de Investigaciones Sobre América del Norte. April 13, 2016
- Motivational Speaker at Universidad Rural sede en Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenango, Guatemala—2019
- Inaugural Lesson Guest Speaker at Universidad Da Vinci, Guatemala City, February 2021

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER

- Maya America
Journal of Essays, Commentary, and Analysis
<https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/mayaamerica/editorialboard.html>

DOCUMENTARY/FILM

- Co-Producer—Maya American Youth Documentary 2020 (In Progress)

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Ability to communicate effectively in the Mayan languages such as Q'anjob'al & Akateko, and fluent in both English and Spanish

ABSTRACT

This research study explored the identity and educational experiences of Maya Q'anjob'al youth living in Los Angeles and in other states. The Maya Q'anjobal ethnic group is 1 of the more than 22 ethnic groups from Guatemala. Indigenous Maya American youth face many similar obstacles that Native American youth face, such as being oppressed and racialized. These obstacles hinder not only their educational experience but also their emotional, social, and mental wellbeing, which prevents them from developing their fullest potential. In the case of the Maya, they have additional struggles to confront, such as immigration status, language oppression and the particular history in Guatemala. Therefore, this research used a qualitative phenomenological study to examine whether American-born Maya children affirm their indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al background, and if affirming their language contributes to their academic achievement and adjustment to life with a secure sense of identity. The study sought answers to these questions by conducting interviews and surveys among Maya Q'anjob'al American college students while examining conflicting factors that influence the language loss among the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in the United States (Light, 1995). In addition, the results of the study will seek to inform more effective strategies in educational leadership.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the first settlements in the Americas, over 20, 000 years ago, migration has been a continuous phenomenon (Loucky, 2019). People have been migrating to the United States from different parts of the world including people from Latin America. In recent decades, due to political turmoil, violence, and the exigency of survival, there have been significant numbers of Mesoamerica people crossing north and across the continent (Loucky, 2019). This study focused on the Maya people who have lived for thousands of years in Mesoamerica, in particular, the Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group who have migrated to the United States.

The study highlights parts of the United States where the Q'anjob'al people are more populated, what their challenges are, their dreams and hopes, and their contributions to this country. The study explored the identity and language experiences of Maya American youth. Above all, the study focused on the future of their children in the United States. This research explored specific questions such as the following: (a) How do the Maya youth perceive their identity, culture, and language, (b) How does their Indigenous identity impact their lives, and (c) From the students' perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment?

Background/History

Indigenous people are too often homogenized by non-indigenous people, resulting in misclassification of their identities. They are original people to the land, have common characteristics and similar stories. Different researchers refer to the Maya as Indigenous Mayan, American Mayan, Immigrant Mayas, or Native Americans from the South (Millender, 2012). However, the terms Maya and Mayan differ in meaning. *Maya* as a noun and an adjective refers to the culture and the people; *Mayan* refers to the language (Verhoeven, 2007). Therefore, this

study refers to these native people as *Maya*. The Mayan language spoken by the participants in this study is Q'anjobal. The term *Ladino* refers to people of Spanish descent who are born in Guatemala and whose primary language is Spanish (Millender, 2012). *Mestizo* refers to people born in Guatemala who are of Maya and Spanish descent.

There are about 25 ethnic-linguistic groups all across Guatemala, southern Mexico, in parts of Belize and in Honduras (Loucky, 2019). According to Loucky (2019), the Maya people are among the diaspora peoples now present across the United States and Canada.

The purpose of this research was to focus on the Q'anjob'al ethnic group from Huehuetenango, who now lives in the United States. Huehuetenango is one of the 22 Departments of Guatemala. Huehuetenango is the fifth department in geo-extension graphic of Guatemala with an approximate territory of 7,403 km², equivalent to around 5.6% of Guatemalan territory (Herrera, 2014). The department consists of 32 municipalities which include a wide range of populations, predominantly, the presence of Maya Indigenous Peoples of Akateko, Popti', Chuj, Tektiteko/Teko, Awakateko-Chalchiteko, Mam and K'iche' origin. There are also substantial numbers of the mestizo population, particularly in the City of Huehuetenango and in the hot land, north of the Department (Herrera, 2014). The Q'anjob'al are among the different ethnic groups in Guatemala, including the K'iche' (9.1%), Kaqchikel (8.4%), Mam (7.9%), Q'eqchi' (6.3%), and other minority groups such as Achi, Akatek, Chuj, Ixil, Jakaltek, Poqomam, Poqomchi', Q'anjob'al, Tz'utujil, Uspantek (Söchtig, 2015).

The history of the Maya people includes more than 500 years of conquest and domination (Millender, 2012). Dating back to the early 1500s, the invasion of Guatemala by Spaniards forced the Maya to give up their land and culture (Millender, 2012). Millender (2012) explains that the Mayas lost their resources, their education, their culture, and their identity. As a

celebration of their invasion, the Spanish constructed systematic oppression that sought to annihilate the Maya culture and language (Millender, 2012). Once the Maya people lost their land, they became refugees under both Spanish and Guatemalan non-Indian elites. They suffered imposed poverty and were exploited as a source of cheap labor, and essentially were forced to live in the isolated and rural areas of northwestern Guatemala (Millender, 2012). According to Loucky and Moors (2000), when the CIA overthrew Guatemala's elected government in 1954, the Maya's misery intensified as they were obligated to live in isolation. The authors state that Maya children suffered the most. Children were chronically malnourished and the Maya were forced to work in the Pacific coast area (Loucky & Moors, 2000).

The first Maya immigrants appeared in Los Angeles in the late 60s and mid-1970s. According to Light (1995), the first Q'anjob'als arrived in Los Angeles sometime between 1967 and 1975. They settled in the Pico-Union area near downtown Los Angeles and found work in the garment industry. Others soon followed, with the goal of working in Los Angeles just long enough to help families back home and perhaps save money to buy land or business upon returning to Guatemala (Light, 1995).

During the Civil War of the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, the Maya people were the most impacted by the consequences of the war. During this time period, the Guatemalan military forced the Maya people into massive displacement throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Central America. The Maya did not have a choice. They were forced to leave their families, communities, and sacred places against their own will (Camposeco, 2012).

In the last few decades, thousands of Maya refugees arrived in the United States. According to Millender (2012), the United States Center for Immigration reported that between 1990 and 2000, new immigrants and immigrant births accounted for 60% of the nation's

population growth. The migration of Indigenous Mayas from Guatemala to the U.S. has contributed to this expanded diversity. Furthermore, in January 2006, the Department of Homeland Security estimated Guatemala as the third leading source of undocumented immigrants to the United States (Millender, 2012).

In only four decades, people of Maya ancestry have become a vibrant and vital part of communities and neighborhoods throughout North America (Loucky, 2019). There are thousands of Maya children attending K-12 schools and universities in the USA. Maya cultures now blend with Native Americans, enriching, yet testing institutions, opinions, and harmonies (Loucky, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Indigenous Maya American youth face some of the similar obstacles that Native American youth face, such as being oppressed and racialized. These obstacles hinder not only their educational experience but also their emotional, social, and mental wellbeing, which prevents them from developing their fullest potential. In the case of the Maya, they have other battles to confront, such as immigration status, language oppression, and the particular history in Guatemala.

Minimal work has been done to address the difficulties of Indigenous Maya American youth in the education system, but a lot of work has been achieved for United States Native American students. Native American students' test scores are very low (de Plevitz, 2007). For instance, according to Castagno and Brayboy (2008), the scores of American Indian and Alaskan Native Students (AI/AN) on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reading assessments are more than twice below that of their White peers. Similarly, AI/AN students' scores on the NAEP assessments for mathematics are three times below that of their White peers

(Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Maya Native American students are not exempt from these educational experiences and test scores. Maya parents express that some of the Maya American children do not finish high school and or do not aspire for higher education.

The lived experiences of Native American youth in the United States coincide with the experiences of Maya Indigenous youth. In the case of the Maya in Guatemala, the discrimination they escaped from continues to oppress them in the United States. Being a Maya in Guatemala has often meant marginalization, exploitation, and victimization through state-sponsored violence and death (Batz, 2010). According to Batz (2010), being Maya in Los Angeles is less severe but it is still marked by marginalization, repression, and discrimination. Furthermore, LeBaron (2016) states that Maya American children face prejudice from non-indigenous immigrant children who have learned from their parents to see the Maya culture as inferior. Economic poverty, language barriers, and the treatment they receive from other children contribute to low self-esteem and lack of Maya pride. Maya American children face some problems of self-identity. LeBaron (2016) shares the experience of a young Maya student who said that on her first day of school in the United States, knowing little English and Spanish, made her feel ashamed of her Maya background. She said that she and other children preferred to claim Mexican as their identity because they thought it a higher status (LeBaron, 2012). Other Maya youth ask hard questions such as the following: Who am I? What is my identity? Can I identify myself as Maya even though I no longer speak a Mayan language?

Language discrimination is a very serious problem because it directly strips Maya American children away from their identity (Vicente, 2019). Due to the pain attached to speaking an Indigenous language, parents prefer not to expose their children to the Native language. Grandparents use their maternal language, their Indigenous language, as the only means to

communicate and transmit love and affection to grandchildren. However, the moment the link between grandparents and grandchildren is cut, so is the language. Consequently, when language is lost, the culture of storytelling is also lost (Vicente, 2019).

An important concern for educators is language preservation and identity formation among immigrants from Latin America who speak indigenous languages. Immigrants who speak indigenous languages have been scarcely studied. Often, they are considered to have similar racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics as other Latinos in the United States (Peñalosa, 1986). The future of Maya in the United States seems uncertain, particularly on how the new generations will view their Maya heritage (Camposeco, 2019).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of Maya American youth of the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in Los Angeles and in other states. It examined whether American-born Maya children affirm their indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al background and if they perform better in school and have a better adjustment to life if they have a secure sense of identity. The research sought answers to these questions by conducting interviews and surveys among Maya Q'anjob'al American college students while examining conflicting factors that influence language loss among the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in the United States (Light, 1995). In addition, the results of the study aim to inform more effective strategies in educational leadership that will empower and celebrate Maya Indigenous identities and languages, rather than oppress them.

Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do Maya American youth perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?
- RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States?
- RQ3: From the students' perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment?

Methodological Approach

For the past 30 years, I have enjoyed the privilege of serving the Maya community in Los Angeles and in other states. I have served the community under different roles, but for the last 15 years, I have been serving as a Maya National Consultant to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Also, I have been a board member of the Maya Heritage Community Project at Kennesaw State University, and I have been a public educator and advisor at a local public school in Los Angeles. As an educator and community organizer leader, I have applied my personal experiences and language skills to navigate within the Maya, Latino, and English-speaking communities. These experiences helped me to recruit participants from Maya Non-profit organizations in Los Angeles, California and in other states such as Greenville, SC, Omaha, NE, Belfair, WA, Alamosa, CO, and Champaign, IL. The participants were of Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group.

Careful analysis was done through the phenomenological method and utilized narratives, testimonies, interviews and surveys. The research was conducted in English to determine how Maya youth, children of Maya immigrants, perceive/understand/know their identity, culture,

language, and spirituality. In some cases, I will use my native language of Q'anjob'al to determine their understanding of the language and culture. How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States? Do children with a secure sense of identity do better in school and/or have life fulfilment?

Research Design

A qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological method was used to obtain a better understanding of the Maya people. Characteristics of the phenomenological research are best suited for this form of research to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Sources of Data

Setting

The researcher used two specific local non-profit organizations in Los Angeles where he has close connections with the subjects who have agreed to participate. The participants completed an online survey (see Appendix A). Follow up questions were delivered through e-mail and/or phone calls. The researcher interviewed five participants at each non-profit organization in Los Angeles and at least two from five different states such as Omaha, Nebraska. With these 20 subjects, the researcher availed himself of their stories, family history, and identities.

Participants

Participants were from Maya non-profit organizations in Los Angeles, California and from other states such as Greenville, SC, Omaha, NE, Belfair, WA, Alamosa, CO, and Champaign, IL. The participants were of Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group. Careful analysis was

done through phenomenology method. Interviews were conducted in Mayan Q'anjob'al language, Spanish, and English.

Sample Method and Desired Sample

The researcher analyzed field notes, interviews, recordings and existing data such as photographs and literature. Subjects were chosen and screened based on eligibility for program and criteria. Field notes were written by the researcher based on social interactions between participants. The researcher interviewed Maya youth. The recordings were authorized by IRB specifications. The interviews were reviewed appropriately using triangulation.

Selection Criteria

Sampling

Sampling is when a researcher gathers additional information from individuals different from those people initially interviewed to determine if the theory holds true (Creswell & Poth, 2016). On a national level, the researcher conducted samplings from various states, for example, South Carolina, Tennessee, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Nebraska, or California. Since the researcher has been working and assisting Maya communities in these states, he was successful in selecting proper samples among Maya American youth.

Data Collection Strategies & Procedures

Since narrative researchers can use various types of narratives for guidance to collect stories (Creswell & Poth, 2016), the researcher used the phenomenological approach to conduct interviews and to collect data. Data were collected by phone or online. Open-ended questions were used to elicit experiences of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and to provide interpretations of their past, present and future (Roberts, 2002). Interviews should be about an hour long and notes will be taken during interviews.

The researcher observed Maya cultural events such as Maya music, Maya dances, Maya language classes, et cetera. Observations sought to fulfill the research purpose and address research questions. The researcher observed physical settings, participants, activities, interactions, conversations and analyzed their own behavior during the observation (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Tools/Instruments Used

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol consisted of questions regarding Maya Culture with the purpose of gathering data about perspectives on Maya identity and Maya cultural values. The interview protocol included about ten questions directed at Maya American youth. The questions were created to gather data and explore perspectives on Maya identity, the future of the Maya culture, and to what extent American-born Maya children embrace the Maya culture, inherit the values, and demonstrate Maya identity. The purpose of the open-ended questions was to understand the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Proposed Data Analysis

Data analysis in quantitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was classified into themes and then coded for analysis.

Data Analysis Spiral

It is necessary to use the Data Analysis Spiral when conducting research, (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher used the spiral method to organize data. Based on the Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell & Poth, 2016), the researcher organized files, by creating visual representations of data consisting of interpretations, memorizing ideas, classifying codes, and organizing them

chronologically. By using this method, the researcher was able to effectively analyze and use his collected data.

Timeline

Since the researcher had established prior relationships with his subjects, the estimated timeline was one year (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This time frame allowed the researcher to effectively interview his subjects and review his data. A year served as sufficient time to fulfill all required tasks for this study.

Measure to Ensure Study Validity

To enhance the validity of findings, the researcher used the following strategies for validation: (a) clarifying researcher bias or engaging in reflexivity, (b) member checking for seeking participant feedback, (c) having a prolonged engagement and persistent observation on the field, (d) collaborating with participants, (e) enabling external audits, (f) having a peer review or debriefing of the data and research process, (g) corroborating evidence and (h) discovering a negative case analysis or disconfirming evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2016). On a national level, the researcher conducted sampling possibly to include Maya American Youth from South Carolina, Nebraska, Washington, Colorado, and California. Since the researcher is well-acquainted with Maya- American youth, he was intentional in selecting his interviewees. This population was interviewed strategically throughout selected Catholic churches and some non-profit organizations in Los Angeles.

The researcher has been counseling the Maya community locally and nationally for more than a decade. Rapport has been established during this time with the Maya leaders. This friendship status facilitated a reciprocal collaboration between researcher and interviewee. Appointments were scheduled when convenient for both parties.

Limitations

The researcher understands that Maya might have a variety of opinions about being Maya or becoming a Latino. Views might not be clearly realized by the Maya themselves. Some Maya people think they are Latinos and not Maya people (LeBaron, 2016). In the study and interviews, the researcher recognized and respected possible diverse opinions and refrained from unfairly influencing interviewees' perspectives.

Researcher Reaffirms His Own Maya Identity

The researcher is a Maya from Guatemala and his native language is Q'anjobal. As he got older, he began to recognize that indigenous people do not have reasonable access to education, healthcare, jobs, or simple human rights. As a boy in the 1980s, he experienced the Guatemalan Civil War. After his uncle was killed by the Guatemalan military, he left his parents and village behind at the age of 13, and migrated to the city of Huehuetenango, Guatemala. For seven years, he washed dishes to pay his way through middle school and high school. He graduated high school in 1988. During his teenage years, he not only suffered discrimination, but he witnessed how the Maya people were treated in Guatemala. In middle school and high school, he was called "Indio." The term "Indio" is used as a derogatory term by non-indigenous people to insult indigenous people or natives. His classmates would make fun of him for not speaking or writing proper Spanish. He internalized these painful, racist, and humiliating experiences. These experiences produced him low self-esteem and made him grumble a lot about his life: "Why did my family bring me to this world?" "Why was I born Maya?" "Why are Maya people marginalized and treated unfairly?" Nevertheless, these early pains and miseries became his motivators. To overcome the post-trauma, internalized racism, and consequences of the war in his village, he decided to follow the trail of the refugees and to make the overland journey to the

United States in November 1988. As soon as he arrived in Los Angeles, he was faced with yet another barrier. He was undocumented, did not know the English language, and nobody was there to pay for his rent and food. He worked 10-12 hours a day as a textile machine operator while learning English as a third language at night.

Because of his name, he was automatically classified as a Latino or Hispanic in Los Angeles. However, having Latino names did not save him from discrimination from other non-Maya immigrants. Non-Maya immigrants still looked at him and asked about the Mayan language he speaks. His physical indigenous traits exposed his Maya identity.

At the age of 35, he joined Pastoral Maya. Pastoral Maya is an Indigenous Maya Catholic Ministry in the United States. About this time, he met a Maya Elder who was a Day Keeper of the Maya calendar and Maya Spirituality. His encounter with Pastoral Maya and with the Maya Elder was life-changing. He embraced his Maya identity and started an internal journey. This life change came along with United States citizenship.

Researcher Role and Positionality

The researcher was unbiased during the interview. However, he positioned himself as an independent and expanded his experience and knowledge of Maya identity. With careful observation of other's experiences, he did extensive reflective writing because his story is similar to those involved in the study. That is, the researcher has been undocumented like thousands of Maya immigrants in the United States and he is well aware of the struggle to maintain Maya heritage in Los Angeles while assimilating into the American culture.

These concerns were clearly demonstrated in an annual meeting of Maya leaders in Arizona in November 2016. One of the leader's primary topics of discussion included questions concerning their children; such as the following: where will their United States-born children be

in 50 years, and how will the children claim their Maya identity? These questions are not new. The Maya people have had these concerns since they settled in Los Angeles in the early 1980s.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the ethical conduct of this study, the researcher will not publish the participants' names. All information provided will be confidential. For example, in no way will the researcher reveal immigrants' names or their relationship to other individuals or organizations. All information provided must be kept secured and cannot be shared without the participants' permission.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical domain was about Maya indigenous people and second-generation indigenous students born in the United States whose parents speak Mayan languages. Most Maya American children do not speak their parents' native languages anymore. Therefore, the theoretical domain of the paper analyzed research on the experiences of Maya Q'anjob'al American Youth and Mayan language loss: A post-colonial perspective on language, culture and identity.

The theoretical domain that guided the research was post-colonial theory. Post-colonial theory deals with the effect of colonization on cultures and societies. This theory began in the 1950s with the work of Frantz Fanon and is now applied widely to various fields. The researcher will work with the ideas and methods of William G. Demmert and culturally based education (CBE), which applies to education that recognizes the importance of indigenous languages, culture, spirituality, and community participation and use extensive literature on Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous (CRS) Youth.

Definition of Key Terms

The purpose of defining these key terms is to help the reader understand words strictly related to the Maya.

Ladino refers to Guatemalan descendants from Europeans who speak Spanish as their primary language (Millender, 2012). *Maya* is defined as the descendant of the Indigenous Maya who originated in Guatemala but migrated in the United States (Millender, 2012).

Maya as a noun and an adjective refers to the culture and the people (Verhoeven, 2007).

Mayan refers to the language (Verhoeven, 2007).

Significance of the Study

Estimates have claimed Maya children number a million or more. It is important to establish the success of this new group of Maya citizens, and have them well-adjusted in society. In addition, the USA is still struggling to incorporate US Native Americans and refugees from across the world and this study on the Maya Youth will add to the literature and understanding of best practices in educational leadership.

Chapter Summary

Anxieties regarding the future of the Maya culture and Maya Q'anjob'al language in the United States affect Maya Americans greatly. The anxieties addressed in this study are acceptance, self-esteem, identification, lack of social status, language, and education barriers. Most Maya American youth have not developed self-identity, nor have they developed self-esteem or Maya cultural pride.

The concerns are whether the Maya Culture and Maya Q'anjobal language will survive in the United States and whether the Maya American youth will embrace it and have a secure sense of identity to perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment.

The results of this study include promoting Maya cultural awareness, improving participants' self-esteem, and promoting current indigenous Maya identity role models. Additional benefits include improving education about Maya culture and preserving the Maya values. Prior research has been reviewed and new research has been examined and clearly documented through phenomenological methods.

The researcher's purpose in this study was to encourage Maya youth to embrace Maya values and identity. Furthermore, this study sought to inform that by celebrating the uniqueness of the Maya culture in a modern American society, the children will embrace their cultural Maya background and inherit the Maya values so that they reach their human potential.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is organized into two parts. The first part is about two theoretical frameworks: post-colonial theory and culturally based education/decolonizing education. The second part presents reviews of literature about colonization's impact on Maya cultural identity and language loss, and the experiences of Maya American youth in the United States.

The theoretical approach and literature review will help address the many concerns regarding the acceptance and identification of Maya children born in the United States. The specific concerns that will be investigated are whether U.S. born Maya children will embrace their Maya cultural background, whether they will inherit the values of the Maya culture, and ultimately whether they will demonstrate Maya identity (Perez, 2009).

Earlier researchers had suggested that it was very uncertain whether Maya American children would inherit the Maya culture, identity, and language. For example, Peñalosa (1986) pointed out that the future of the Maya children in Los Angeles was doubtful because children were reluctant to learn the Mayan languages and instead preferred learning Spanish and English. On the other hand, however, Peñalosa (1986) also stated that some Maya children demonstrated great curiosity about their Maya heritage and they worried about losing their Maya language and identity.

Peñalosa's (1986) early claim is extremely useful because it gives insight into the difficult problem of preserving identity, culture, and languages. For instance, Batz (2010) states that children of immigrants of all backgrounds are facing difficulties in preserving parental language, culture, and identity in the United States. These challenges can be attributed to the educational system (Batz, 2010). Also, LeBaron (2016) states that Maya children face prejudice

from nonindigenous immigrant children who have learned from their parents to see Maya-indigenous culture and values as inferior. Also, economic poverty, language barriers, and the treatment they receive from other children contribute to a weak self-esteem and lack of pride in their heritage (LeBaron, 2016). While these findings are true, other researchers suggest that problems concerning the preservation of identity, culture, and languages offer new opportunities to respond and change our educational institutions. For example, Smith et al. (2018) believe that universities should require a minimum amount of Indigenous studies content. There should be a collaborative effort between students and the highest levels of university administration (Smith et al., 2018). To illustrate Smith et al.'s (2018) point of view, Maldonado and Shosted (2019) explain that over the past 10 years, professors and students at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign have been developing opportunities to preserve languages. The general goal of the professors and students of this university is to support educators and the school population to better understand Indigenous students and programs (Maldonado & Shosted, 2019). Maldonado and Shosted (2019) state that some of the students at The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign are of Q'anjob'al ethnic background and the university is opening up spaces to build support networks for the students to continue to use their language (Maldonado & Shosted, 2019).

These concerns led to research for appropriate theoretical theories. In order to find out the impact of colonization on Maya cultural identity and language loss, the post-colonial theory was used to try to answer the concerns regarding Maya American children. The ideas and methods of William G. Demmert and CBE, which applies to education that recognizes the importance of indigenous languages, culture, spirituality, and community participation, were applied to see how effective these practices are in helping Maya American students obtain greater confidence with

being of Maya heritage. Ultimately, can CBE support the social and academic success of Maya American children?

Theoretical Approach

A number of researchers have recently suggested that Indigenous studies have some fundamental problems. Historically, research studies of Indigenous peoples have been conducted by Western academics (Getty, 2010). According to Getty (2010), researchers have often examined Indigenous peoples' lives from a colonial perspective rather than recognizing their Indigenous worldviews, or ways of viewing life and the world around them. Therefore, Getty (2010) reports that Indigenous peoples have been demanding to have more control over and input into research about Indigenous peoples. Given these points, the post-colonial theory will inform research that is useful to the Maya American youth, research that will be respectful of their ways of being (Getty, 2010). Most Maya American children do not speak their parents' native languages anymore and some are ashamed of their own Maya culture. Therefore, the theoretical domain, post-colonial theory, was used to guide the research. According to Drabinski (2019), post-colonial theory deals with the effect of colonization on cultures and societies. This theory originated in the 1950s with the work of Frantz Fanon and is now applied widely to various fields (Drabinski, 2019). In addition to the post-colonial theory, this research applied the theoretical approach, ideas, and methods of William G. Demmert's CBE practices, which refer to education that recognizes the importance of indigenous languages, culture, spirituality, and community participation (Demmert & Towner, 2003). Furthermore, decolonization theories were investigated through literature review about the impact of colonization on Maya cultural identity and language loss and Maya American youth experiences in the United States while examining conflicting factors that influence the language loss among the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in The

United States (Light, 1995). As a final point, the results of the study aim to inform more effective strategies in educational leadership that will empower and celebrate Maya Indigenous identities and languages, rather than oppress them.

Post-Colonial Theory

A number of scholars have recently written about the history and definition of post-colonial theory. According to Ashcroft (2001), the effects of colonization started since European colonial powers occupied, or invaded a huge area of the globe from the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century (Ashcroft, 2001).

Proponents of post-colonial theory argue that post-colonial theory is a critical body of knowledge that questions the dominant ways through which the world is known and how this knowledge is defined (Iwowo, 2014). As the prominent writer Ashcroft (2017) puts it, post-colonial theory or post-colonial theory deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies and how these cultures have responded to the impacts of colonization. Also, Lynes (2012) states that post-colonial theory not only examines how cultures respond to oppression, but post-colonial research also examines various forms of resistance these practices have created, in particular, Indigenous inhabitants of colonized lands (Lynes, 2012). Similarly, Sherry (2012) stresses that post colonialism is a broad theoretical approach that studies the history and present impact of colonialism and racism on social, political, and economic systems. In other words, Sherry (2012) believes that post colonialism focuses on particular groups of people who because of their race or ethnicity have been excluded, marginalized, and represented in ways that degraded or even dehumanized them. Sherry (2012) also adds that post-colonial theorists not only examine the position of people who have been colonized, but also analyze the impact that

the process of colonialism has on those people who benefited from colonial acts such as dispossession, violence, and the promotion of racist ideology (Sherry, 2012).

Other prominent researchers such as Chavez (2009) point out that post-colonial theory or post colonialism is about looking into the processes of colonization and decolonization. Chavez (2009) affirms that post-colonial theory involves questions about how cultures create identities after colonization, about the subjugation of colonized peoples' knowledge and histories, about the use and misuse of knowledge about colonized peoples by Westerners, and about the creative ways in which colonized and formerly colonized peoples respond to their oppression.

Furthermore, according to Iwowo (2014), post-colonial theorists claim that the world has long been viewed through the one-sided ethnocentric lens of the colonizer and that this has led to the detriment and subsequent marginalization of the less significant world views of the colonized. Additionally, Iwowo (2014) claims that colonizers hold the systematic production and organization of Western knowledge in its show of ethnocentrism, which legitimized its privileged positioning as the mainstream. As a result, the colonizers created an uneven dichotomy in which other non-Western forms of knowledge were thrown in the sideline and that this imbalanced view of the world was due more to reasons of entrusted economic interests and political control than to unintentional oversight or ignorant omission (Iwowo, 2014).

Furthermore, Iwowo (2014) states that new lands were not only conquered and their wealth completely obtained, but the colonies were consequently connected to the West in governance, that resulted in unfair exchange and commercialization, which guaranteed that they remained economically dependent on the West for sustainability. Iwowo (2014) emphasizes that colonialism not only created structures that facilitated the removal of wealth from the colonies but it also established economic systems which guaranteed a reliance on the West for economic

life within the colonies. Such practices consequently impose Western supremacy not only politically but also economically, culturally and ideologically (Iwowo, 2014).

Lynes (2012) writes about some general forms of exploitation; Lynes (2012) refers to the following: (a) the extraction of raw and rare materials, such as gold, fur, fish, sugar, and so on; (b) the establishment of enclaves either to facilitate this extraction or, in some cases, for strategic military purposes, as with Guantánamo, the American naval base in Cuba; (c) as part of a process of judicial exile, as in the case of Australia; or (d) of religious refuge, as with the settlement of Pilgrims in America (Lynes, 2012). Lynes (2012) explains that these colonists were not the first to occupy the territories on which they arrived, which meant that the establishment of colonies inevitably also meant at least some form of displacement of the original inhabitants. In Lynes's (2012) point of view, displacement of Indigenous peoples by the colonizers included the following: genocide as in the periodic wholesale killing of native North and South Americans at various times by the British, French, Portuguese, and Spanish; enslavement and enforced labor as in the capturing of Africans for work on American and Caribbean plantations and in mines. Lynes (2012) emphasizes the general forms of exploitation, exclusion, suppression, and discrimination, supported by the various forms of political, economic, and religious systems introduced by the colonial authorities (Lynes, 2012). Sherry (2012) believes that these effects of colonialism on the human soul and mind have created specific mental pathologies and disorders.

According to Arukwe (2014), the decades of the 1960s and 1970s marked the era of decolonization in terms of stopping European expansionism and the advancement of self-determination by formerly colonized peoples. However, decades after were marked by growing neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism by European societies that were earlier colonialists (Arukwe, 2014). Arukwe (2014) explains that neo-imperialism previously called for

decolonization in terms of the reversal of European expansionism and the inauguration of self-determination for colonized peoples in political terms has virtually been overtaken by events as the focus appears to be on how to deal with the state of post-coloniality using post-colonial knowledge. Post-colonial knowledge relates to the intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to and analysis of the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism (Arukwe, 2014). Ashcroft and Kadhim (2001) believe that post-colonial theory started as the intellectual engagement with the consequences of colonization by the work of colonized writers as soon as they were forced into the colonial education system (Ashcroft, 2001). The study of the controlling power of representation in colonized societies began in the 1950s with the work of Frantz Fanon and reached a climax in the late 1970s with Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Ashcroft, 2017).

Frantz Fanon is one of the most important figures in the history of what is now known as post-colonial studies that examines the meaning and impacts of European colonialism across the world (Quinn, 2017). According to Quinn (2017), Fanon was born in the French colony of Martinique. He worked as a psychiatrist in Algeria, another French colony that saw brutal violence during its revolution against French rule (Quinn, 2017). Sherry (2012) states that while Fanon was growing up in Martinique, he started writing about his own experiences. According to Quinn (2017), Fanon's writing reports of the physical and psychological violence of colonialism forms the basis of a passionate, closely reasoned call to arms, a call for violent revolution. This idea would be incendiary today, but it was more so in its time (Quinn, 2017); Also, Sherry (2012) explains that in Fanon's writing, he examines the effect of racism on the choice of sexual partners by women of color, and discusses the effects of the Algerian war of independence. Fanon consistently emphasized the damaging effects of racism and colonialism on the self-image and psyche of both colonizers and colonized people (Sherry, 2012). However, he did not believe

that people of color were destined to experience the same dehumanization as previous generations. As Fanon (1991) comments in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “I am not the slave of the slavery that dehumanized my ancestors” (p. 230). As a result of Fanon’s experiences and condemnation of colonialism, he wrote his final book *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961 (Quinn, 2017).

Fanon's book helped to inspire liberation struggles across the globe (Quinn, 2017). The starting point of *The Wretched of the Earth* is violence (Quinn, 2017). Fanon argues that because colonialism is both created and sustained by violence, it can be destroyed only by violence (Quinn, 2017). According to Quinn (2017), *The Wretched of the Earth* was written to inspire a revolution and it attacks the central assumption of colonialism and that the colonized peoples are inferior to their colonizers. Quinn (2017) states that this idea might be based in direct racism. Thinking that white Europeans are superior to the native populations of other continents or, less directly, might be based on a belief that the colonized countries are less evolved or civilized than the colonizing powers (Quinn, 2017). Quinn (2017) affirms that *The Wretched of the Earth* makes a strong argument against both views. It denies the power of colonial experts to claim with full authority that colonized people are inferior and want or need colonialism (Quinn, 2017).

According to Sherry (2012), Fanon believed that colonialism was responsible for the creation of specific mental pathologies and disorders. Fanon believes that colonialism dehumanizes the colonized, who can reassert their true humanity only by violent action against the powers that dehumanize them (Quinn, 2017). Fanon was very concerned to show the effects of colonialism on the ways in which people from different countries, ethnicities, and cultures

interact and the way that stereotypes of the “negro” are a direct result of colonialism (Sherry, 2012).

Iwowo (2014) emphasizes that post-colonialism argues against ethnocentric assumptions that are not only rooted in colonial perspectives but also that they advance a Western worldview to the exclusion of non-Western views. These are ethnocentric assumptions supporting mainstream disciplines, which are fundamental in excluding the values and practices of other non-Western cultures (Iwowo, 2014).

There are other prominent proponents of post-colonial theory. Chavez (2009) acknowledges that other scholars such as Angelita Reyes mark the emergence of something called post-colonialism in the 19th century. Chavez (2009) believes that Frantz Fanon is sometimes credited for the earliest post-colonial writing in books such as his 1952 text, *Black Skin, White Mask*. Nevertheless, Chavez (2009) also recognizes scholar Edward Said's 1978 book, *Orientalism*, as the hallmark text in post-colonial theory. Other key figures in post-colonial theory include Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Albert Memmi, and Aime Cesaire (Chavez, 2009).

Some scholars recognize that *Orientalism* is the hallmark text in post-colonial theory. According to Ashcroft and Kadhim (2001), in a thesis called “Beginnings” by Said, he states that all cultural and theoretical movements have many beginnings rather than a single origin. In Said's book *Orientalism*, Said argued that the whole idea of ‘the Orient’ was thoroughly imposed by European notion (Ashcroft & Kadhim, 2001). Ashcroft and Kadhim (2001) argue that ‘the Orient’ did not stem from the diverse cultures found in Asia; rather, it is an ideology through which European countries demonstrated their dominance (Ashcroft & Kadhim, 2001). Ashcroft and Kadhim (2001) maintain that Said believed that the idea of the Orient was produced and managed by European countries in a way that reflected their political, social, economic, military,

ideological, and scientific power. Orientalism, therefore, places the West in a position of superiority over the Orient (Ashcroft & Kadhim, 2001).

Sherry (2012) states that Said emphasized that Orientalism not only justifies colonial acts after they have occurred, but also justifies colonization in advance. That is, according to Sherry (2012), it helps people in colonizing countries to develop an imperialist spirit and also promotes disrespect for the people in non-Western countries. Also, Sherry (2012) argues that some of the prejudices that Orientalism helps promote is the image of people from non-Western countries as childlike, irrational, depraved, and different, in contrast to the supposed Western traits of maturity, rationality, morality, and normality. For instance, Sherry (2012) states that Said compared the ways in which Islam is represented by the Orientalists as symbolizing terror, devastation, barbarians, and the demonic, whereas the West is seen as civilized, Christian, and originating.

Ultimately, Sherry (2012) believes that Said's work was extremely influential because it challenged the way many scholars had previously understood Asia and the Middle East. It emphasized their reliance on secondary texts rather than on the original sources in non-English languages, and questioned their authority, leading to an increased emphasis on the ways in which people in colonized countries understood and responded to the challenge of colonialism (Sherry, 2012).

Post-colonialism has nowadays become a popular and important theory for literature research (Wang, 2018). Culture is a key factor in defining this literary theory as well as an essential point to distinguish post-colonialism from its forefathers: imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism (Wang, 2018).

Criticisms of Post-Colonialism

While many writers agree and embrace the contribution of post-colonial theory and the significant impact it has had on academia, it has also been subject to criticism. According to Chavez (2009), some scholars have argued that post-colonial theory focuses too much on the West and its colonial impact while denying the colonial-style relations between, for example, Arabs and Africans. Other scholars have suggested that post-colonial theory overemphasizes the impacts of culture while denying or ignoring the relevance of economics (Chavez, 2009). On the one hand, Chavez (2009) states that post-colonial theories often center indigenous and mestizo/a culture as central to understanding the impacts of colonization. In addition, this focus has introduced the importance of religious conflict and translation to understanding the continual impacts of colonialism and imperialism (Chavez, 2009). Nevertheless, post-colonial criticism and theory have done much to illuminate the ways in which Western texts have created non-Western peoples and cultures (Prescott, 2007).

Contributions of Post-Colonial Theory

Several scholars celebrate the fact the many writers are embracing post-colonialism. According to Mishra (2015), the idea of post-colonialism indicates a break from the past, and a sign of the new (Mishra, 2015). Equally, in the words of Drabinski (2019), post-coloniality means embrace of the new.

Post-colonial theory challenges established disciplinary knowledge that has been created through the force of modernity and long histories of imperialism (Chavez, 2009). Post-colonial theories have had a significant impact on the lives of Natives of the Americas. For example, Prescott (2007) affirms that for the Negroes who live in the United States and in Central or Latin America, their problem is not fundamentally different from that of the Africans.

In the words of Iwowo (2014), it is understood that Western colonialism and non-Western resistance have very important implications for how we see and know the world. Iwowo (2014) explains that post-colonial theory condemns the universalizing tendency of Western knowledge as being the negative enduring legacy of an imperialist colonial empire, one that has continued to silence and marginalize non-Western subjectivities. Lastly, Iwowo (2014) indicates that Western intellectualism should not only recognize the legitimacy of other, non-Western world views but, more importantly, should be positioned as part and parcel of a plurality of knowledge rather than as mainstream (Iwowo, 2014).

Maintaining Indigenous Languages

For the last few years, there has been discussion about Indigenous languages disappearing. Broadly speaking, Indigenous language is any language particular to a certain area (Walsh, 2005). Walsh (2005) states that, on the one hand, anthropologists and linguists anticipate the demise of the majority of Indigenous languages within this century and have called on the need to arrest the loss of languages. On the other hand, opinions vary concerning the loss of language (Walsh, 2005). Some regard it as a hopeless cause, and others see language revitalization as a major responsibility of linguistics and kindred disciplines (Walsh, 2005). According to Krauss (1992), we can expect to lose half of the world's 6000 languages this century, and by the end of this century, most of the languages that are still spoken will be endangered (Krauss, 1992). Krauss is not alone on this claim. Also, according to Walsh (2005), Krauss is one of the most quoted by linguistics and linguistics call to preserve, and revitalize Indigenous languages (Walsh, 2005). Adding to Walsh's claim, Yoshioka (2010) states that in both Mexico and Guatemala, indigenous languages are at risk of extinction. Yoshioka (2010) explains that because languages influence people's ways of thinking and help them identify with

particular ethnic groups, indigenous language loss can result in severe problems that extend well beyond the demise of these languages. Yoshioka (2010) also states that although current multicultural reforms offer indigenous people unprecedented opportunities, these seemingly positive changes may actually threaten indigenous languages and cultures. The author believes that indigenous language maintenance will become more difficult because neoliberal multiculturalism endorses indigenous cultural rights without putting forth other necessary changes. Yoshioka (2010) explains that effective language preservation strategies require us to reorganize dangers hidden in the current multicultural agenda, to rigorously ask how we can destigmatize negative images attached to indigenous cultures, and to combat centuries-long oppression and discrimination (Yoshioka, 2010). Furthermore, Droogendyk and Wright (2017) call for social psychologists to increase their attention to issues of language and social justice, especially among Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples should be the main actors of linguistic power. Nichols (2006) points out the relationship between linguistic diversity and power. Nichols (2006) claims that linguistic diversity limits political power for indigenous communities (Nichols, 2006). The author states that we must reflect on the fact that of the 6000 or so languages spoken today, only 1.5% are officially recognized by nation-states. Of this 1.5%, only a small portion is recognized at the state level. Given that indigenous peoples are the bearers of the vast diversity of the world's languages, and given that official recognition of these languages is so rare, it seems important that indigenous peoples themselves should be central to thinking and acting on the issue (Nichols, 2006).

Indigenous peoples use different strategies to maintain languages. According to Walsh (2005), there is a considerable range of strategies for maintaining or revitalizing Indigenous

languages. Some attempts have been more successful than others (Walsh, 2005). Mesinas and Perez (2016) illustrate a study where a total of 15 parent-child dyads participated. Mesinas and Perez's (2016) study reveals the influence Zapotec parents have on their children in enabling them to remain connected to their Zapotec culture and identity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents. Adolescents responded to corresponding open-ended questions in a written survey (Mesinas & Perez, 2016). Results indicate that the children of parents who were the most involved in cultural groups and organizations were more likely to participate in traditional dance and music groups (Mesinas & Perez, 2016). The authors state that children of parents who identified as indigenous and encouraged Zapotec language use were more likely to also identify as indigenous and speak Zapotec.

Droogendyk and Wright (2017) contend that the knowledge and use of one's Indigenous language can facilitate the psychological conditions shown to underpin interest in participating in collective action. The authors' perspective highlights the fact that there may be unique predictors of collective action among Indigenous peoples. Droogendyk and Wright (2017) discuss the importance of these ideas in light of the reality of language loss in many Indigenous groups, and call for social psychologists to increase their attention to issues of language and social justice, especially among Indigenous peoples.

Post-Colonial and Multicultural Curriculum

The demographic of schools in America are rapidly changing. Olmedo (2004) states that there is a need for educators to develop multicultural curricula for the nation's schools. In an effort to get to know students and develop curricula, Olmedo (2004) embraces the experience of a group of teachers who have visited Mexico to learn about the knowledge of Mexican students. The teachers did field research in a state in Mexico with one of the largest migrations to Chicago

(Olmedo, 2004). So, Olmedo (2004) affirms that teachers' successes and their challenges of developing curricula go beyond the "heroes-and-holidays" approach to ethnic cultures and that consider issues such as transnationalism, illegal immigration, and racism (Olmedo, 2004). Culturally response schooling (CRS) for Indigenous students is needed. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) argue that although CRS for Indigenous youth has been advocated for over the past 40 years, schools and classrooms are failing to meet the needs of Indigenous students (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

For example, S. D. Garcia (2017) tells her story of when her 4th-grade son came home and asked for help with his homework. The assignment was a writing assignment regarding European arrivals to North America. The instruction said, "Imagine you are one of the explorers. Create your character. Decide your motives for sailing to the New World. Decide which European country you are sailing from. Are you a captain, a noble person, a merchant, a minister? Are you sailing alone or with your family?" Garcia writes that this made her angry and sad. S. D. Garcia (2017) states that the assignment asked to imagine what it would be like to participate in the genocides of Indigenous communities. Still, her son said, I love my teacher. According to S. D. Garcia (2017), this insidiousness curriculum forces children to navigate the political and emotional terrain of confronting their own while developing a love for learning and their teachers. Native children are forced to navigate a system that has endorsed the erasure of our communities (S. D. Garcia, 2017).

Maya, Post-Colonialism and Language

Mayan languages play important roles in Maya identities. According to Arriaza and Arias (1998), Mayan identities in Guatemala point out the important role of language in civil rights struggles. For example, Arriaza and Arias (1998) state that in the late 1970s, the Guatemalan

military dictatorship instituted a systematic attack on Mayan culture; roughly 440 small towns populated by Mayan peasants disappeared from the map in the early 1980s. However, Arriaza and Arias (1998) affirm that the persistent will for cultural and political space led to a revitalization of Mayan languages and culture in the 1990s. Also, Arriaza and Arias (1998) indicate that there is a relationship between language and racism that impacts the Maya communities in Guatemala. For example, Scull (2009) did a study that focused on Ladino (European-descent) perspectives of race-relations with indigenous groups (Mayan-descent) in Guatemala. Scull interviewed 13 Ladinos regarding their perceptions on the current social status of their indigenous counterparts, on social barriers, and the ways in which they socialize their children about race relations with Guatemala's indigenous groups (Scull, 2009). The author recruited participants from Cobán and El Quiché. Interviews were analyzed using grounded theory. According to Scull (2009), study participants suggested that they reject categorical racism and that government policies have been effective in establishing indigenous rights and mitigating social inequality. However, Scull (2009) found that most participants blamed indigenous cultural practices as the cause of their oppression, and some participants indicated a concern that Ladinos are losing political power (Scull, 2009).

Mayan languages have been around for thousands of year years. According to Pye (2013), Mayan languages have been in contact with Spanish for nearly 500 years and yet maintain much of their structural integrity. Pye (2013) points out that the arrival of bilingual schools and television has now altered the circumstance of language use within many Mayan households. Pye (2013) conducted a study on the comparison of children's and mothers' production of verb, existential, and negation constructions in Spanish and five Mayan languages, with a special focus on Mam. Pye (2013) states that Mayan children may have vocabularies with up to 20% Spanish-

derived lexemes and still not exhibit significant structural changes in their grammars (Pye, 2013). Pye (2013) explains that a two-year-old Mam child growing up with intense pressure to use Spanish exhibited changes to verb, existential, and negation constructions that were not evident in the language of other Mayan-speaking children. On another study on Mam (Maya Language), Collins (2010) explored the general relationship of language and culture via the notion of centeredness, which the author suggests is a recurring cultural value instantiated in how the Mam (Maya Language) conceive of the world, both practically and philosophically (Collins, 2010). The author looked at the constructed world of the Mam (and, more generally, the Maya), their homes and towns, and the metaphysical idea of being centered in life and in relationships with others. Collins (2010), suggested that centeredness serves as a formal grammatical theme in Mam, a basis and center stake from which deictic spatial notions are computed, and the author shows briefly how such a center is instantiated in the lexicon, the morphosyntax, and the discourse structure of Mam (Collins, 2010). The author concludes that language and culture are “interconstitutive, due to cultural practices (Collins, 2010).

The Mayan languages are revived through community-based programs. According to England (2003), Mayas are participating in a movement of cultural reaffirmation, a principal focus of which is language. Maya linguists are central in formulating and reshaping language ideologies to further the goals of revitalization, and they play a significant role in cultural or linguistic activism (England, 2003). The author states linguistics are having some successful attempts at reversing language loss that has arisen through an integrated community-based program of cultural revitalization that centers, to a large extent, on language and makes specific use of linguistics (England, 2003).

Maya knowledge and wisdom offer a true Maya education. According to A. P. Garcia Ixmata (2010), Maya knowledge and wisdom contend that imported religions and western-style education have helped obliterate much traditional Mayan wisdom and reduced Mayan beliefs to a kind of folklore. However, A. P. Garcia Ixmata (2010) mentions a project at the University of Rafael Landivar's Institute of Linguistics & Education. A. P. Garcia Ixmata (2010) explains that the project aims to provide the foundation for a truly Mayan education. That is, the education described, along with how the components of Maya knowledge is cultivated through dialogue, advice, discussion, guidance, and lived experience. The author states that Mayan values of respect, solidarity, responsibility, mutual assistance, trust, mission, spirituality, equality, humility, and respect for nature are transmitted to the community by relatives and spiritual guides (A. P. Garcia Ixmata, 2010). That author concludes that knowledge is aimed at positive action that results in living in peace, harmony, good health, the importance of using the Mayan language in knowledge production, and the use of the 260-day calendar that governs spiritual and material activities (A. P. Garcia Ixmata, 2010)

Mayan Language and Identity in the U.S.A.

Indigenous Maya people are new in the United States. According to Jenner and Konkell (2018), there exists little coverage in literature and media about the current state of education for Mayan immigrants in the U.S. and their U.S.-born children. The authors state that what is noticeable is that Many Mayan immigrants who come to the U.S. find that paths toward a high school or college degree are filled with roadblocks (Jenner & Konkell, 2018). LeBaron (2016) explains that Maya immigrants still typically arrive in the U.S. unable to read or write in their first language or in Spanish, or with very limited competency. Also, McDevitt (2016) states that one in four children under the age of six attending pre-school has at least one immigrant parent

and speaks a language other than English. The author affirms that this is why learning English as a second or third language is a challenge for many Maya American children, but some are able to progress quickly with English immersion or bilingual programs (Tienda & Haskins, 2011).

Fitting into the American culture is a challenge for Maya students. They feel uncomfortable fitting into a new culture (Jenner & Konkol, 2018). Jenner and Konkol (2018) state that in formal education, teachers may transfer the values and norms of the dominant culture, making sure that norms and rules are followed. Sometimes educators knowingly or unknowingly devalue minority cultural practices and minority ethnic identities (Jenner & Konkol, 2018). Consequently, some Maya children start exploring new identities such as American, Latino, or Hispanic (Jenner & Konkol, 2018). Also, LeBaron (2016) states that this is detrimental to Mayan children's success. Research has supported the notion that young people who value their ethnic culture and languages improve academic performance (LeBaron, 2016). Nonetheless, Batz (2014) states that in Los Angeles, California, where Maya children are confronted with pressure to adapt to an environment that is predominantly Latino/Hispanic, Maya children express their identity through the use of traditional dress, language, literature, and spirituality. That author states that these forms of expressing identity are challenged by Euro-American culture, which discriminates against these customs. Batz (2014) states that these conditions are more severe for Maya children, who face difficulties in maintaining their heritage as public education socializes them into the U.S. culture and history. Nonetheless, Batz (2014) concludes that the Maya children in Los Angeles are recovering their identity and culture through music, spirituality, literature, and language, resisting imposed identities and reaffirming their Maya roots. Also, according to Hiller et al. (2009), some of the first and second-generation Maya immigrants living in South Florida resist a public mis-categorization of being part of the

Hispanic community by emphasizing their indigenous heritage. Hiller et al. (2009) share the stories of Maya immigrants who explain the struggles Indigenous immigrants face in the United States as they resist the erasure of their identity. Also, LeBaron (2012) claims that the Maya bring with them memories of being oppressed by dominant Hispanic groups in their homelands, and sometimes they hide Indian identity. LeBaron's (2012) study is based on his interaction over a 10-year period with several hundred Maya around the United States who had maintained Maya identity and rejected Latinidad. LeBaron (2012) argues for a more in-depth discussion about the definition of Latinidad as it applies to indigenous groups, in particular as a prerequisite to questioning whether individuals should be categorized as Latino, regardless of their desire to self-define as Maya, rather than Latino.

There exists more than one way to preserve Maya identity in the United States. Even though some parents are teaching their children the Mayan language they speak at home, Menjívar (2002) and Batz (2010) argue that Mayan languages are not the only way to express identity. Some Maya people express identity through the use of traje (Maya clothing), language, literature, and spirituality (Batz, 2010). According to Batz (2014), some Maya children in Los Angeles are recovering their identity and culture through music, religion, literature, language, and are resisting imposed identities by reaffirming their Maya roots.

Music plays an important role in the Maya identity of the Maya community. One of the musical instruments of the Maya is the Marimba, a native instrument that consists of three long tables with wooden keyboards and sound boxes (Clark, 2017). Also, according to Clark (2017), the Marimba is more than just an entertainment for the Maya communities. Also, Clark (2017) states that the Marimba is a living being, its significance goes beyond the sounds it produces. Clark (2017) explains that for the Q'anjobales, the Marimba speaks to its listeners in the natural

order of the universe and Mother Earth. Some of the Maya American children embrace this type of Maya music. Whether they will continue to embrace the Marimba music remains to be seen (Clark, 2017).

Although Maya people express identity through music in the United States, Maya identity is still non-existent in many public spaces and institutions (Batz, 2014). Since Mayas are not recognized as Mayas, but rather Latinos, their pride, and self-esteem are diminished (Batz, 2014). Public and private institutions should appreciate the cultural and language background of indigenous students (Batz, 2014).

The hope of the Maya community in the United States is the Maya American children. In Los Angeles, second-generation Mayas bridge their family stories and the political insights gained from their participation in other forms of social justice organizing to create a mobile archive of indigeneity (F. B. Lopez, 2017). Furthermore, F. B. Lopez (2017) states that Maya American scholars are now attempting to build a community of U.S. Central American scholars and provide an alternative framework for the analysis of Latino studies to include diverse voices, especially those of Indigenous people.

Current U.S. Indigenous Curriculum K-12

Maya children attend U.S. public schools. According to Jones (2018), in California, for at least 50 years, children have spent time during 4th grade learning the states' history, with focus on the Spanish missions the 21 outposts established by Father Junipero Serra, soldiers and settler in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Students created missions out of sugar cubes and popsicle sticks visited missions and sometimes learned a version of the mission story that emphasized the Spanish perspective rather than that of native people (Jones, 2018). S. D. Garcia (2017) states

that this kind of curriculum forced Native children to navigate a system that has endorsed the erasure of native communities (S. D. Garcia, 2017).

Educators and public-school administrators are starting to introduce post-colonial terms in education. According to S. D. Garcia (2017), in 2017 educators started to use terms like culturally relevant curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Also, S. D. Garcia (2017) states that in July 2013, Oregon Department of Education created the American Indian Alaska Native Advisory Panel as an effort to review and revise the American Indian /Alaska Native (AI/AN) Education State Plan adopted by the Board in 2006 (S. D. Garcia, 2017). Consequently, the AI/AN Advisory Panel finalized the AI/AN Education State Plan and on April 9, 20015, the Oregon State School's Endorsed its implementation (S. D. Garcia, 2017). S. D. Garcia (2017) gives another example of how American Indian curriculum has been slowly changing. S. D. Garcia (2017) states that they have the curriculum of the Grand Ronde Tribal History Curriculum. The author states that The Grand Ronde Tribal History Curriculum Unit was an endeavor that involved the Education Department, Tribal Library, Land and Culture Department, Public Affairs and various Tribal staff members. The 15 lessons included in the curriculum are: Pre-termination time period (Time immemorial to 1855); Pre-termination (1855-Removal of Tribes to Reservation Life); Five Principal Tribes, Laws and Treaties, Housing, Transportation, Fishing and Hunting, Stories and Oral History, Plants, Basketry/Gathering, Clothing, Language, Termination, Restoration, and Sovereignty, and Tribal Government today (S. D. Garcia, 2017).

California updated its history-social studies framework. According to Jones (2018), in 2016, the mission chapter was broadened to include more information about Native Californians, how they lived before colonization and how they were affected by the arrival of settlers. Jones

(2018) states that missions are taught as sites of conflict, conquest, and forced labor. Jones (2018) states that California standards state that even though missionaries brought agriculture, the Spanish language, culture, and Christianity to the native population, American Indians suffered in many California missions.

Culturally-Based Education: Promoting Academic Success and the General Well-Being of Native Students

There are hundreds of thousands of Maya American youth attending American schools, and among these children are the Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group. This research in addition to the theory of post-colonialism applied William G. Demmert's theoretical approach and CBE methods, which applies to education that recognizes the importance of indigenous languages, culture, spirituality, and community participation (Demmert & Towner, 2003).

According to Demmert (2011), the education of Native children continues to be an issue because of the ongoing failure of schools and education policymakers by not responding to the educational needs of students. In other words, Demmert (2011) states that such failures are demonstrated with "the evidence by high dropout rates, low academic achievement rates, a lack of university graduates, a low number of professionals within the different Native American communities, and the challenging quality of life in many tribal groups and communities" (p. 255).

Demmert and Towner (2003) emphasize that there is a widespread firm belief among Native American communities and among professional Native educators that meaningful educational experiences require an appropriate language and cultural context (Demmert & Towner, 2003). From Demmert and Towner's (2003) point of view, language and cultural context support the traditions, knowledge, and languages of the community as a starting place for learning new knowledge.

What is Culturally-Based Education?

To understand the pedagogy associated with teaching in a CBE setting for Native American students there must be a basic understanding of what that includes. Demmert (2011) states that, first and foremost, is the recognition that CBE programs will not be all the same and may vary for different Indigenous student groups that schools serve. Second, assessment tools have to be developed in order to accurately measure the levels of a school's CBE program that reflects the priorities of the students. Third, assessment tools must be developed that are linguistically as well as culturally appropriate, and that meet the academic priorities and needs of the community.

Demmert (2011) affirms that the issues of culture, language, cognition, community and socialization are central to learning. The primary socialization of infants and young children are accomplished through joint meaningful activity with guidance by more accomplished participants, mainly through language exchanges or other semiotic processes (Demmert, 2011).

According to the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), CBE grounds high-quality instructional practices in culturally and linguistically relevant contexts. The NIEA (2008) states that CBE is more than teaching language and culture as special projects. CBE is a systematic approach that fully incorporates and integrates specific cultural ways of thinking, learning, and problem-solving into educational practice. These approaches recognize and utilize Native languages as a first or second language that incorporate traditional cultural characteristics and they involve teaching strategies that are harmonious with the Native culture (NIEA, 2008). Furthermore, Singh and Espinoza-Herold (2014) state that culture-based education has been positively related to students' socio-emotional well-being, civic engagement, school motivation and higher academic outcomes.

Historical Overview

One of the pioneers of CBE is William G. Demmert. According to Gilbert (2011), William G. Demmert (Tlingit/Ogala Lakota) spent his life working to improve the education of Indigenous students. Demmert was born in Klawock, Alaska, in 1934 and began his formal schooling in a Bureau of Indian Affairs school in Sitka, Alaska in 1940, he obtained a B.A. in Education from Seattle Pacific College, a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from the University of Alaska in 1968, and a Doctor of Education degree from Harvard in 1973.

Gilbert (2011) highlights a few of Demmert's accomplishments. What is important to highlight is the accomplishment that led to Demmert's contribution to CBE. As Deputy Commissioner of Education in the U.S. Department of Education from 1975 to 1976, Demmert implemented The Indian Education Act of 1972 (Gilbert, 2011). He then served as Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Indian Education Programs from 1976 to 1978. Demmert went on to become Alaska's Commissioner of Education from 1987 to 1990 and subsequently co-chair of U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos' Indian Nations at Risk Task Force (Gilbert, 2011).

The essence of Demmert and Towner's (2003) work on CBE came from his own experience. Demmert and Towner (2003) remember that in his early years of teaching, during the 1960s, many of the schools serving American Indians and Alaska Natives were failing the Native communities. In making this comment, Reyhner (1991) also expresses his own experience. Reyhner (1991) states that while he was teaching a bilingual education class on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, he asked his students: Why are Indian students not doing well in school? The students' responses and the observations from Native American teachers and aides reminded him of the results of the Comprehensive Navajo Dropout Study which found that the most

common reason Navajo students for dropping out of school was boredom (Reyhner, 1991).

Reyhner (1991) states that many Indian students do not see the education they are receiving as being meaningful to their lives. Reyhner (1991) also believes that the problem is not that they are failing to learn the "basics" but they do not see the application of the things they learn in school to their lives outside of school. In fact, Reyhner (1991) states, their education often demands that they give up the Indigenous culture and stop being Indian.

These findings are important because this research highlights the common root causes of Indigenous students' low performance in schools. Demanding that Indigenous students have been forced to give up their Native identity since the arrival of Europeans. For instance, in 1880, in an attempt to Americanize the American Indian, government officials in Washington issued regulations that enforced all instruction in English in both mission and government schools (Reyhner, 1991). To illustrate this practice, Reyhner (1991) points out the testimony of a Native student at Carlisle Indian School. According to Reyhner (1991), a Sioux teacher educated at Carlisle Indian School, Luther Standing Bear, found that the English-only education mandated by the government was inadequate. The Sioux teacher felt that:

The Indian children should have been taught how to translate the Sioux tongue into English properly; but the English teachers only taught them the English language, like a bunch of parrots. While they could read all the words placed before them, they did not know the proper use of them; their meaning was a puzzle. (Reyhner, 1991, p. 239)

In the late nineteenth century, government officials thought they could solve the Indian problem in a few years by forcefully taking Indian students from their parents and giving them an all-English education (Reyhner, 1991). This policy of forced assimilation with English-only instruction did not accomplish the rapid assimilation that was confidently predicted at the time.

The United States has long established a pattern of action toward the Native Americans. For instance, in 1802, 1819, and 1823, the government enacted three policies oppressing the sovereignty of American Indians (S. D. Garcia, 2017). S. D. Garcia (2017) states that in 1802, Congress passed a law authorizing \$15,000 per annum to promote civilization among Natives. Furthermore, S. D. Garcia (2017) states that in 1819, the US government gave money to churches to teach Natives how to be culturally White. Four years later, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823) that tribal sovereignty was diminished based on European rights of discovery (S. D. Garcia, 2017). These three policies worked to eradicate Native ideologies, values, and languages (S. D. Garcia 2017). Indeed, according to Meza (2015), American Indian policy undermined native culture by forcing Native Americans to assimilate into the European-American lifestyle, and Native children were taken away from their families at a young age to off-reservation Indian boarding schools (Meza, 2015). Meza (2015) states:

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man. (p. 354)

The goal of education policies for Indian children, besides teaching how to read, write, and speak English was to civilize, assimilate, teach individual identity as opposed to tribal identity, and teach them Christianity (Meza, 2015). Boarding schools were maintained away from reservations, which meant that Indian children were taken away from their families, homelands, and tribes (Meza, 2015). This strategy was practiced as an attempt “to kill the Indian, to save the child by taking them from their families and communities and teach them to not be savage so they could fit into mainstream society as civilized beings” (Meza, 2015, p. 355). The experiences of Natives

in North America are similar to the experiences of the Natives in Latin America, especially the Mayas, in Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico.

Natives in Guatemala

From the beginning, colonial rules were established in Guatemala. For instance, Richards and Richards (1997) state that official crown policies were established to Castilianize (the dialect of Spanish spoken in Castile, which is standard Spanish) the Indians and convert them to Christianity (Richards, 1997). According to Richards and Richards (1997), in June of 1550, the crown ordered the Dominican and Franciscan friars to catechize the Indians in Spanish. Richards and Richards (1997) also state that in 1646, all Indians must learn Spanish and that the courts must not allow speech in any other language but Spanish. If the Indians learned Spanish, only then would Indians be extended the privilege to wear Spanish dress.

According to Richards and Richards (1997), after Guatemala obtained independence from Spain in 1821, the Guatemalan Republic explicitly continued to promote a Castilianization policy that called for the eradication of all Indigenous languages:

The Constituent Congress of the State of Guatemala, considering that it ought to have one national language, while those Mayan languages still used by Indians are so diverse, incomplete, and imperfect, and are not sufficient for enlightening the Maya people of perfecting the civilization, does decree and declare that: The Parish priest, in agreement with the municipalities of the people, should, through the most expedient, prudent, and efficient means, extinguish the languages of the Indians. (p. 195)

Other Guatemalan post-colonial governments continued to call for Castilianization of the Indians to integrate the Indians.

Nonetheless, this research shows that the Castilianization program stopped in the late 19th Century. L. E. López (2014) states that Cultural Bilingual Education did not come from the government. In the early 20th Century, United States missionaries conducted bilingual literacy experiments with adults who spoke Kaqchikel (L. E. López, 2014). L. E. López (2014) writes that in 1980, a pilot bilingual education project started with the support from The United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The program began with 40 schools and four years later it was institutionalized as a national program (L. E. López, 2014).

Natives in Belize

The Maya people in Belize have a similar story as that of the Maya in Guatemala and Mexico. Eleazar (2013) states that the Maya people in Belize were dispossessed of their lands and forced to work in cocoa plantations and other parts of the colonial economy. Consequently, Eleazar (2013) affirms that millions of Maya people are still striving, living and surviving among the harshness of these contemporary days in Belize, Mexico, and Guatemala.

Belize inherited its educational system from the British (Gregory, 2017). According to Gregory (2017), Belize has one of the lowest educational achievements in the region and the roots of the current educational problems lie in the unique history of the nation based on the perpetuation of policies against the Maya enacted by the British, the subsequent and on-going colonization efforts via schools, and the lack of education via the Maya languages. Furthermore, Gregory (2017) explains that the history of Belize begins with disinterest by the British in developing this area as a colony and its lack of acknowledgment of the Maya as Indigenous people (Gregory, 2017). In making this comment, Gregory (2017) argues that the disinterest allowed the colonization via Christian controlled schools disenfranchised women and the Maya, and disenfranchisement of women is a possible factor in the on-going poverty of the Maya. The

antagonistic British policies include built-in economic disadvantages for the Maya who were forced to become landless laborers (Gregory, 2017).

Natives in Chiapas

In the case of the Mayas in Chiapas, Mexico, Rockwell (2005) reports that in the early 16th Century, Catholic missionaries destroyed all pre-Hispanic books that contained Maya religious and cultural practices (Rockwell, 2005). The colonizers took the land and made the Maya slaves.

The first Bishop of Chiapas spoke out about the mistreatment of the indigenous peoples. Rockwell (2005) narrates that the first Bishop asked how anyone would accept the God of a people who bring death. Four hundred years later, that role has been assumed by the Bishop of Chiapas, Don Samuel Ruiz (Rockwell, 2005). However, according to Rockwell (2005), the Vatican tried to remove this troublesome Bishop, Samuel Ruiz. Nonetheless, because of his voice of conscious and outspoken voice for change, the parishioners rallied around him. Don Samuel Ruiz believes that the rebellion in Chiapas is not driven by ideology (Ruiz, 1994).

Definitions of Culturally-Based Education Interventions

There are three major theories underlying CBE interventions (Demmert & Towner, 2003). These are: cultural compatibility theory, cognitive theory, and cultural-historical-activity theory (CHAT; Demmert & Towner, 2003).

According to Demmert and Towner (2003), cultural compatibility is the most frequently encountered framework when it comes to presenting studies about CBE. It is, however, according to Demmert and Towner (2003), “a simple descriptive framework, in contrast to cognitive theory and CHAT, each of which contains sets of accepted principles with wide connections to other phenomena, disciplines, and domains of inquiry” (p. 7). These three major

theoretical approaches to CBE, in Demmert and Towner's (2003) view can well be considered as increasingly elaborate restatements for the concept of congruence. Still, cognitive theorists who have worked in education make no distinction between types of sources of knowledge (Demmert & Towner, 2003).

Demmert and Towner (2003) state that only at this point does CHAT diverge from cognitive theory. CHAT is primarily a theory of development. Cultural activities among members, primarily through semiotic processes, create internalizations of knowledge, values, and cognitive routines (Demmert & Towner, 2003). But all three theories presumably would agree that the basis of education is best built on the experience, values, and knowledge of the students and their families, both personal and community-based (Demmert & Towner, 2003). Indeed, this research shows the different attempts to eliminate the Indian. In Meza's (2015) view, "kill the Indian, save the child by taking Indian children from their families and communities and teaching them how not to be savage so they could fit into mainstream society as civilized beings" (p. 355).

Culturally Based Education as an Alternative Approach

The concept of culture-based education emerged as an alternative approach to Western and colonial educational approach along with the collapse of colonial powers of Europe (Singh & Espinoza-Herold, 2014). Singh and Espinoza-Herold (2014) explain that educational researchers have used many terms over the past century to denote culture-based education: Culturally responsive, culturally respectful, culture-sensitive, culturally rooted, culturally relevant, and culturally congruent. According to Singh and Espinoza-Herold (2014), the use of different terms by different researchers in Culture-Based Education all have the basic premise of

respect for multi-ethnic diverse knowledge systems, skills, and the incorporation socio-cultural diversity in educational practices.

The challenges that Indigenous and multiethnic students face go well beyond the classroom walls (Gilbert, 2011). For instance, according to Gilbert (2011), in the U.S., unemployment among Native people is three times the national average, gang activity is prevalent and incarceration rates are high. In Gilbert's (2011) view, this social and economic dilemma is a result of the destruction of Indigenous families and communities brought by colonial policies that marginalize and devalue Indigenous peoples and promote culturally-assimilationist policies, assisted by the processes of schooling (Gilbert, 2011). Furthermore, Gilbert (2011) makes a similar concern by stating that "When the current educational system ignores American Indian students' own traditional teachings nurtured in the home and within the local community, the educational system has lost a valuable educational tool to augment the existing curriculum" (Gilbert, 2011, p. 43).

Maya Students in United States Schools

Maya students seek a sense of belonging. According to DeNicolò (2019), school belonging refers to a students' sense of being a valued member of a community of learners within the school context where they have access to support (DeNicolò, 2019).

In the United States, bilingual education classrooms can often be sites of belonging and security for students learning English in school (DeNicolò, 2019). While not all school districts provide bilingual education, according to DeNicolò (2019), when it is offered, it may be the only option for emergent bilinguals to receive instruction in their home language. Maya students may live in homes where two or more languages are spoken (i.e. Q'anjob'al, Spanish and/or English) (DeNicolò, 2019). Language is very important for the maintenance of Mayan culture and

perspectives (Batz, 2010). England (2003) states that language is widely considered to be the single most important symbol of Mayan identity (England, 2003). A key educational dilemma that indigenous Latinx students face in U.S. schools is the lack of knowledge that school personnel possess regarding indigenous and/or Mayan communities (DeNicolo, 2019). Their respective Latinx and Latinx indigenous students could be identified as emergent bilinguals or English learners through home language surveys and English language proficiency assessments (DeNicolo, 2019). It is highly possible that school staff will assume that their only home language is Spanish (DeNicolo, 2019).

Understanding Pedagogy and Curriculum

Demmert (2011) emphasizes that a child's education must include social, emotional, and ethical competencies as well as academic priorities. Demmert (2011) affirms that a growing number of schools serving indigenous communities agree with these premises conceptually. The task as we envision it is to accomplish this in a culturally compatible and supportive environment (Demmert, 2011).

Demmert (2011), along with a group of like-minded schools and professionals from different institutions, developed a set of CBE rubrics to help define what one might strive for in a CBE program. Demmert (2011) writes that this set of rubrics was designed specifically for the tribal and community groups in his consortium; he believes they have implications for a broader selection of schools interested in developing a CBE curriculum. He identified three types of schools: (a) Generic, designed to meet the academic needs of students without regard to the multicultural or ethnic mix of students, (b) Multicultural designed to meet the cultural as well as academic needs of the different student racial or ethnic groups served by a school or system, and (c) Culture-specific, designed to meet the needs of a specific cultural or ethnic group of students.

According to Demmert (2011), the CBE rubrics have five categories, each with levels of CBE called indicators which are a general definition of CBE rubric levels and a set of exemplars for each indicator. These rubrics include:

- Culturally-based indigenous language use
- Culturally-based pedagogy
- Culturally-based curriculum
- Culturally-based patterns of participation in leadership and decision-making
- Culturally-based methods of assessing student performance. (p. 3)

The four different levels (indicators) for each of the rubrics listed above from low to high are: (a) not present, (b) emerging (indicators), (c) developing (indicators), and (d) enacting (indicators) (Demmert, 2011).

Crede Principles for Effective Teaching

According to Demmert (2011), the following principles have five implementation levels. Each level assesses how well the principles implement and include the following:

- Teachers and students working together. Joint productive activity.
- Development of language and literacy across the curriculum.
- Development of the languages of instruction and the content areas are the meta-goal of all instruction.
- Connecting lessons to students' lives. Contextualize teaching and curriculum in students' existing experiences at home, community, and school.
- Engaging students with challenging lessons. Maintain challenging standards for student performance; design activities to advance understanding to more complex levels.

- Emphasizing dialogue over lectures. Instruct through teacher-student dialogue, especially academic, goal-directed, small-group conversations (known as instructional conversations), rather than lecture.
- Learning through observation. Providing demonstration or models of requested performance.
- Encouraging student decision making. Involving students in the choice or design of instructional activities. (pp. 3-4)

The five different levels for assessing the implementation of these seven principles from low to high are: (a) not observed, (b) emerging, (c) developing, (d) enacting, and (e) integrating (Demmert, 2011).

According to Demmert (2011), The Indigenous Cultural (Socio-Psych) Wellbeing Continuum Rubrics have five levels of measurement and include:

- Strong, positive indigenous identity and active involvement in cultural community;
- Active and practical traditional spirituality.
- Understands and demonstrates responsibility to family, community, and broader society.
- Shows continuing development of cognitive and intellectual skills.
- Knows, understands, respects, and applies kinesthetic activity for physical development. (p. 4)

The four different levels (indicators) for each of the rubrics listed above from low to high are as follows: (a) not present, (b) emerging indicators, (c) developing indicators, and (d) enacting indicators. It takes 3–5 years to develop oral proficiency for limited English proficient (LEP) students and it can take 4–12 years to develop academic English proficiency. Also, moving from

a Native language to English or French has been shown to affect a Native student's self-esteem if done before the first language has been well established (Demmert, 2011).

Culturally-Based Education Models

According to Gilbert (2011), CBE may be successfully integrated into the classroom in a manner that would provide Native students with instructions in core subject areas based on Indigenous students' cultural values and knowledge. Gilbert (2011) states that math, reading, language arts, history, science, physical education, music, cultural arts and other subjects may be taught in curricula instilled in Native traditional and cultural concepts and knowledge. To illustrate Gilbert's view, this research applied the Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education theoretical model (Reyhner et al., 2011).

According to Kana'iaupuni et al. (2010), The Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education (HCIE) study explored the kinds of teaching strategies being used in Hawaii classrooms, and investigated the impact of teachers' use of CBE on student socioemotional development and educational outcomes (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010). Kana'iaupuni et al. (2010) state that based on the existing literature, researchers expected that cultural relevance in education would have direct effects on student socioemotional factors such as self-worth, cultural identity, and community/family relationships, as well as direct and indirect effects on educational outcomes such as student engagement, achievement, and behavior.

According to Kana'iaupuni et al. (2010), the focus of this study was to create a model and definition for understanding the relationships between CBE and student outcomes. Based on this framework, this study explored the use of CBE by teachers in diverse educational settings (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010). The project linked this information on the use of Culturally-Based

Instructional practices to students' reported socioemotional development and academic outcomes in reading and math (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010).

In general, according to Kana'iaupuni et al. (2010), the HCIE study adds to an understanding of Culture-Based Education with a definition of CBE from a Hawaiian perspective, a theoretical model of what it looks like in the classroom, and a set of rich, quantitative data that can be used to examine various questions about schools, teachers, parents, and students.

Kana'iaupuni et al. (2010) state that the findings to date offer fresh insights regarding culture-based education, where it is implemented, who implements it, and how its implementation is related to socioemotional and academic student outcomes.

Furthermore, Kana'iaupuni et al. (2010) report that the data help debunk some myths associated with culture-based education such as the following:

The use of CBE is limited to only "Hawaiian teachers" or "Hawaiian schools", CBE is radically different from conventional best practices or there is no added value of CBE to educational outcomes. In fact, the data support the hypothesis that cultural approaches strongly enhance relevance and relationships at school, while also supporting positive academic outcomes. (p. 17)

In addition to enhanced socioemotional outcomes, multilevel analyses consistently point towards positive relationships between CBE and student math and reading test scores (Kana'iaupuni, et al., 2010).

Culturally-Based Education and Academic Achievement

To mention a few Natives' academic success, educators, and policymakers in Hawaii are exploring nontraditional school types such as charter schools and Hawaiian Language and

Culture-Based (HLCB) schools to address achievement differentials among students (Takayama, 2008).

Recently, Takayama (2008) examined student data across three school types (conventional public schools, Western-focused charters, and HLCB) and at three grade levels (5, 7, and 10). Takayama's (2008) findings show that the mean scores for reading and mathematics are not significantly different in most cases between conventional public schools and HLCB schools. However, according to Takayama (2008), in lower level grades students score significantly higher in conventional public schools; in higher level grades, there are no significant differences in means or HLCB students outperform their peers. Among both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian students, mean scores are the highest in Western-focused charter schools (Takayama, 2008). Also, Takayama (2008) states that when proficiency statuses are examined under the No Child Left Behind Act, a significantly higher percentage of students in HLCB schools move out of the lowest proficiency level (the Well Below status) than in conventional public schools (Takayama, 2008).

In addition to Takayama's (2008) finding, Hawaiian immersion programs, including Aha Punana Leo, have yielded significant academic benefits (NIEA, 2008). According to the NIEA, immersion students have received prestigious scholarships, enrolled in college courses while still in high school, and have passed the state university's English composition assessments despite receiving the majority of their English, science, and mathematics instruction in Hawaiian (NIEA, 2008). Furthermore, the NIEA (2008) states that student achievement on standardized tests has equaled, and in some cases, surpassed that of Native Hawaiian children enrolled in English-medium schools, even in English language arts. Hence, Hawaiian immersion has

achieved the program founders' goals of strengthening Native Hawaiian Maui, self-determination, and ethnic pride (NIEA, 2008).

Major Issues and Challenges

In March 2005, Demmert et al. (2006) addressed a special workshop titled, "Improving Academic Performance among American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Students" (Demmert et al., 2006). According to Demmert et al. (2006), the major issues, challenges, and solutions that ran through the entire meeting in Santa Fe were:

First, how Native American students are viewed and how they view themselves in the classroom, the community, and society. This is crucial if we are to keep students in school, and constructively engage them from Kindergarten through High School graduation. Second, capacity building at all levels is a challenge that continues to plague education systems and schools that educate Native American students. Third, we must quickly translate research findings into practices that enable teachers to use current knowledge to alter the academic lives of Native American students. (p. 78)

In the face of globalization, according to Demmert et al. (2006), "pluralism or multi-cultural approaches may be necessary for schools with representatives from different communities in attendance, and should be a consideration for all educators" (p. 85). Demmert et al. (2006) affirm that stakeholders such as "teachers, administrators, aides, and researchers must confront racism and stereotypes, training students of all cultures to bridge between communities and cultures, to be bi- or multicultural" (p. 85).

Conclusion

After careful literature analysis, most of the authors agree that post-colonialism has a negative effect on Indigenous peoples, especially on Indigenous Maya children of the 21st

Century. These groups of authors take different approaches on how to combat post-colonialism, but in general, they agree that language is a major consideration. Also, they believe that to provide successful learning experiences for American Indian students and or Maya American students, the educational institution must offer a culturally relevant curriculum for Indigenous students. Based on the literature review, Maya children, specifically, face huge challenges. Most Maya American children have not developed self-identity, nor have they developed self-esteem or Maya cultural pride. Demmert (2011) concludes by stating that the coalition on Indigenous Language and Culture-Based Education believes that the following are necessary in order to promote successful schools and schooling for Native American students: The expansion of traditional family networks, parents, community leaders, school administrators, staff, teachers, and student focus on improving academic performance and well-being.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter involves the rationale and methodology framework that were used for this study. The method consisted of the process of gathering data and developing rapport with the participants. The chapter discusses how access was obtained to the participants and the use of the phenomenological approach to describe their experiences. Also, there is an explanation of the analysis procedure, researcher's subjectivity, and researcher's role.

The researcher has been very involved with different Maya communities in the United States since 2003. For instance, in 2007, the researcher had the opportunity to visit the Maya Q'anjob'al community in Alamosa, Colorado. The itinerary included visiting the local schools where the Maya Q'anjob'al children attended. In the end, the researcher had the privilege to visit a local elementary, middle, and high school, including Adams State College. The researcher started the day visiting the elementary school. The school administrator asked the teachers to bring their Maya Q'anjob'al children to a big classroom for the researcher's presentation. There were about 40-50 children. The researcher started the presentation by introducing himself and by giving his background. After the introduction, the researcher asked the children to tell him what they knew about the Maya people. They did not say anything and did not seem to be engaged. So, the researcher changed his strategy. The researcher started talking in his native Q'anjob'al language. Then he asked if any of the children in the room understood what he had said. The room went silent for about 40 seconds. Then one little brave soul raised his hand stating that he understood what the researcher had said; then another student raised his hand, then two, three hands went up, and so on until all the children in the room raised their hands. This was an awakening experience for the researcher. Although he did not ask the children why they

hesitated to respond, the researcher suspected that the children did not want to be singled out as Maya.

On that same day, the researcher went to the local high school in the same town. When he arrived at the high school, he was told to visit the “Chapin Club” during lunchtime. “Chapin” is a nickname for Guatemalans. To his surprise, the club members were all Maya Q’anjob’als; but their meetings were in English. The researcher wanted to engage the Chapin Club members in Q’anjob’al, but they did not seem to be comfortable speaking in Q’anjob’al. Therefore, he carried on in English.

The researcher had a similar experience in Canton, Georgia. Dr. Alan LeBaron, Professor of Latin American History at Kennesaw State University coordinated the visit with the Assistant Principal at a local high school where the Maya children attended. The School Principal asked all the Latino students to come to the auditorium to listen to the researcher’s presentation. The presentation was about the importance of staying in school, getting good grades, and then applying to college. But, what was unique about the presentation was that the researcher told the students his story as a Maya Q’anjob’al. He introduced himself in his Maya Native Q’anjob’al language and spoke about his struggles with learning English as a third language. The Latino kids were very quiet and impressed. Then the researcher asked if anybody in the room was of Maya descent and if they understood what he said in Q’anjob’al. No single hand went up. At the end of the presentation, about 10 kids lined up to see the researcher and asked for his autograph. The high school kids told him that their parents also speak Q’anjob’al. Next, the researcher asked if the kids spoke Q’anjob’al or if they understood what he had said in Q’anjob’al. The kids ignored his question. Instead, one of them asked if the researcher wanted to visit their local church and speak to the congregants about his Maya identity, language, culture, and speak about

his upbringing as Maya Q'anjob'al in Guatemala. The researcher accepted the invitation; that is another story. After speaking to the kids in Alamosa, Colorado and in Canton, Georgia, the researcher concluded that none of the kids wanted to be singled out as Maya Native Q'anjob'al.

These two experiences mentioned above marked the turning point of the researcher's thinking. To this day, he still visits different Maya communities in different places. He still visits Maya Communities in Colorado, Georgia, Washington, Oregon, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, Arizona, California, et cetera. On the international level, the researcher has visited the Maya Communities in Toledo, Belize, and in Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

The researcher has lost contact with some of the children he met 10 or 15 years ago. However, he wonders if today they can speak the Maya Q'anjob'al language. Also, he wonders if they are proud of their Maya ancestry. He wonders how many of them went on to college and graduated. These questions will sustain some of the researcher's passion and resolve to begin formal research and document his personal experiences with some of these Maya youth.

The researcher has not done any specific research on any of the Maya ethnic groups in The United States. But, his involvement with the Maya communities for the last 15 years has inspired him to do some work regarding the journey of the Maya children in this country, specifically, the Maya Q'anjob'al American youth. The researcher would like to hear directly from the Maya youth, the Maya Q'anjob'al college students, and those who did not go to college. He would like to know if they have a sense of Maya identity and if they see any value in preserving the Mayan language and culture.

Minimal work has been done to address Indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al American youth. Therefore, this research was important. The researcher focused on the Maya Q'anjob'al

American college students and others of college-age. Hence, this research used the qualitative phenomenological study to examine whether American-born Maya children affirm their indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al background and if by affirming language they perform better in school and have a better adjustment to life with a secure sense of identity. The study sought answers to these questions by conducting interviews and surveys among Maya Q'anjob'al American youth while examining conflicting factors that influence the language loss among the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in the United States (Light, 1995). In addition, the results of the study seek information that will be used to develop more effective strategies in educational leadership.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

This research focused on the Q'anjob'al ethnic group from Huehuetenango, Guatemala, who now lives in The United States. In only four decades, people of Maya ancestry have become a major part of communities and neighborhoods throughout the United States (Loucky, 2019). Now there are thousands of Maya children attending K-12 schools and universities in the USA. However, Indigenous Maya American youth face some of the similar obstacles that Native American youth face such as being oppressed and racialized. These obstacles hinder not only their educational experience but also their emotional, social, and mental wellbeing, which prevent them from developing their fullest potential. In the case of the Maya, they have other battles to confront, such as immigration status, language oppression, and the particular history in Guatemala.

Hence, this study examined the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do Maya American youth 'perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?

- RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States?
- RQ3: From the students' perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfilment?

Research Methodology Approach and Study Design

Qualitative research was used for this study because there is a need to explore whether the Maya Culture will survive in the United States, specifically the Q'anjob'al ethnic group. According to (Creswell & Poth, 2016), qualitative research is needed for this type of research. Qualitative research is conducted when the researcher wants to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants' study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Also, according to Ploeg (1999), qualitative research is generally based on non-probability and purposive sampling rather than probability or random approaches. Sampling decisions are made for the explicit purpose of obtaining the richest possible source of information to answer the research questions (Ploeg, 1999).

Given that Maya American youth of the Q'anjob'al ethnic group is unique and is growing in this country, the phenomenological approach will allow the researcher to understand the participants' experiences with preserving Indigenous language, culture, and identity. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this case, the research will focus on the participants' experiences as Maya Q'anjob'al and determine if by affirming their Indigenous identity this helps them perform better in school and have a better adjustment to life and have a secure sense of identity. The research sought answers to these questions by conducting interviews and surveys

among Maya Q'anjob'al American college-age students while examining conflicting factors that influence language loss among the Q'anjobal ethnic group in the United States (Light, 1995). In addition, the results of the study aim to inform more effective strategies in educational leadership that will empower and celebrate Maya Indigenous identities and languages, rather than oppress them.

Method

A purpose sample of men and women with approximately 50% of men and women was used in this phenomenological study. Participants were Maya Q'anjob'al born in the United States. The average age of the participants was between 20 and 30 years old, the plan is that half of them will be in college and the other half will be in the workforce. The target participants were single and able to communicate in English. The interviews were conducted in English over a period of 2 months.

Sampling refers to the process used to select a portion of the population for study (Ploeg, 1999). The researcher used field notes, interviews, recording, and existing data such as photographs and literature. Subjects were chosen and screened based on eligibility for the program and criteria. Field notes were written by the researcher based on social interaction with the participants. The researcher interviewed Maya Q'anjob'al youth. The recording was authorized by IRB specifications.

Selection Criteria

Choosing a study sample is an important step in any research project since it is rarely practical, efficient, or ethical to study whole populations (M. N. Marshall, 1996). In the words of M. N. Marshall (1996), the aim of all quantitative sampling approaches is to draw a representative sample from the population, so that the results of studying the sample can then be

generalized back to the population. Ploeg (1999) explains that purposive sampling decisions influence not only the selection of participants but also settings, incidents, events, and activities for data collection.

Participants

Participants were selected from Maya non-profit organizations in Los Angeles, California and in other states such as Greenville, SC, Omaha, NE, Belfair, WA, Alamosa, CO, and Champaign, IL. The participants were of Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group. Careful analysis was done through phenomenology, and interviews were conducted in English.

Setting

The researcher went to two specific local non-profit organizations in Los Angeles where he has close connections. The researcher has been working with these two non-profit organizations in Los Angeles for the past 30 years. Also, the researcher has been a public educator and advisor at a local public school in Los Angeles and a consultant and advisor to some of the Maya communities in Los Angeles. However, participants will take a survey an online survey. Furthermore, for the last 15 years the researcher has been serving as a Maya National Consultant to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Also, the researcher is a board member of the Maya Heritage Community Project at Kennesaw State University. The researcher's involvement in these roles has given him the opportunity to connect with the participants. Follow up questions will follow through email and phone calls.

Research Design

A qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological method was used to obtain a better understanding of the Maya people. The aim of a phenomenological approach to qualitative research is to describe accurately the lived experiences of people and not to generate

theories or models of the phenomenon being studied (Ploeg, 1999). Characteristics of the phenomenological research are best suited for this form of research to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

Since narrative researchers can use various types of narratives for guidance to collect stories (Creswell & Poth, 2016), the researcher used the phenomenological approach to conduct interviews and to collect data. Data were collected by phone or in person. Open-ended questions were used to elicit the experiences of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present, and future (Roberts, 2002). Interviews were about an hour long and notes were taken during interviews. Interviewees were asked to sign an IRB informed consent form and will be given a choice to use pseudonyms.

All handwritten field notes will be kept in the researcher's possession, in his home, and in a locked filing cabinet. All audio recordings will be saved in his personal Google Drive account, which is password-protected. All audio recordings were transcribed by the transcription service, Ebyy.co. The transcriptions were downloaded, and saved to a folder on the researcher's personal laptop, and will be password protected. Backup copies of audio recordings and transcripts were stored on an external USB drive and are kept in a locked filing cabinet in his home. All data will be maintained under these conditions for the duration of the study and will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study.

Tools/Instruments Used

Interview Protocol

Interviews were conducted in English. The interview protocol consists of questions regarding Maya Q'anjob'al culture to gather data about perspectives on Maya identity and Maya cultural values and language (see Appendix B and Appendix C).

The interview protocol involved two parts. The first part was a quick survey, in which the researcher asked the participants' ethnic background and college level or experiences. The second part was a recorded interview. Before the interview, the researcher made sure that the participant had signed the informed consent form. If not, the researcher provided one via OneDrive on the spot. Once the informed consent form had been signed and collected, the researcher informed the participant that if there were any other questions that arose at any point in the study, they could feel free to ask them at any time. The participants were informed about the duration of the interview between 40 minutes to one hour.

Furthermore, the researcher reminded the participant that if they want to decline or stop the interview, the participant could stop at any time without any repercussions. Once everything was clear and there were no further questions or comments, the researcher turned on the recording device and asked the first few questions from RQ1. Then the researcher proceeded to the other questions from RQ2 and RQ3. These are open-ended questions and focused on understanding the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The researcher asked any clarifying questions and/or asked the participant to add additional information. Once the interview was completed, the researcher thanked the participant for their time and for their willingness to participate in the research. The same method was applied to every interviewee.

Protection of Human Subjects

This qualitative research involves human subjects and there are specific regulations to assure the protection of all participants involved in the research. On July 12, 1974, the National Research Act (Pub. L. 93-348) was signed into law, creating the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (Department of Health, 2014). When an educational institution receives federal funding to conduct research, the institution makes a number of promises to the United States Government and promise to carry out a plan of research in a fiscally responsible manner (Bledsoe et al., 2007). Bledsoe et al. (2007) state that when the research involves human subjects, the educational institution promises to ensure that the rights and welfare of human subjects who participate in the research are adequately protected.

Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP) is part of the Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GSP IRB). This entity is responsible for reviewing every research, and they are under the legal limits to assure the protection of human subjects. The GPS IRB (2017) states the following:

It is the policy of Pepperdine University that all research involving human participants must be conducted in accordance with accepted ethical, federal, and professional standards for research and that all such research must be approved by one of the university's Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). In the review and conduct of research, Pepperdine University is guided by the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report.

In addition, all human subjects research conducted by or under the auspices of Pepperdine University will be performed in accordance with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, DHHS (CFR), Title 45 Part 46 (45 CFR 46), entitled Protection of Human

Research Subjects, and Parts 160 and 164, entitled Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information and the California Protection of Human Subjects in Medical Experimentation Act. Where applicable, FDA regulations on human subjects' research will be followed. (Paras. 50 and 56)

The researcher took the protection of human subject's guidelines seriously according to the National Research Act (Pub. L. 93-348) and the Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology Institutional Review Board (GSP IRB). The researcher was aware of the sensitivity of the research and acted ethically and professionally before, during, and at the end of the research. Also, the researcher obtained IRB approval permission from Pepperdine University's IRB Department prior to proceeding with collection of data (see Appendix D). The researcher also completed the CITI Certification (see Appendix E).

The researcher did not financially compensate the interviewees or give any other kind of compensations. However, interviewees interested in the outcomes of the research will get a copy of the dissertation as soon as the researcher completes the process.

Proposed Data Analysis

According to Ploeg (1999), many data collection techniques are used in qualitative research, but the most common are interviewing and participant observation. Qualitative research usually involves smaller sample sizes than quantitative research (Ploeg, 1999). Also, qualitative data analysis, unlike quantitative data analysis, is not concerned with statistical analysis, but with analysis codes, themes, and patterns in the data (Ploeg, 1999).

Coding

To analyze data in qualitative research, coding is the first step toward data analysis (Seale & Kelly, 2004). Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing data

for analysis then reducing the data to themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Seale and Kelly (2004) explain that certain parts of the data are relevant to each other. So, the job of the researcher is to detect patterns in the data by identifying the data that are similar and placing them together so that patterns can be found (Seale & Kelly, 2004). Hence, the researcher will use coding to analyze the interview responses of the Maya Q'anjob'al American youth.

Bracketing

According to Creswell and Poth (2016), this is the first step in phenomenological reduction. Creswell and Poth (2016) state that bracketing is the process of setting aside all preconceived experiences and biases to best understand the experiences of participants in the study. However, the researcher acknowledges and he is aware that he is a Maya from Guatemala and his native language is Q'anjob'al. As a boy in the 1980s, he experienced the Guatemalan Civil War. For 7 years, he washed dishes to pay his way through middle school and high school. He graduated high school in 1988. During his teenage years, he not only suffered discrimination but he witnessed how the Maya people were treated in Guatemala. The researcher decided to follow the trail of the refugees and to make the overland journey to the United States in November 1988. Now he is a United States naturalized citizen.

The researcher's background and experiences will not interfere with conducting higher quality research and collecting current data. He will do his best to suspend judgment and focus on the experiences of Maya Q'anjob'al American youth and focus on analyzing data collection. Furthermore, the researcher will prepare and organize data for analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The analysis of interview transcripts and field notes will be classified into themes and then codes for analysis.

Data Analysis Spiral

It is necessary to use the Data Analysis Spiral when conducting research (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher used the spiral method to organize data. Based on the Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell & Poth, 2016), the researcher organized files, by representing and visualizing the data, by assessing interpretations, memorizing ideas, classifying codes, and organizing them chronologically. By using this method, the researcher was able to effectively analyze and use his collected data.

Timeline

Timelining is particularly appropriate with sensitive and complex topics or when interviewees' oral language expression is limited due to a variety of circumstances (E. A. Marshall, 2019). As the researcher has established prior relationships with his subjects, the estimated timeline was one year (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This allowed the researcher to interview the participants and review the data. This would be the right amount of time to complete the things need for the study.

Measure to Ensure Study Validity

To enhance the validity of findings, the researcher used the following strategies for validation: (a) clarifying researcher bias or engaging in reflexivity, (b) member checking for seeking participant feedback, (c) having a prolonged engagement and persistent observation on the field, (d) collaborating with participants, (e) enabling external audits, (f) having a peer review or debriefing of the data and research process, (g) corroborating evidence and (h) discovering a negative case analysis or disconfirming evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2016). On a national level, the researcher conducted sampling including Maya American youth from South Carolina, Nebraska, Washington, Colorado, and California. Since the researcher had been working and

assisting Maya communities in these states, he purposely selected Maya American youth. This population was interviewed strategically throughout selected Catholic churches and some non-profit organizations in Los Angeles. The researcher has been counseling the Maya community locally and nationally for more than a decade. Rapport has been established during this time with the Maya leaders. This friendship status required a casual correspondence, leading to access. Appointments were scheduled when convenient for both parties.

Limitations

The researcher understood that Maya might have a variety of opinions about being a Maya or becoming a Latino, and views might not be clearly realized by the Maya themselves. Some Maya people think they are Latinos and not Maya people (LeBaron, 2016). In the study and interviews, the researcher recognized and respected the possible diversity of opinion and tried not to unfairly influence the participants.

Researcher Role and Positionality

The researcher was unbiased during the interview. However, he positioned himself as an independent and expanded his experience and knowledge of Maya identity. With careful observation of other's experiences, he did extensive reflective writing because his story was similar to those involved in the study. In qualitative research, the researcher needs to position himself in his writing (Creswell & Poth, 2016). According to Creswell and Poth (2016), the researcher first talks about their experience with the phenomenon being explored. For example, in an annual meeting of Maya leaders in Arizona in November 2016, one of the leaders' primary topics of discussion included questions concerning their children; such as, where will their children born in the United States be in 50 years, and how will the children claim their Maya

identity? These questions are not new. Since the Maya people settled in Los Angeles in the early 1980s, they have had these concerns.

The researcher has been undocumented like thousands of Maya immigrants in The United States and he knows the struggle to maintain Maya heritage in Los Angeles while he assimilates in American culture. He is of Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group, speaks the Q'anjob'al language, Spanish, and English. The researcher is aware of his background and biases. Yet, the researcher paid attention to his biases and did not let them interfere when interpreting data.

Ethical Considerations

Wilson and Wilks (2013) state that Indigenous research emphasizes the respectful inclusion of Indigenous knowledge, and ongoing consultation, and negotiation with Indigenous peoples regarding the research processes, outcomes and benefits. Also, Wilson and Wilks (2013) explain that Indigenous research approaches require an ethical undertaking to work with the community, define the research topic, agree on conduct, share analysis of findings, and the distribution of outcomes.

To ensure the ethical conduct of this study, the researcher was sensitive and respectful to the cultural background of the Maya people. The researcher will not publish the participants' names. All information provided will be confidential. For example, in no way will the researcher reveal immigrants' names or their statuses to other individuals or organizations. All information provided will be kept secured and cannot be shared without the participants' permission.

Chapter Summary

The researcher explored stories of Maya Q'anjobal American youth, testimonies, and experiences through interviews. The use of qualitative method research is one of the best ways to explore whether the Maya culture will survive in the United States. The phenomenological

approach allowed the researcher to understand the participants' experiences with preserving Indigenous language, culture, and identity. The method helped to collect data, analyze, and interpret the results, and it will create a meaningful contribution to the next generation of Maya Q'anjobal American and it will create a significant contribution of the Maya culture in the United States of America and worldwide.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

For the last four decades, due to political turmoil, violence, and the need for survival, hundreds of thousands of people with Maya heritage have migrated to the United States. Presently, a large population of Maya children is attending K-12 schools and universities nationwide. The lived experiences of the Maya children are often similar to that of Native American youth. In the case of the Maya in Guatemala, the discrimination they escaped from continues to oppress them in the United States. Being a Maya in Guatemala has often meant marginalization, exploitation, and victimization through state-sponsored violence and death. In places like Los Angeles, although dangers and hardships might be less severe than in other parts of the United States, Maya identity is still marked by marginalization, repression, and discrimination (Batz, 2010). Maya American children face prejudice from non-indigenous immigrant children who have learned from their parents to see the Maya culture as inferior. Economic poverty, language barriers, and the treatment they receive from other children contribute to low self-esteem and lack of Maya pride. Hence, this study explored the identity and language experiences of Maya American youth.

The research explored the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do Maya American youth perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?
- RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States?
- RQ3: From the students' perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfilment?

The three research questions used in this research provided an organizational structure to report the data. A total of 39 themes were identified as a result of ten interview questions. After analyzing the interviews, significant phrases were created to construct groups and then align them to themes for each interview question. Once themes were formed, they were visually organized in a chart.

Direct quotes from the interviewees were selected, quotes that represent their lived experiences. Also, all data were deduced and collected from recorded transcripts. In doing so, the integrity of the data was preserved. The researcher took the precaution to keep the participant's anonymity. Each interviewee is referred to as "Participant" in a sequence order [e.g., Participant 1 (P1) until Participant 15 (P15)].

Participants

There were about 57 participants who completed the online survey. Of the 57 participants, 15 were interviewed in English through Zoom video conferences, and each interview took approximately 45-60 minutes. Eleven participants were female and four were male. The participants' age ranged from 20-30 years. The online survey represented four different Maya ethnic groups such as Chuj, Akateko, K'iche, Mam, and Q'anjob'al living in California, Washington, Colorado, Oregon, Nebraska, Illinois, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, et cetera. However, the Maya American participants who were interviewed were of the Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group. All of the participants were college students; it is essential to acknowledge that parents of the participants were from the different municipalities of the Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala. Three of the participants stated that their parents were from San Pedro Soloma, one from San Juan Ixcoy, one from Barrillas, and the rest from Santa Eulalia.

Presentation of Findings

There were 57 online survey respondents. Nearly two-thirds of them were born in the United States (68.4). When asked: What was your first language? The majority of the respondents (54.4%) reported that Spanish was their first language, with Q'anjob'al the second most frequent response (26.3%), and all other languages at 7% or less. When asked: Which Mayan languages were spoken in your home? 65% indicated Q'anjob'al and 21% specified Chuj.

As a whole, the group showed a strong interest in Mayan languages with 90% responding that the languages were important or very important to them. Eighty six percent of the respondents indicated a desire to learn a Mayan language and another 8.6% stated they might be interested in learning a Mayan language. When given the opportunity to specify which language they would be most interested in learning, the responses aligned consistently with the language that they indicated was spoken in their homes. There was not much variance in the data about the importance placed on the language with such a large percentage of responses falling in the four or five categories. But there were a few responses that might be worth exploring in more detail. The average level of importance placed on the Mayan language by the respondents born in the US was 4.46, whereas for participants born outside of the U.S., the average level of importance was 4.77. The average importance for those whose first language is Spanish was 4.19, while for those whose first language is a Mayan language, it was 4.91. For respondents whose families spoke Chuj at home, they reported an average importance of 4.75, compared to a 4.48 average for those whose families spoke Q'anjob'al at home.

Overall the respondents agreed that parents encouraged them to embrace their Mayan heritage, with an average of 4.49. Again, there were some differences between some of the

subgroups that should be explored. The respondents who were born in the U.S. reported a slightly higher agreement that their parents encouraged them to embrace their Mayan heritage (4.56) than those who were born outside of the US (4.33). For those whose first language was a Mayan language, the average response was 4.73, compared to a 4.32 average for those whose first language was Spanish. There was even a difference based on which Mayan language was spoken at home, with respondents from homes that speak Q'anjob'al reporting an average of 4.81, while those from homes that speak Chuj reported only an average of 4.08. Differences can also be seen according to current educational status. The respondents who are currently college students reported an average of 4.91 compared to an average of 4.49 for students not in college.

Research Question 1

RQ1: How do Maya American youth perceive, understand, know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?" Three interview sub questions were asked to address the first research question with a total 15 participants:

- IQ1. Please tell me about yourself. Are you currently attending school? What is your grade level?
- IQ2. What do you know about Maya Culture? Explain.
- IQ3. Do you identify yourself as a Maya Q'anjob'al? Explain.

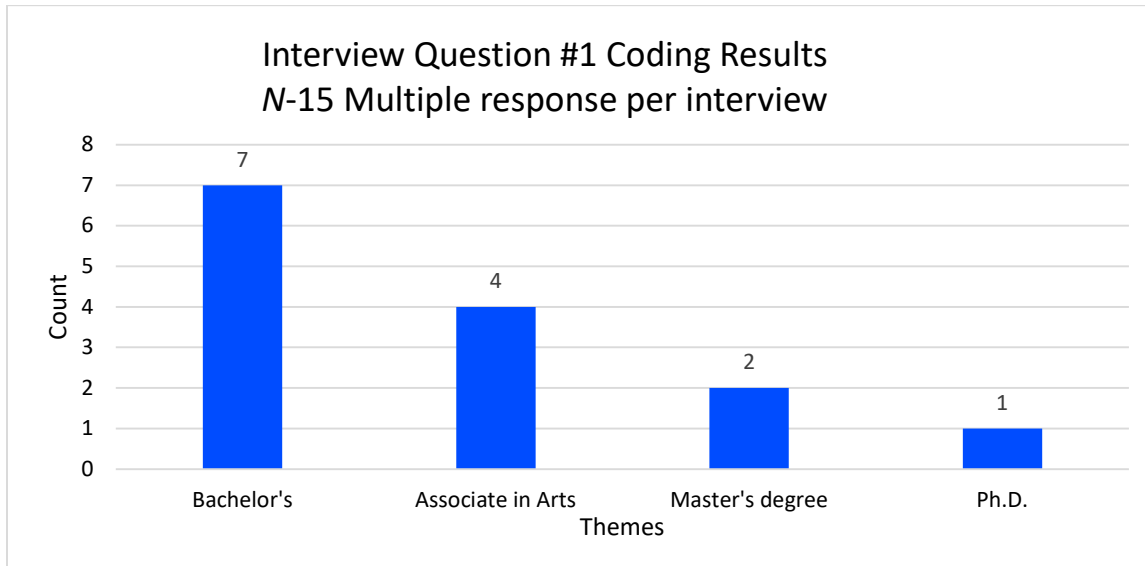
Themes were derived from the responses to the three interview questions.

Interview Question 1

Please tell me about yourself. Are you currently attending school? What is your grade level? Four themes emerged based on the participants' responses: (a) Bachelor's, (b) Associate in Arts, (c) Master's degree, (d) Ph.D. (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ1



Bachelor's. Seven participants verbalized having a bachelor's degree; the responses indicated how education is a key factor in understanding cultural identity and the limitations of the Maya culture in the United States. For instance, P1 said, "I went to the University to get my bachelor's degree and to better understand myself."

Associate in Arts. Four participants verbalized having an associate degree. They explained how education helped them become aware of their cultural roots. For example, P11 expressed, "I received my technical assistance with an associate degree in animal clinic; this helped me understand and help other people of different background, especially Maya people."

Master's Degree. Two participants expressed how vital education had been in providing them a deep sense of their Maya cultural background in The United States. For example, P7 said, "I am very proud of my Indigenous Maya roots. I have a master's degree in human development with a concentration in leadership in education and human services."

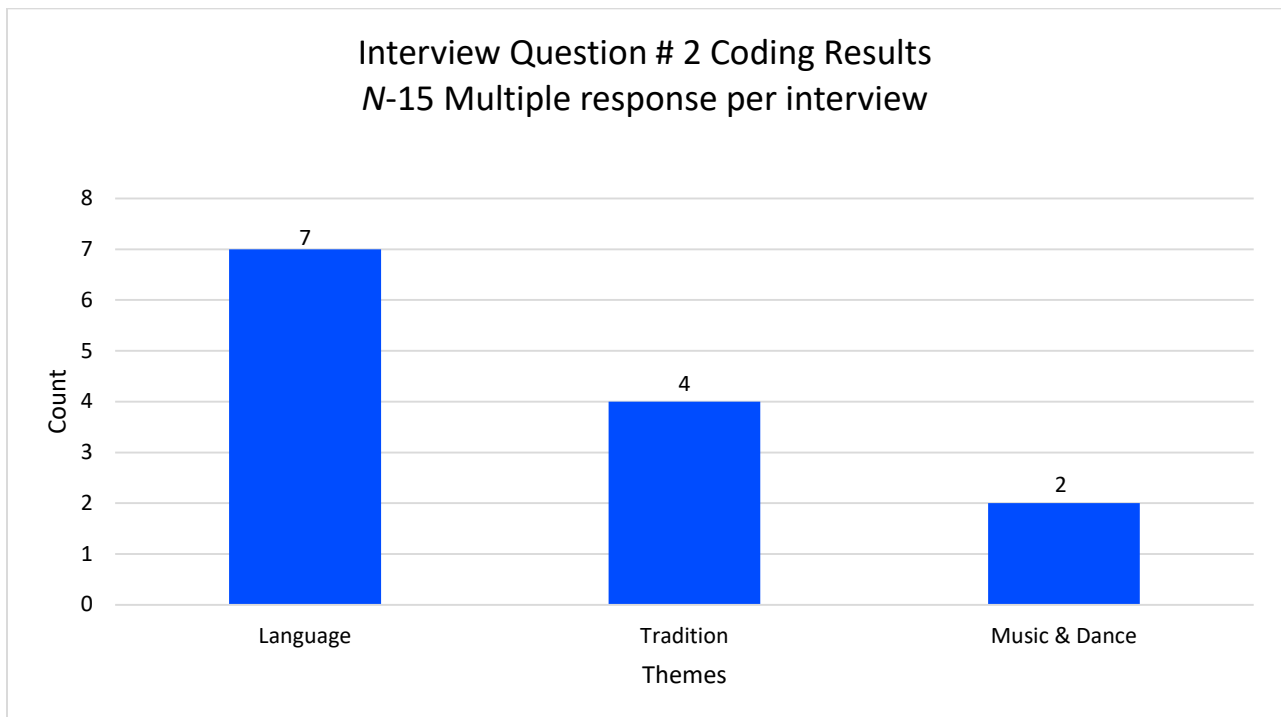
Ph.D. One participant revealed that having a Ph.D. contributed to the development of a strong cultural connection and helped them have a clear sense of cultural awareness as a Maya in the United States. P4 said, “I am tracing the origin of the Q’anjob’al music. By doing so, I am also tracing my roots.”

Interview Question 2

What do you know about Maya culture? Explain. Based on the participants’ responses, three themes emerged: (a) language, (b) tradition, (c) music and dance (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ2



Language. Seven participants explained that speaking Mayan languages was one way to express Maya identity in the United States. They believed that understanding a Mayan language was one way to understand the Maya culture. P4 expressed, “My Mayan language is among the first things I knew about my Maya heritage and culture.”

Tradition. Four participants stated that the Maya traditions helped them have a clear understanding of their identity in the United States; their Maya traditions represent their heritage and their Maya identity. P13 commented, “Maya culture is all about tradition and language.”

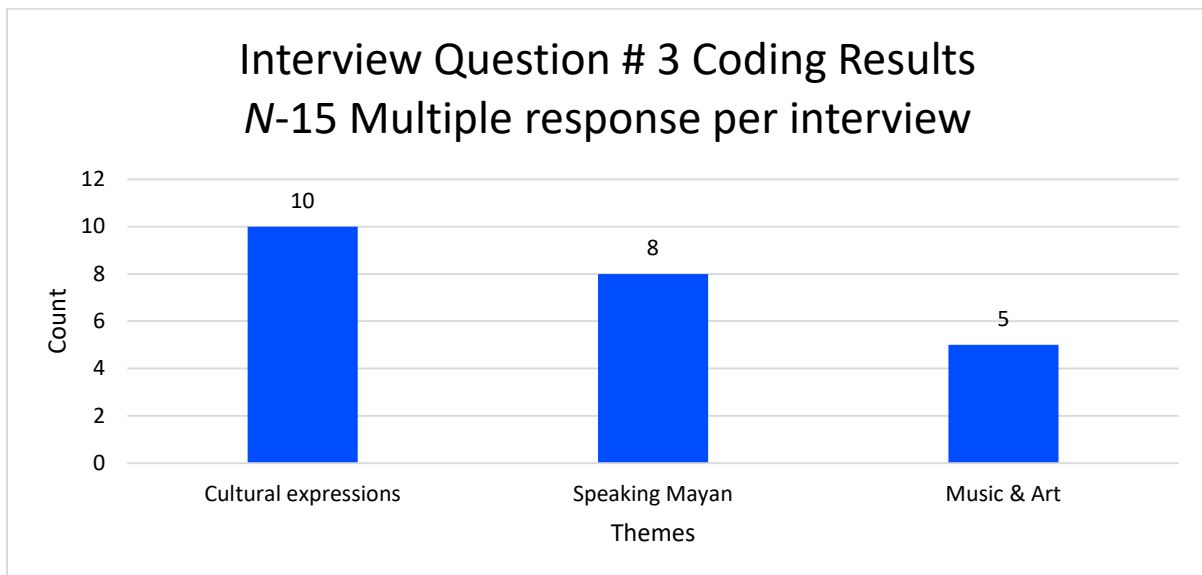
Music & Dance. Two participants expressed that Maya music and dance can serve as a method to preserve the Maya culture. P13 said, “When my whole body dances our ancestral music, it not only allows me to be myself but it also allows me to show my Maya culture to more people.”

Interview Question 3

Do you identify yourself as a Maya Q’anjob’al? Explain. Three themes emerged from the participants’ responses: (a) cultural awareness, (b) speaking Mayan languages, and (c) music and art (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ3



Cultural Awareness. Ten participants communicated the importance of their Maya culture in the United States. They explained that there are different ways to express their Maya

culture. This could be through speaking Mayan Languages, practicing Maya values, music, art, or Maya spirituality. P14 expressed, “My culture shaped my mindset and [helped me] see the world through my Maya values; my Maya values reinforce my identity.”

Speaking Mayan Languages. Eight participants mentioned the importance of speaking Mayan languages in The United States. They said that speaking Q’anjob’al gives them a sense of pride and a sense of identity in the United States. P12 said, “Speaking a Mayan language added something to my life; it is part of a cultural expression that I value the most, and it distinguishes me among other cultures in Los Angeles.”

Music & Art. Five participants explained that art and music are critical elements to understand their cultural Maya identity. These elements give them a sense of belonging to a unique Maya ethnic group in the United States. P12 explained, “I had learned more about my Maya culture through Maya music and art that are unique to my Q’anjob’al ethnic group. Also, I have attended Maya conferences that have increased my sense of cultural Maya identity in the United States.”

Summary of RQ 1

How do Maya immigrant youth perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality? After analyzing the interviewees’ responses to questions 1, 2, and 3, a total of 10 themes were identified as: (a) bachelor, (b) AA, (c) master, (d) PhD, (e) language, (f) tradition, (g) music and dance, (h) cultural awareness, (i) speaking Mayan languages, and (j) music and art. Most of the interviewees showed a strong sense of Maya pride.

Research Question 2

Fifteen participants answered five sub-interview questions under RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in The United States? The five sub-interview questions were:

- IQ4. What Maya Q'anjob'al cultural expressions do you value the most and why? e.g. Maya music, language, spirituality, clothing, etc.
- IQ5. If you do not speak the Mayan Q'anjob'al language, would you be interested in learning it?
- IQ6. What are some of your challenges and strengths in expressing your Maya identity?
- IQ7. Do you think that the Maya culture will have a future in the United States? Explain.
- IQ8. Do you wish your parents had taught you the language when you were growing up?

Interview Question 4

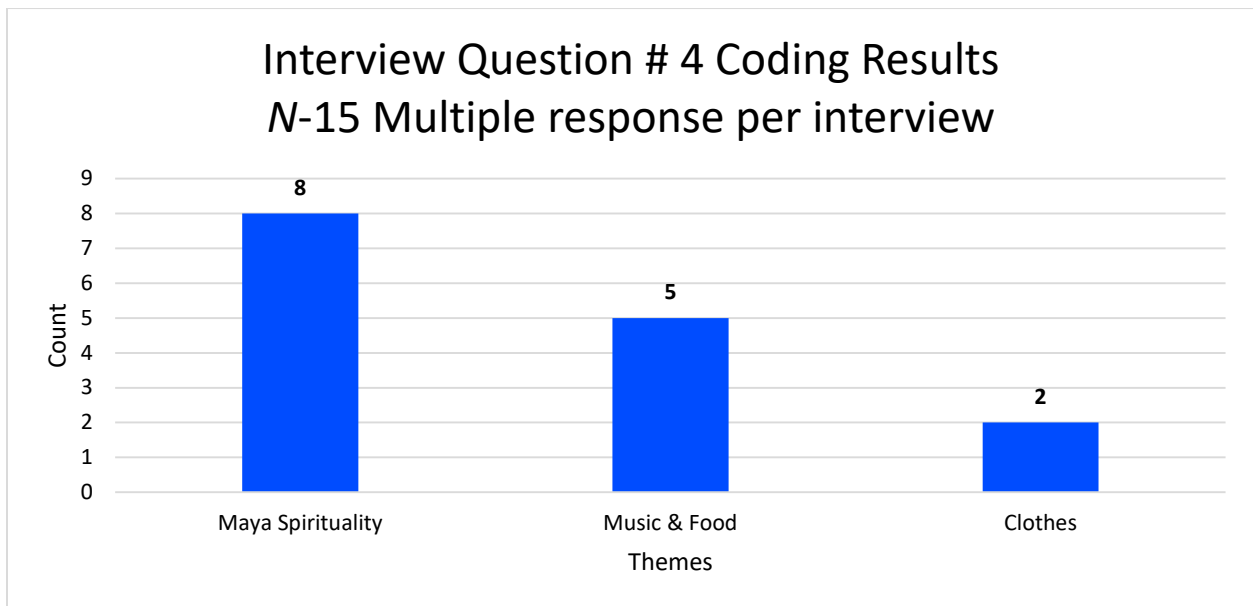
What Maya Q'anjob'al cultural expressions do you value the most and why? e.g. Maya music, language, spirituality, clothing, etc. Based on the interviewees' responses, three themes were identified as: (a) Maya spirituality, (b) music and food, and (c) clothes (see Figure 4).

Maya Spirituality. Eight participants said that Maya spirituality has had a great impact on their lives growing up in The United States. P8 said, "Through Maya spirituality we connect with the Spirit of our ancestors and with Mother Nature."

Music & Food. Five participants expressed that music and food were a way to express their cultural identity. They stated that music adds vivid experiences to their lives in The United States. P1 said, “Music and food are the most cultural expressions of my roots.”

Figure 4

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ4



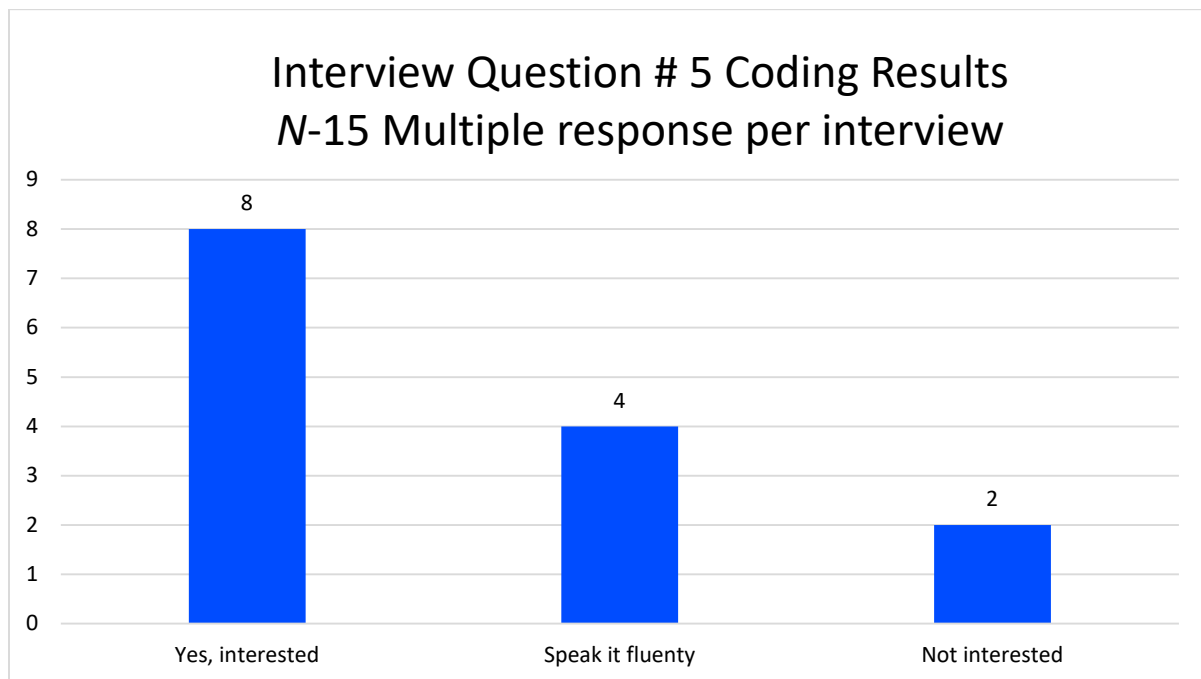
Clothes. Two participants mentioned that clothing is another Maya cultural expression that brings a deep sense of identity. P2 commented, “The vivid colorful clothes that Maya people wear in special occasions represent the uniqueness of the Maya culture.”

Interview Question 5

If you do not speak the Mayan Q’anjob’al language, would you be interested in learning it? Three themes were identified from the interviewees’ responses as: (a) yes, I am interested, (b) speak it fluently, and (c) not interested (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ5



Yes, I Am Interested. Eight participants responded that learning the Q’anjob’al Mayan language would connect them more to their Maya identity. They said that if they spoke a Mayan language, they would have a greater impact on other people’s lives in the United States. P2 expressed, “Yes, I am interested in learning the Mayan language.”

Speak It Fluently. Four participants mentioned that they speak Q’anjob’al fluently. They stated that speaking a Mayan language has not only shaped their Indigenous identity but has also impacted their lives in a positive manner. Their families helped them learn the Q’anjob’al Maya language when they were growing up and attending academic institutions in this country. P3 said, “I grew up speaking Q’anjobal in the United States.”

Not Interested. Two participants stated that they are not interested in learning the Mayan language. They said that they just wanted to speak English to avoid mixing two languages. Also, they stated that their parents didn’t want them to grow up not being proficient in English. They

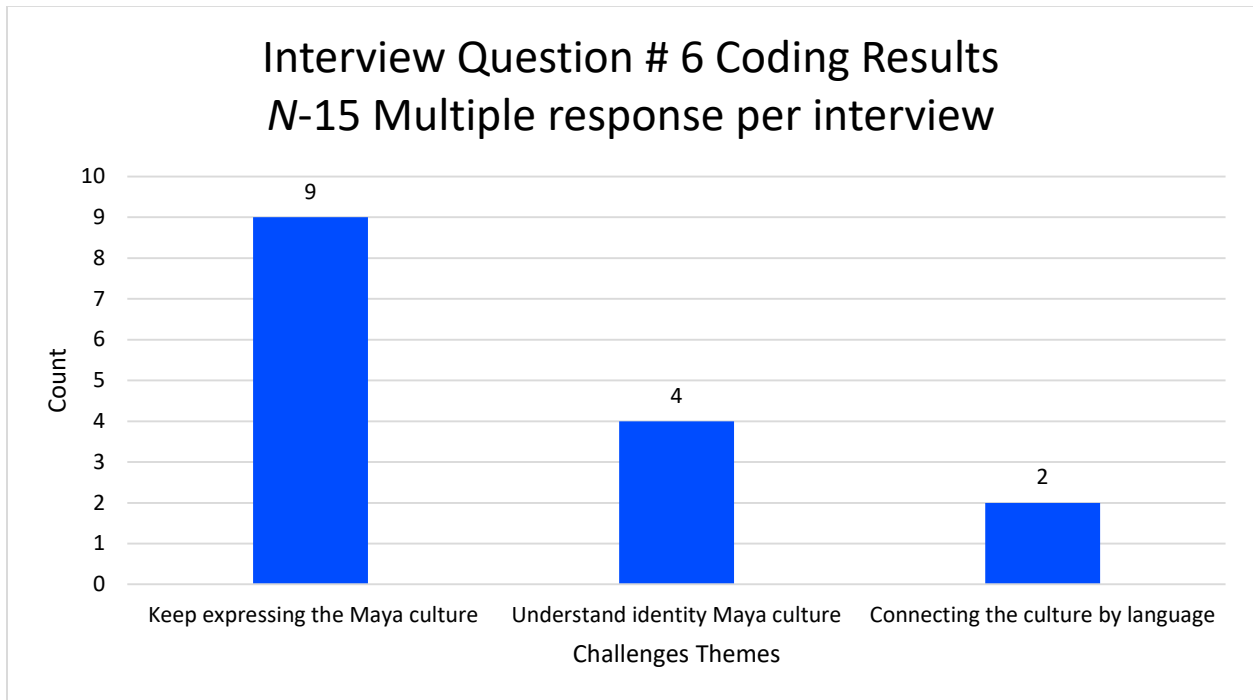
said that their parents wanted the best for them; and according to them, the best is speaking English only. P5, expressed, “I am not interested in learning or speaking the Mayan language.”

Interview Question 6

What are some of your challenges and strengths in expressing your Maya identity? Based on the interview responses, three themes were identified as challenges: (a) expressing the Maya culture, (b) understanding Maya identity, and (c) connecting the culture with the language. Also, three themes were identified as strengths: (d) expressing the Maya culture, (e) understanding Maya culture, and (f) not interested (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ6: Challenges



Challenges

Expressing the Maya Culture. Participants expressed that their sense of Maya identity has helped them to stand strong and not be influenced by other dominant cultures. However, they

stated that expressing their Maya culture has been a major challenge. They are constantly bombarded by other ways of thinking and other ways of living. Nonetheless, they believed that the only way to keep the Maya culture alive in the United States was to keep the different Maya expressions. P2 said, “We should keep our Mayan languages, music, art, and clothing as ways to stay connected with our Maya heritage.” P1 commented, “The challenge is to continue sharing our Maya culture.” P3 said, “Another challenge is that we are not speaking the Mayan languages anymore.”

Understanding Maya Identity: Participants expressed that their Mayan languages and spirituality are key elements to sustain the Maya identity and pass on to the new Maya generations in the United States. P2 expressed, “Speaking my Mayan language helps me to fully understand the Maya culture.”

Connecting the Culture with Language. Participants expressed how important it is to speak a Mayan language. They said that Mayan languages are directly connected to the culture. Participants are aware that only through language can one express and communicate the history and traditions of our people. P4 commented, “The challenge in The United States is that the new generation doesn’t speak the Mayan language anymore.” P7 said, “I am proud of my Maya identity in the United States” (see Figure 7).

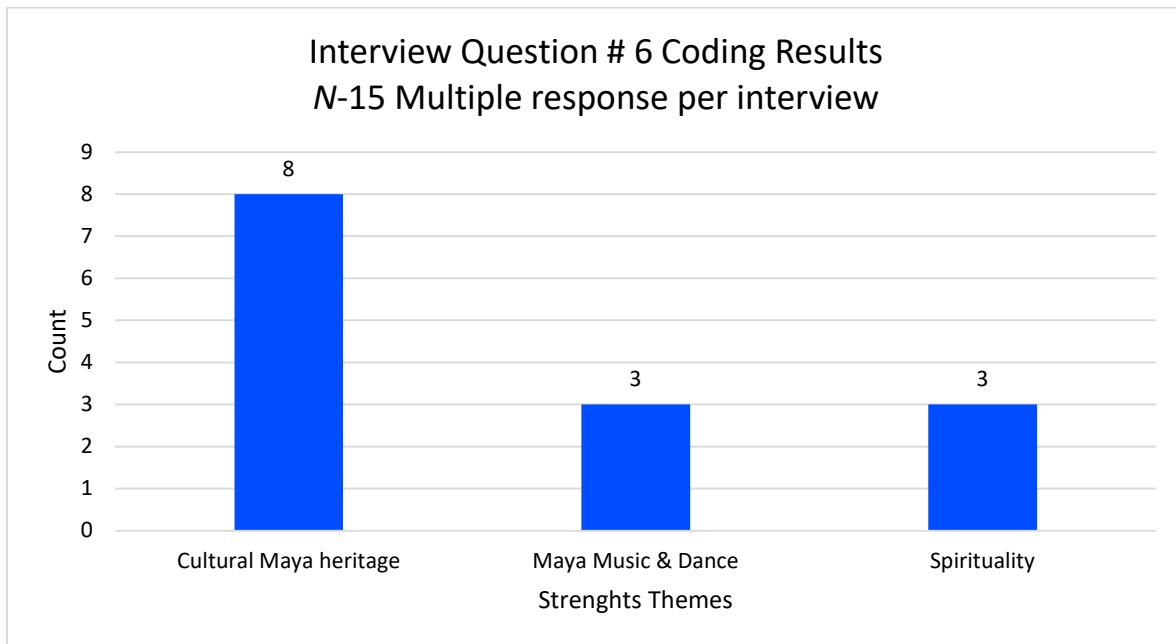
Strengths

Cultural Maya Heritage. Participants strongly indicated that Maya heritage had a positive influence on their lives. P1 said, “Embracing my Maya heritage helped increase my self-esteem in The United States.” P1 continued saying that “my Maya cultural heritage is my strength.” P3 commented, “I am proud of expressing the Maya heritage without shame.” P9 said, “One of the strengths of my Maya culture is the vivid experiences through the Maya music.”

Maya Music & Dance. Participants expressed that music and dance reinforce their Maya identity. They stated that practicing the traditional Maya music creates a feeling of belonging. P13 said, “When I listen to the Marimba, Maya music, it makes me proud of who I am.” P4 commented, “When I dance the Marimba, I feel connected to my Maya heritage.”

Figure 7

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ6: Strengths



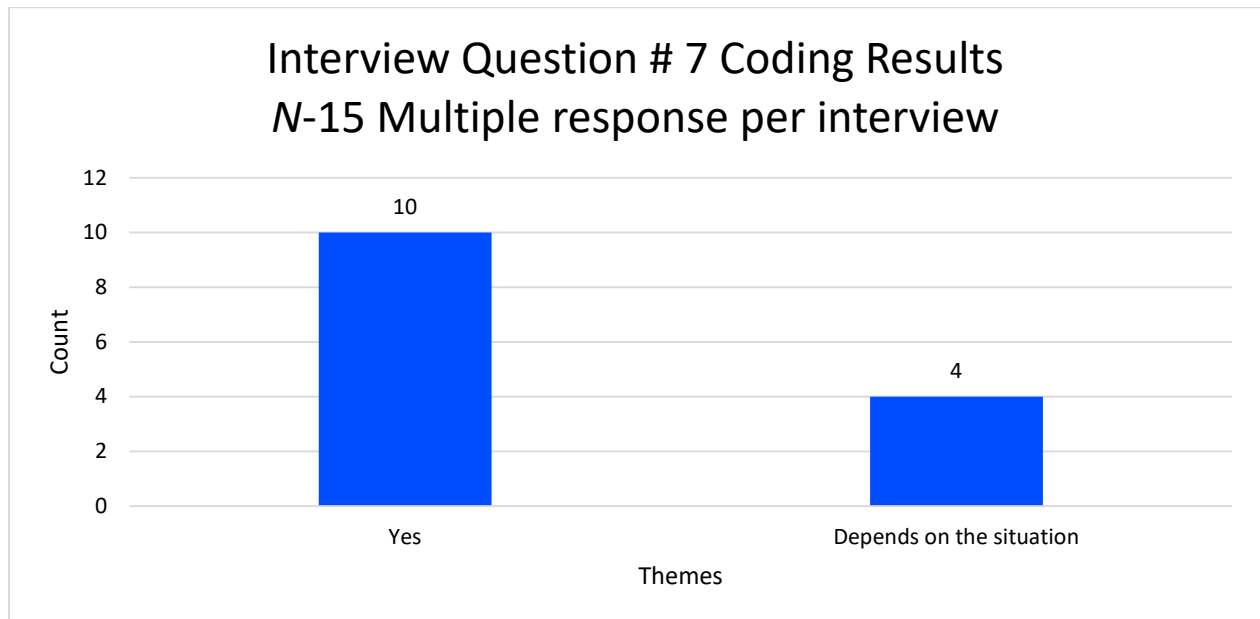
Spirituality. Participants commented that Maya spirituality is totally different from the Western spirituality. Maya spirituality consists of being connected with everything around us; it consists of being in union with Mother Earth, the sky, the wind, the water, etc. P4 said, “We have high respect for Mother Nature and all living things, and animals just as we respect our fellow human beings. Also, P4 said, “I can dance to the music of Mother Nature just as I dance the music of my ancestors; to me, this is Maya Spirituality.” P6 commented, “Maya Spirituality consists of being in connection with everything around us, with the world.”

Interview Question 7

Do you think that the Maya culture will have a future in the United States? Explain. Six themes were identified under Interview Question 7: (a) yes, (b) it depends on the situation (c) families can sustain the Maya cultural practices, (d) Maya leaders can inspire youth, (e) organizations can promote Maya culture, and (f) acculturation (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ7: Part 1



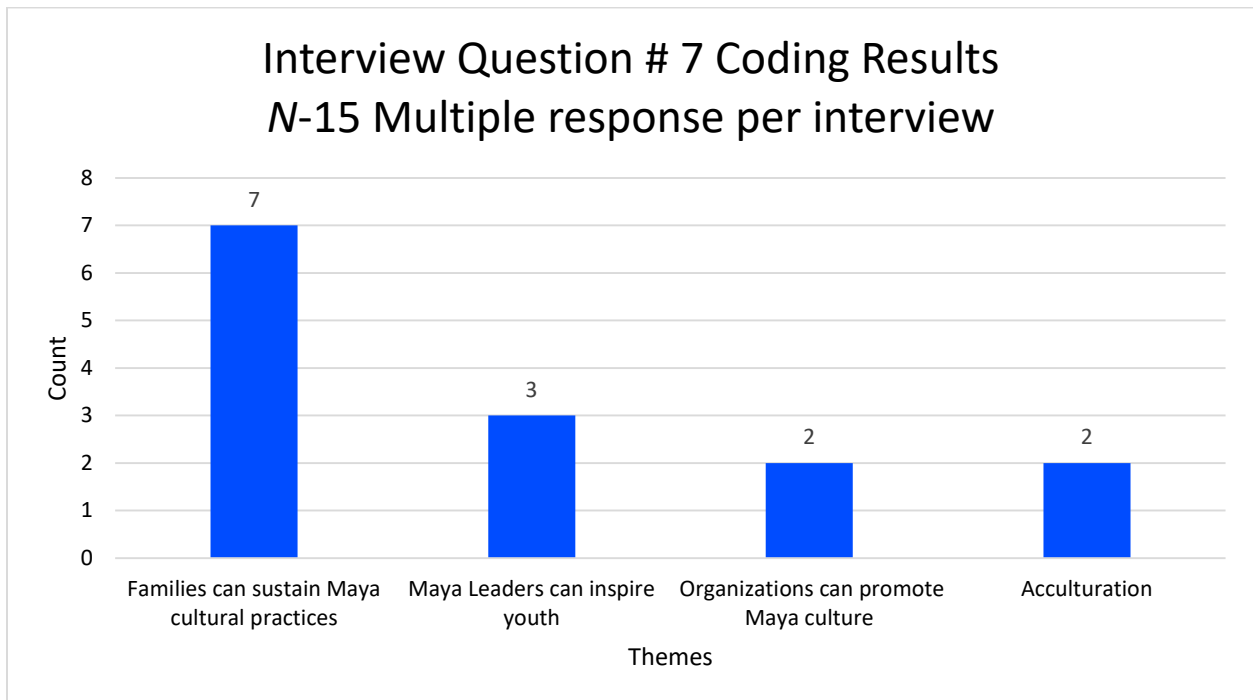
Yes. Participants commented that some of the work by Maya leaders is slowly impacting the lives of Maya youth in the United States. They said that the more people promote Maya education and Maya events, the more young people will embrace the Maya culture for its survival in the United States.

It Depends on the Situation. Participants expressed that in some states in the United States, there are no Maya organizations that can promote the Maya culture. Maya parents allow

the system to educate their children. In other words, Maya children are exposed to the dominant American culture and children grow up thinking that they are just American (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ7: Part 2



Families Can Sustain the Maya Cultural Practices. Participants expressed that the future of the Maya culture in The United States will depend on Maya families. P1 said, “If Maya families pass on their Maya traditions to their children, then the Maya culture will survive.” P4 expressed, “The only way the Maya culture can survive in the United States is if Maya families pass on the Maya traditions such as music and language to their children.” P3 commented, “Families are the foundations of the Maya culture; they have to teach the Maya youth.” P5 said, “We know that it is a challenge to teach Mayan languages and keep practicing the Maya traditions, but we should persist.” P6 said, “We can survive if Maya parents have a solid cultural foundation.”

Maya Leaders Can Inspire Youth. Participants expressed that the future of the Maya culture will also depend on good leadership. Participants believe in good and strong leaders who are able to motivate and inspire the next generation of young Maya people. They stated that leaders can transform lives by adding Maya values to the Maya communities. P12 said, “A leader can lead by example; also, a leader can educate the younger generation by modeling.” P12 commented, “Maya leaders are authentic and practice servant leadership; these types of leadership brings the community together.”

Organizations Can Promote Maya Cultural. Participants commented that the more Maya organizations promote Maya cultural events, the more impact Maya Organizations will have on the next generation. P1 said, “The future of the Maya in The United States will also depend on Maya organizations; leaders with strong conviction and commitment will keep the culture alive.” P2 commented, “Maya organizations can maintain and promote unity among the Maya communities.”

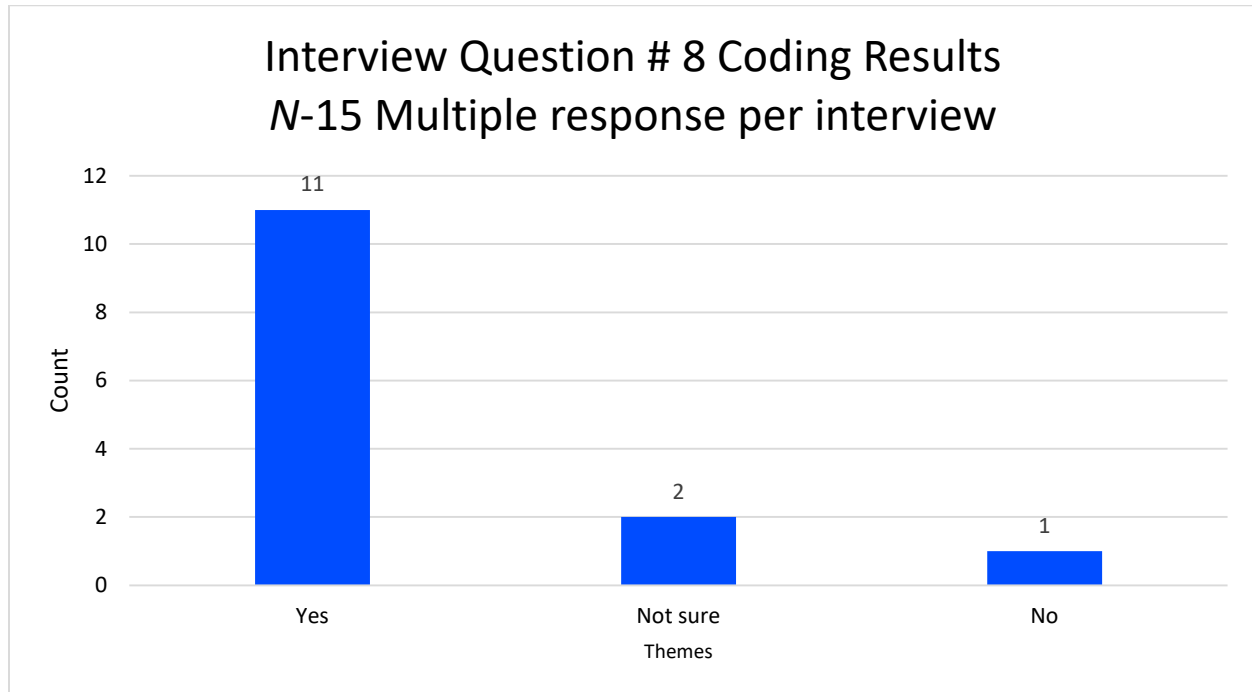
Acculturation. Participants expressed that they are really concerned about the future of the Maya culture in The United States. They said that most of the Maya people assimilate so fast and embrace American culture. P1 states that “many Maya people learn English and stop using their native languages; P2 said, “Guatemala does not support the Indigenous people; the USA does support, but the problem is that people acculturate so fast that they forget their cultural heritage.” P5 expressed, “The American culture influences the youngest generation so easily.”

Interview Question 8

Do you wish your parents had taught you the language when you were growing up? Explain. The participants’ responses generated six themes: (a) yes, (b) not sure, (c) no, (d) my parents decided for me, (e) they taught me, and (f) I want to learn (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ8: Part 1



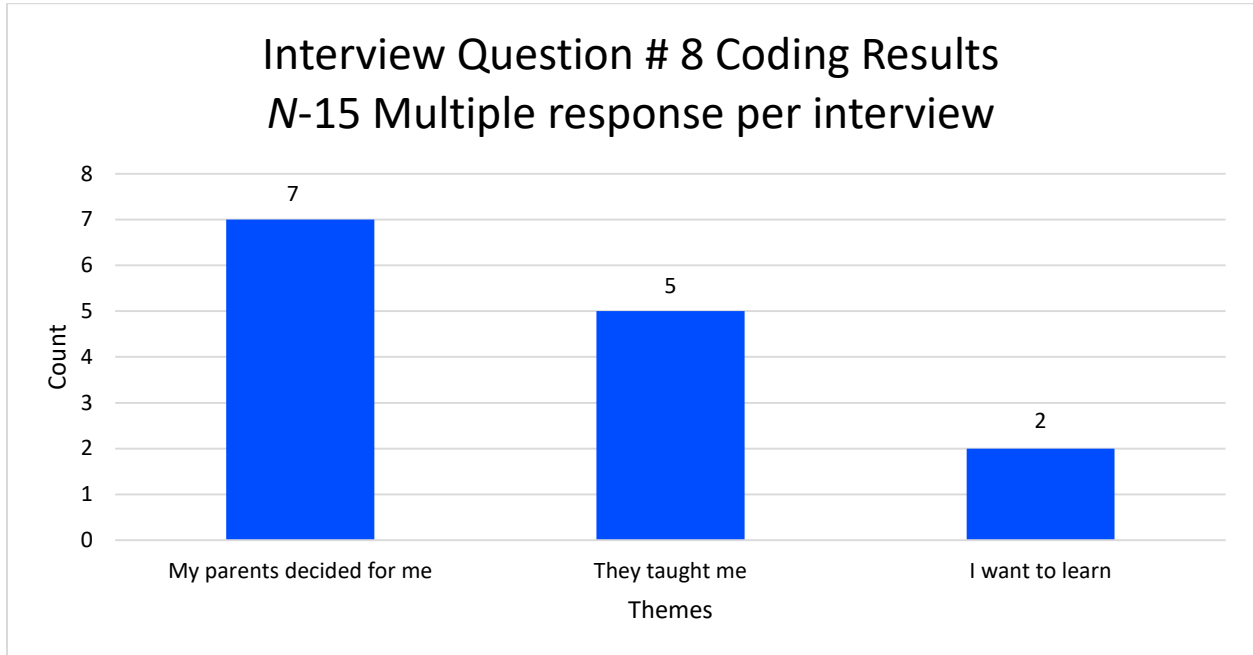
Yes. Participants commented that they are glad their parents taught them how to speak the Maya language as they were growing up in the United States. As they got older, they discovered the beauty of the sounds of each Maya word and the meanings hidden behind it.

Not Sure. Few participants expressed doubts about the Mayan language. Their parents told them that they are Americans and that there is no need to learn the Mayan language. P13 said, “My parents didn’t see any value in learning Q’anjob’al.” P6 said, “They didn’t teach me, but I can understand some words.”

No. Participants expressed that their parents decided for them. P2 expressed, “My parents chose not to teach me how to speak a Mayan language. P8 said, “My parents knew that if I spoke a native language, I was going to suffer from discrimination.” P3 commented, “My mom tried to teach me, but she failed” (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ8: Part 2



My Parents Decided for Me. Participants expressed that their parents were so busy working and doing their best to assimilate into the American culture. In their busy lives and trying to assimilate, they told us to speak English. P1 said, “My parents told me that in order to be successful in the United States, I must leave my Mayan language behind.” P11 commented, “My parents only spoke Spanish to me and they avoided speaking their native language in front of me.”

They Taught Me. Participants expressed that their parents taught them limited Mayan languages. P7 said, “My parents helped me understand and speak Q’anjobal for survival.” P10 expressed, “My parents taught me Q’anjob’al, English, and Spanish. They said that being trilingual was going to benefit me in the long run.” P12 expressed, “my parents taught me; they said that Q’anjob’al is the language of our ancestors, and that the language was going to connect

me to our Maya values and culture.” P14 said, “My parents taught me the language; through the Maya language, I learned to be free.” P3 commented, “My parents were aware that by teaching me the language it was going to reinforce my identity.”

I Want to Learn. Participants expressed that their decision to learn a Mayan language was going to help them understand their identity in the United States. P2 said, “I am learning my Mayan language by myself.” P1 commented, “I personally decided to learn the language.” P13 said, “I am eager to learn the Mayan language.”

Summary of RQ2

How do Maya immigrant youth perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality? After analyzing IQ 4, IQ5, IQ6, IQ7, and IQ8, a total of 21 themes emerged. The themes are: (a) Maya spirituality, (b) music and food, (c) clothes, (d) yes, I am interested, (e) speak it fluently, (f) not interested, (g) keep expressing the Maya culture, (h) understanding Maya culture, (i) connecting the culture with language, (j) keep expressing the Maya culture, (k) (l) it depends on the situation, (m) families can keep cultural practices, (n) strong Maya leaders can inspire, (o) organizations can promote Maya culture, (p) acculturation, (q) not sure, (r) my parents decided for me, (s) they taught me, and (t) I want to learn.

Research Question 3

RQ3: From the students’ perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment? Fifteen participants answered either one or both of the two interview questions below:

- IQ9. Do you think that a secure sense of identity helped you do well in college?

Explain.

- IQ10. Do you think that not having a secure sense of identity hindered you or made college difficult? Explain.

Interview Questions 9 and 10

Do you think that a secure sense of identity helped you do well in college? Explain. Do you think that not having a secure sense of identity hindered you or made college difficult?

Based on the interview responses, four themes were identified as: (a) yes, (b) It helped me discover my life's purpose, (c) It empowered me, and (d) It improved my self-esteem (see Figure 12).

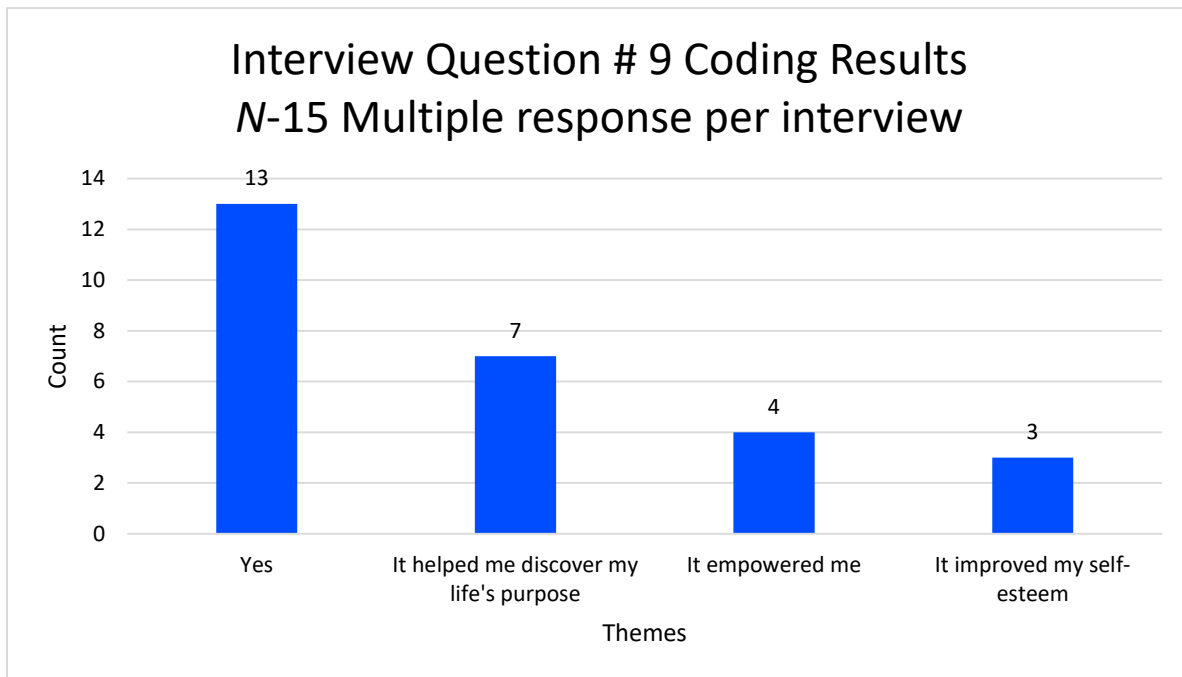
Yes. Participants expressed that their strong Maya identity helped them improve their performance in school. They stated that having a strong cultural identity helped them face and cope with lack of self-esteem. P9 said, “Being aware of my Maya background motivated me to learn more about my Maya culture.” P8 expressed, “During my undergrad, my sense of identity helped me understand who I am and become a better human being.” P2 commented, “My college experience was traumatic, but my Maya heritage helped me find my way out.”

It Helped me Discover my Life's Purpose. Participants expressed that having a Maya identity led them to discover their life’s purpose. What they have discovered is that the Maya values and wisdom have helped them find a purpose. Maya values such as respect and how to live in harmony with the cosmos, nature, our universe, and with other people have deep meanings. Moreover, P1 said, “to understand our lives in the vast universe, one should look at the starry skies and learn from them in silent during the night.” P3 said, “Learning from the Maya values helped me discover my WHY, my life’s purpose. It really helped me find a balance between my professional, emotional, and spiritual life.” When I was in college, my Maya identity helped me discover my passion for Maya spirituality and Maya music. It led me to study

ethnomusicology in graduate school.” P6 commented, “My sense of Maya identity helped me face difficult moments and moved forward.” P10 said, “my sense of Maya identity helped me discover who I am; now I am confident because of my Maya identity.”

Figure 12

Themes That Emerged From Responses to IQ9



It Empowered Me. Participants expressed that having a strong sense of Maya helped them to freely express themselves in college. They felt confident and capable to perform well in college and in other areas of their lives. Also, they said that having a sense of Maya identity empowered them with a deep sense of belonging. P4 stated, “Knowing who we are can innovate and impact not just the United States but the whole world. P8 said, “My sense of identity led me to love myself and my people.” P11 explained, “Having a sense of security led me to understand my ancestors’ culture.” P2 commented, “Being Maya American helped to set goals and apply to

the best colleges.” P5 said, “It gave me perseverance.” P9 commented, “I discovered my passion and authenticity.”

It Improved my Self-Esteem. Participants expressed that having a sense of identity increased their self-worth. We are not just Indians, we are the legacy of the first peoples, and we are not immigrants but natives. They stated that when they think of themselves in this way, their self-esteem rises and they realize that they are capable of doing anything. P1 expressed, “It helped me to build a sense of security and self-esteem; it allowed me to try new things and new ways to improve myself.” P8 said, “Sharing the Maya experiences at the university level made me feel proud of who I am.” P13 commented, “A sense of identity led me to cultivate a strong self-esteem; it helped me to dream more and challenge myself to take new opportunities in the U.S.A.”

Summary of RQ3

Do children with a secure sense of their identity perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment? From the students’ perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment? After analyzing interview responses and points of view, a total of 3 themes were identified as: (a) yes, (b) It helped me discover my life's purpose, (c) It empowered me, and (d) It improved my self-esteem.

Summary of Findings

These findings were collected and analyzed using the qualitative phenomenological method. The data compiled are the results of the interviews, and the study focused on the identity and educational experiences of the Maya Q’anjob’al youth living in Los Angeles and in other states. First, the research identified the Maya American youth who have experienced some level of institutional, educational, and life successes in the United States. Second, the research showed

the obstacles and difficulties that the Maya American youth faced to express their Maya identity. Third, the study revealed the main obstacles that the Maya American youth face to preserve their language, Maya values and traditions within the dominant American culture. Fourth, the study showed ideas and recommendations for future Maya leaders and community organizers to promote Mayan languages and Maya heritage. Overall, this study explored the life experiences of Maya American youth.

The research was the result of 15 participants who were carefully selected to contribute with their life experiences. The participants responded to ten semi-structured interview questions and three research questions:

- RQ1: How do Maya immigrant youth ‘perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?
- RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States?
- RQ3: Do children with a secure sense of their identity perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment?

From the students’ perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment?

The researcher coded the data collected using Microsoft Excel and Word. Data analysis was the vivid and live experiences of Maya American youth. Thirty-five themes were created from all interview questions to answer the three research questions (see Table 1). In the Chapter 5, the researcher will show discussions, recommendations, implications for future research, and the conclusions of this research.

Table 1*Summary of Themes From Three Research Questions*

RQ1: How do Maya immigrant youth 'perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?	RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States?	RQ3: Do children with a secure sense of their identity perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment?
Language	Maya Spirituality	It helped me discover my life's purpose
Tradition	Music & Food	It empowered me
Music & Dance	Clothes	It improved my self-esteem
Cultural expressions	Speaking it fluently	
Speaking Mayan Language	Keep expressing the Maya culture	
Music & Art	Understand Maya Identity	
	Maya heritage	
	Maya Music & Dance	
	Spirituality	
	Families can sustain Maya traditions	
	Maya Leaders can inspire youth	
	Organizations can promote Maya culture	
	Acculturation	
	My parents decided for me	
	They taught me	
	I want to learn	

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of Maya American youth of the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in the United States. It examined whether American-born Maya children affirmed their indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al background and if they performed better in school and had a better adjustment to life if they had a secure sense of identity. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings related to the literature on the post-colonial theory and the theoretical approach of William G. Demmert's CBE practices, which refers to education that recognizes the importance of indigenous languages, culture, spirituality, and community participation (Demmert & Towner, 2003). In addition, this study includes a discussion on decolonization theories and the impact of colonization on Maya cultural identity and language loss, and the experiences of Maya American youth in the United States. Furthermore, this investigation aimed to inform more effective strategies in educational leadership that will empower and celebrate Maya Indigenous identities and languages, rather than oppress them. The study concludes with an implication for practice and a summary of the findings.

This chapter contains discussions to help answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do Maya American youth 'perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality?
- RQ2: How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in the United States?
- RQ3: From the students' perspective, do they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment?

The findings were grouped by themes under each research question and aligned to the literature review. For instance, under RQ1, the findings contain themes such as (a) Maya Q'anjob'al music and dance, (b) Maya cultural expressions, and (c) speaking Mayan languages. Under RQ2, the findings contain themes such as (a) Maya Spirituality, (b) Maya clothing, (c) speaking the Mayan language fluently, (d) keep expressing the Maya culture, (e) understanding Maya identity, (f) families can sustain Maya traditions, (g) Maya leaders can inspire youth, and (h) organizations can promote Maya culture. Under RQ3, the findings contain themes such as (a) Identity helped some participants discover their lives' purpose, (b) it empowered their purpose, and (c) it improved their self-esteem.

Interpretation of the Findings

Earlier researchers had suggested that it was uncertain whether Maya American children would inherit the Maya culture, identity, and language. Peñalosa (1986) stated that the future of the Maya children in Los Angeles was doubtful because children were reluctant to learn the Mayan languages and instead preferred learning Spanish and English. This study revealed what Peñalosa anticipated four decades ago. For example, the participants stated that Spanish was their first language and a few of them speak their parents' Mayan languages. For instance, when asked "How do Maya immigrant youth 'perceive/understand/know their identity, culture, language, and spirituality (RQ1)," the majority of the respondents (54.4%) reported that Spanish was their first language, with Q'anjob'al the second most frequent response (26.3%), and all other languages at 7% or less. Three of the respondents said that English was their first language (5.3%). It is not a surprise that Spanish is the dominant language among the Maya people; researchers state that the Mayan languages are slowly disappearing. For instance, Yoshioka (2010) states that in both Mexico and Guatemala, indigenous languages are at risk of extinction.

Yoshioka (2010) explains that because languages influence people's ways of thinking and help them identify with particular ethnic groups, indigenous language loss can result in severe problems that extend well beyond the demise of these languages. This is the case for Maya American youth who are slowly losing their native language.

Also, Krauss (1992) states that we can expect to lose half of the world's 6000 languages this century, and by the end of this century, most of the languages that are still spoken will be endangered (Krauss, 1992). The researchers' prediction is evident in Guatemala and the United States. For instance, Batz (2010) states that children of immigrants of all backgrounds are facing difficulties in preserving their parental language, culture, and identity in the United States. Batz (2010) believes that these challenges can be attributed to the educational system. The loss of Mayan languages and other Native languages are the negative effects of colonization in cultures and societies (Drabinski, 2019).

The loss of Mayan language in the United States is evident among the Maya American youth. There are various reasons why this is happening. LeBaron (2016) states that Maya children face prejudice from nonindigenous immigrant children who have learned from their parents to see Maya-indigenous culture and values as inferior. Also, economic poverty, language barriers, and the mistreatment they receive from other children result in weak self-esteem and a lack of pride in their heritage (LeBaron, 2016). For some participants in this study, parental influence played an important role. For example, two of the participants stated that their parents did not want them to learn the Mayan languages. They said that they just wanted to speak English to avoid mixing two or more languages. Also, they stated that their parents did not want them to grow up not being proficient in English; their parents wanted the best for them, and according to them, the best was speaking English only. According to Chavez (2009), these

expressions from the participants and studies done by researchers on the loss of Indigenous languages are due to various kinds of cultural imperialism.

On the one hand, researchers state that some of the Maya parents experienced discrimination in their home countries. For example, LeBaron (2012) claims that the Maya brings with them memories of being oppressed by dominant Hispanic groups in their homelands, and sometimes they hide their Indigenous identity. Indeed, no parents want their kids to face discrimination, and as a result, distance their children from their Indigenous identity in an attempt to protect them from abuse.

According to Loucky (2019), in recent decades, due to political turmoil, violence, and the necessity of survival, there have been significant numbers of Mesoamerica people crossing north and across the continent. In particular, Loucky (2019) states that the Maya Q'anjob'al ethnic group who have migrated to the United States left Guatemala during the Guatemalan Civil War of the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. The Maya people were the most impacted by the consequences of the war. During this time period, the Guatemalan military forced the Maya people into massive displacement throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico, and other Central American countries (Loucky, 2019). The Maya did not have a choice. They were forced to leave their families, communities, and sacred places against their own will (Camposeco & Burns, 2012). Hence, parents who lived through these negative experiences of discrimination and violence for being Maya do not want their children to deal with oppressive experiences.

According to the participants, another reason why parents did not pass on the Mayan language to their children was because of their busy work-life. They stated that their parents were too busy working and doing their best to assimilate into the American culture. In the participants' own words, P1 expressed that his parents, in their busy lives and trying to assimilate and learn

English, they told him to speak English at home so his parents could also learn English from him. Another participant said, “My parents told me that in order to be successful in the United States, I must leave my Mayan language behind.” Other participants commented that their parents only spoke Spanish to them and avoided speaking their native language in front of them. The participants’ responses confirmed what most scholars of post-colonialism have claimed. Participants’ experiences align with what Ashcroft (2017) states on the effects of colonization on cultures and societies and how these cultures have responded to the impacts of colonization. The Maya people were forced out of their territory and their lands were taken away from them. In Lynes’s (2012) point of view, displacement of Indigenous peoples by the colonizers included the following: genocide as in the periodic wholesale killing of native North and South Americans at various times by the British, French, Portuguese, and Spanish; enslavement and enforced labor as in the capturing of Africans for work on American and Caribbean plantations and in mines. Lynes (2012) emphasizes the general forms of exploitation, exclusion, suppression, and discrimination, supported by the various forms of political, economic, and religious systems introduced by the colonial authorities (Lynes, 2012). The oppressive systems outlined by Lynes (2012) have contributed to generational trauma that continues to impact indigenous communities. Sherry (2012) believes that these effects of colonialism on the human soul and mind have created specific mental pathologies and disorders. These mental disorders on the Maya consist of shame of their identity and culture, and shame of speaking the Native languages. These are just a few examples of the different challenges that the parents of Maya American youth faced in the United States. Maya children who have not developed their self-identity, self-esteem, or Maya cultural pride are most impacted (LeBaron, 2016). Furthermore, Vicente (2019) explains that language discrimination is a very serious problem because it directly strips Maya American

children away from their identity. Due to the pain attached to speaking an Indigenous language, parents prefer not to expose their children to the Native language. Grandparents use their maternal language, their Indigenous language, as the only means to communicate and transmit love and affection to grandchildren. However, the moment the link between grandparents and grandchildren is cut, so is the language. Consequently, when language is lost, other aspects of indigenous identities are also lost, such as the culture of storytelling (Vicente, 2019).

On the other hand, parents play a significant role in the survival of Mayan languages in the United States. The participants in this research expressed that the reason they still have some basic knowledge of the Mayan languages is that their parents still speak the languages at home. When asked which Mayan languages were spoken in their home, 65% indicated Q'anjob'al, and 21% specified Chuj. Similarly, the participants demonstrated that when given the opportunity to specify which language they would be most interested in learning, the responses aligned consistently with the language that they indicated was spoken in their homes, such as Q'anjob'al and Chuj. Parental role in sustaining Mayan languages confirms research on Indigenous languages revitalization. Researchers have shown that parents play an important role in the lives of children. For instance, Mesinas and Perez (2016) revealed the influence Zapotec parents have on their children in enabling them to remain connected to their Zapotec culture and identity. The authors state that children of parents who identified as indigenous and encouraged Zapotec language use were more likely to also identify as indigenous and speak Zapotec. Similarly, this research showed that Maya parents play an important role in keeping the Mayan languages and culture. According to the respondents in this study, overall, the respondents agreed that parents encourage them to embrace their Mayan heritage. For example, some of the participants expressed that their parents taught them limited Mayan languages. P7 said, "My parents helped

me understand and speak Q'anjob'al for survival." P10 expressed, "My parents taught me Q'anjob'al, English, and Spanish. They said that being trilingual was going to benefit me in the long run." Other participant said, "My parents taught me; they said that Q'anjob'al is the language of our ancestors and that the language was going to connect me to our Maya values and culture." Indeed, parental influence played a significant role on the Maya American youth who speak some or partial Mayan languages.

Maintaining Maya Heritage in the United States

Based on data analysis, Maya American youth demonstrated great curiosity about keeping their Maya heritage, Mayan language, and identity. Four decades ago, Peñalosa (1986) stated that it was very uncertain whether Maya American children would inherit the Maya culture, identity, and language. At that same period, Peñalosa (1986) also stated that some Maya children demonstrated great curiosity about their Maya heritage and they worried about losing their Maya language and identity. Peñalosa's (1986) early claim gives an important insight into the difficult problem of preserving identity, culture, and languages in Indigenous communities. The participants' responses in this study answer Peñalosa's (1986) early claim. According to the participants, they expressed their decision to learn a Mayan language because it was going to help them understand their identity in the United States. For instance, P2 said, "I am learning my Mayan language by myself." P1 commented, "I personally decided to learn the language." P13 said, "I am eager to learn the Mayan language." As a whole, the group showed a strong interest in Mayan languages with 90% responding that the languages were very important to them. 86% of the respondents indicated a desire to learn a Mayan language and another 8.6% stated they might be interested in learning a Mayan language. These results offer some hope for the future of Native languages in the United States.

Several Ways to Express, Keep, and Maintain Maya Identity in the United States

Maya American youth believe that there is more than one way to express, keep, and maintain Maya identity in the United States. For instance, (Batz, 2014) states that in Los Angeles, California, where Maya children are confronted with pressure to adapt to an environment that is predominantly Latino/Hispanic, Maya children express their identity through the use of traditional dress, language, literature, and spirituality (Batz, 2014). That author states that these forms of expressing identity are challenged by Euro-American culture, which discriminates against these customs. Batz (2014) states that these conditions are more severe for Maya children, who face difficulties in maintaining their heritage as the system of education socializes them into the U.S. culture and history. Nonetheless, Batz (2014) concludes that the Maya children in Los Angeles are recovering their identity and culture through music, spirituality, literature, and language, resisting imposed identities and reaffirming their Maya roots. Also, according to Hiller et al. (2009), some of the first and second-generation Maya immigrants living in South Florida resist public mis-categorization when grouped into the Hispanic community by emphasizing their indigenous heritage. Hiller et al. (2009) share the stories of Maya immigrants who explain the struggles Indigenous immigrants face in the United States as they resist the erasure of their identity.

The participants in this study, Maya American youth, believe that Mayan languages are not the only way to keep Maya identity. When asked, (RQ2), “How do Indigenous identity, culture, language, and spirituality impact/influence the lives of Maya youth raised and educated in The United States?” The participants stated that while speaking a Mayan language is very powerful, Maya spirituality, music and food, clothes, dance, and other Maya traditions also

influenced their lives and are also good strategies to understand, live, express, and keep the Maya culture and identity.

Maya Spirituality

According to Hart (2008), since the arrival of the Europeans, the indigenous people of what is now Guatemala have endured massacres, persecution, and discrimination. Hart (2008) states that the Maya religious beliefs and practices have been condemned as superstition and witchcraft. Yet the spiritual worldview of the Maya has survived and even flourishes, five centuries after the invaders' first attempts to destroy it (Hart, 2008). Those who practice Maya spirituality today, their spirituality is based on the relationship between God, the World, the Ancestors, and a sense of the Maya worldview as it is revealed through myth, ceremony, and teaching with its many variations and adaptability that has sustained it for over five hundred years (Hart, 2008). Participants in this study expressed their views on Maya spirituality and the role it plays in their lives.

According to the participants, Maya spirituality has had a great impact on their lives growing up in The United States. P8 said, "Through Maya spirituality we connect with the Spirit of our ancestors and with Mother Nature." They commented that Maya spirituality is completely different from Western Spirituality. Maya spirituality consists of being connected with everything around us; it consists of being in union with Mother Earth, the sky, the wind, the water, etc. P4 said, "We have high respect for Mother Nature and all living things, and animals just as we respect our fellow human beings." Also, P4 said, "I can dance to the music of Mother Nature just as I dance the music of my ancestors; to me, this is Maya Spirituality." P6 commented, "Maya spirituality consists of being in connection with everything around us, with the world." These expressions are very promising. Earlier researchers focused on Mayan

languages and very little on Native Maya spirituality. The participants believe that Maya spirituality is another important way to express and maintain Maya identity.

Maya Music

Participants stated that they express their Maya identity through music. The most common Maya music and instrument they identify with is the Marimba. The Marimba is very common among the Maya in Guatemala and the United States. The Marimba is a native instrument that consists of three long tables with wooden keyboards and sound boxes (Clark, 2017). According to Clark (2017), the Marimba is more than just entertainment for the Maya Communities; the Marimba is a living being, its significance goes beyond the sounds it produces. Clark (2017) explains that for the Q'anjob'als, the Marimba speaks to its listeners and does nothing short of enveloping them in the natural order of the universe and Mother Earth.

The Maya American youth embrace Marimba music and dance as part of their Maya identity. Five of the participants expressed that music is a way to express their cultural identity. They stated that music adds vivid experiences to their lives in The United States. For instance, P1 said, "music is the most cultural expression of my roots." Other participants expressed that music and dance reinforce their Maya identity. They stated that practicing the traditional Maya music creates a feeling of belonging. For example, P13 said, "When I listen to the Marimba music, it makes me proud of whom I am." P4 commented, "When I dance the Marimba, I feel connected to my Maya heritage." Indeed, the Maya American youth who participated in this study embraced the Native Maya Q'anjob'al Marimba music as part of their cultural identity. In part, parents introduced their children to Maya music. Results indicate that the children of parents who were the most involved in cultural groups and organizations were more likely to participate in traditional dance and music groups (Mesinas & Perez, 2016).

Food

The participants expressed that food is also a cultural expression of their Maya heritage. They mentioned that the handmade tortillas, tamales, and other Native foods are unique to their cultural identity in the United States. Additionally, they stated that the diet of their ancestors was corn. One of the participants explained that those who grew up in Guatemala used corn as a primary diet; they ate tortillas with each meal three times a day. Furthermore, they recalled how their grandparents prepared the corn by boiling it in limewater and then draining it in a strainer. According to one of the participants, their grandparents made flat tortillas, tamales, and atol de maize (corn drink). In addition to the participants' explanation of their ancestors' diet, Wyatt (2002) states that the Mesoamerican people used different kinds of squashes to complement the Mesoamerican diet. The Mesoamerican people used vegetables such as tomatoes, tomatillos, greens, sweet potato, manioc, and jicama to complement their diet (Wyatt, 2002). Wyatt (2002) adds that avocado also played a role in the Mesoamerican diet along with chili pepper, and calabashes. No discussion of Mesoamerican cuisine can proceed without mentioning chocolate or cacao (Wyatt, 2002). However, due to colonization, other ingredients and chemicals were introduced to the Maya diet. According to the participants in the study, the tortillas in the United States are not organic anymore. They said that the tortillas in the United States are made of Maseca, even though they are labeled as naturally, gluten-free.

Maya Clothing

The participants expressed pride in wearing the *trajes* (Maya clothing). Two of the participants mentioned that clothing is another way to express Maya cultural identity. P2 said that the Maya clothing brings a deep sense of identity. The vivid colorful clothes that Maya people wear on special occasions represent the uniqueness of the Maya culture. Each department

(equivalent to states in the U.S.) in Guatemala uses different colorful clothes. For instance, the Maya Q'anjob'al women wear the Huipil (a hand-woven blouse) and Corte (a hand-woven skirt). The Maya Q'anjob'al men wear a Capixaj (a hand-woven coat). The Huipil and a Capixaj represent the Q'anjob'al identity and help distinguish the Maya Q'anjob'al from other Maya people. Some studies suggest that to facilitate evangelization and control of the Maya communities, the Spaniards imposed a policy of standardization of dress for the Maya population (Otzoy, 1992). However, according to Otzoy (1992), there is no concrete evidence about such a statement but there is a trace of a royal ID issued on October 1563, which reads: no person, man or woman, is allowed to wear any textile that was embroidered. This royal order was largely ignored by the Maya people (Otzoy, 1992). For over more than 500 years of resistance, the Maya people are using the vivid colorful clothes that Maya people wear on special occasions to represent the uniqueness of the Maya culture in the United States. The Maya American youth who participated in this study embraced the Huipil and a Capixaj with pride.

Challenges of the Maya American Youth

The Maya American youth communicated that expressing their Maya identity in the United States has been a challenge. Maya children express their identity through the use of traditional dress, language, literature, and spirituality (Batz, 2014). Batz (2014) states that these forms of expressing identity are challenged by Euro-American culture, which discriminates against these customs. According to Batz (2014), Maya children are confronted with pressure to adapt to an environment that is predominantly Latino/Hispanic. Furthermore, Batz (2014) states that these conditions are more severe for Maya children, who face difficulties in maintaining their heritage as public education socializes them into the U.S. culture and history.

Participants in the study recognized that expressing their Maya culture was a major challenge, but remain determined to keep their culture alive. They are constantly bombarded by other ways of thinking and other ways of living. P1 commented, “The challenge is to continue sharing our Maya culture.” Nonetheless, they believe that the only way to keep the Maya culture alive in the United States is to keep the different Maya expressions. P2 said, “We should keep our Mayan languages, music, art, and clothing as ways to stay connected with our Maya heritage.” The Maya American youth are aware that even though they don’t speak the Mayan languages anymore, they are embracing the Maya music, clothing, and Spirituality as a way to keep their Maya culture and identity.

Maya American Youth Believe that the Maya Culture has a Future in the US

According to LeBaron (n.d.), thousands of the Maya people living in the United States have established hundreds, perhaps thousands of self-help or hometown associations promoting awareness on concerns regarding religion, Maya spirituality, culture, youth education, and general wellbeing. This is one of the main characteristics of the Maya people. They live in community and they practice and live by the communal way of knowing, sharing, and understanding. Maya community organizations have existed in the United States since at least the 1980s, and organizations can be found throughout the country (LeBaron, n.d.). Furthermore, LeBaron (n.d.) states that some of the second generations have begun to advocate for the practice of cultural or Maya self-identity traditions as well. LeBaron’s (n.d.) claims are visible in the Maya American youth who participated in this study. Participants stated that they are aware of the communal way of knowing, living, and understanding. The young people believe that the Maya families, communities, and Maya organizations will continue promoting Maya identity and culture. For instance, the participants commented that some of the work by Maya leaders is

slowly impacting the lives of Maya youth in the United States through Maya workshops and conferences. They said that the more people promote Maya education and Maya events, the more Maya American children will embrace the Maya culture in the United States. Hence, the Maya American youth believe that the Maya culture will continue to flourish in the United States by continuing to do the following:

Families Can Sustain the Maya Cultural Practices

One participant commented that Maya families in the United States should continue to pass on the Maya traditions such as music and language to their children. P3 commented, “Families are the foundations of the Maya culture; they should continue teaching the Maya youth the Maya core values.”

Maya Leaders Can Inspire the Youth

Participants expressed that the future of the Maya culture will also depend on good leadership. Participants believe in good and strong leaders who are able to motivate and inspire the next generation of young Maya people. They stated that leaders can transform lives by adding Maya values to the Maya communities. P12 said, “A leader can lead by example; also, a leader can educate the younger generation by modeling.” Maya leaders practice authentic and servant leadership; these types of leadership qualities bring the community together in the United States and make it possible for Maya cultures to keep the Maya identity while they assimilate into the dominant culture.

Organizations Can Promote Maya Culture

Participants commented that the more Maya organizations promote Maya cultural events, the more impact Maya Organizations will have on the next generation. P1 said, “The future of the Maya in The United States will also depend on Maya organizations; leaders with strong

conviction and commitment will keep the culture alive.” Statements from the participants are hopeful as they recognize the factors that have the power to sustain their cultural identity. The results confirm LeBaron’s (2016) claim that some of the second generations are advocating for the future of their cultural or Maya self-identity.

Maya American Youth with a Strong Sense of Identity do Well in School

Participants expressed that their firm connection to their Maya identity has helped them stand strong and not be influenced by other dominant cultures. For instance, Hiller et al. (2009) explained that first and second-generation Maya immigrants living in South Florida resist public miscategorization when grouped into the Hispanic community by emphasizing their indigenous heritage. The authors state that Maya children from Guatemala resist being called Guatemalan. According to Hiller et al. (2009), Maya children used statements such as “I am Maya, not Guatemalan, nor Hispanic” to express their belongingness in Southern Florida. These generations of Maya American youth offer hope for the next generations of Maya American children to come.

Also, research has supported the notion that young people who value their ethnic culture and languages improve academic performance (LeBaron, 2016). From the participants’ perspective, when asked if they feel that with a secure sense of identity they perform better in school and/or have life fulfillment (RQ3), the majority of the participants answered that their strong connections to their Maya identity played a vital role in their success in college. They stated that having a strong cultural identity helped them face and cope with a lack of self-esteem. P9 said, “Being aware of my Maya background motivated me to learn more about my Maya culture.” P8 expressed, “During my undergrad, my sense of identity helped me understand who I am and become a better human being.” P2 commented, “My college experience was traumatic,

but my Maya heritage helped me find my way out.” According to the Maya American youth, having a strong sense of Maya identity helped them to discover the following:

My Maya Identity Helped me Discover my Life's Purpose

P1 said, “To understand our lives in the vast universe, one should look at the starry skies and learn from them in silence during the night.” P3 said, “Learning from the Maya values helped me discover my WHY, my life’s purpose. It really helped me find a balance between my professional, emotional, and spiritual life.” When I was in college, my Maya identity helped me discover my passion for Maya spirituality and Maya music. It led me to study ethnomusicology in graduate school.” P6 commented, “My sense of Maya identity supported me through difficult moments and helped me move forward.” P10 said, “My sense of my Maya identity helped me discover who I am; now I am confident because of my Maya identity.”

My Maya Identity Empowered Me

P4 stated, “Knowing who we are can innovate and impact not just the United States but the whole world. P8 said, “My sense of identity led me to love myself and my people.” P11 explained, “Having a sense of security led me to understand my ancestors’ culture.” P2 commented, “Being Maya American helped to set goals and apply to the best colleges.”

My Maya Identity Improved my Self-Esteem

P1 expressed, “It (Maya identity) helped me to build a sense of security and self-esteem; it allowed me to try new things and new ways to improve myself.” P8 said, “Sharing the Maya experiences at the university level made me feel proud of who I am.” P13 commented, “A sense of identity led me to cultivate a strong self-esteem; it helped me to dream more and challenge myself to take new opportunities in the U.S.A.”

Maya American youth have acknowledged that Maya values such as respect, harmony, connection with nature and the universe, Maya spirituality, and connection with other people have helped them find a purpose. This is a great indication that, overall, having a strong sense of identity helped them to freely express themselves and succeed in college and in other aspects of their lives. Also, having a strong sense of Maya identity empowered them with a deep sense of belonging, and nurtured their self-worth. None of the participants identified as immigrants. They strongly believed that they are not just “Indians;” they are the legacy of the first peoples.

Implications for Practice

This research has led to a series of actions to enhance the understanding of the Maya culture in the United States and how it helps the educational system to be more inclusive in their, but not limited to, K-12 programs. The results of this research can be tailored to the needs of other indigenous groups of students or other individuals seeking life fulfillment, with similar experiences, challenges, and feelings. Also, this research helps families, community leaders, and educators expand their leadership experiences and cultural awareness of Maya American youth in the United States.

When Indigenous students are empowered by their identities (as demonstrated by the participants in this study) they are able to think critically of the world that tries to erase their existence. Students are able to challenge that oppression and work towards creating a more equitable future for themselves and generations to come. Educators need to be aware of the students’ values, their goals, and most importantly, their identities. At the core of students’ success is their relationship to their Indigenous identities and the challenges they are forced to overcome in a western society. When educational systems fail to recognize students’ identities

and the struggles they face, they fail to foster students' potential. Educators need to take the time to get to know their students in order to genuinely contribute to their success.

Recommendations for Leadership Practice

This research can be viewed as a valuable resource of knowledge based on the experiences of the Maya American youth. The Maya youth in this study has gained self-knowledge, personal growth, personal development, and wisdom through their struggles and challenges. They have learned to navigate into the American system, Latino Speaking communities, and Maya communities. Their blends of experiences are assets to the American schools and to society and they have so much to offer.

- Educational leaders should get to know the Maya students. Maya students may have Latino or Hispanic names but that does not mean they are Latinos or Hispanics.
- School welcomes and recognizes Indigenous and Native American students.
- Schools should have additional resources such as books, online resources, posters, etc. that would support and increase Indigenous and Native American awareness.
- Be aware that many Maya American youth, who have not developed self-esteem or cultural identity, they may be shy or reluctant to be recognized as Maya. They tend to call themselves Latino or Guatemalan. This is due to the negative connotation attached to being an Indian in Latin America or because the parents have passed some shame. However, the second generations of Maya in this study gained self-esteem, cultural identity and have begun advocating for themselves. They are aware of the communal way of knowing, thinking, interpreting, and understanding.

Find Active Ways to Engage Students

Create a class period (seminar or advisory) where students can share their personal stories, struggles, and learn from each other.

Values and Contributions that Maya Can Bring to Others

- Respect for the land and environment
- Live in harmony with the self, community, and Mother Nature
- Protect the environment
- Community wellbeing
- Communal way of making decisions

Educational leaders should learn more from the Maya traditional knowledge and leadership styles—Authentic and Servant Leadership. Professional development should be offer to educators about these leadership styles but from the Maya way. In general, the Maya knows that we want higher test scores and student engagement. However, if we take out their core values from the classroom, if we are not aware of their cultural identity and use some of it in our classrooms, we are embracing their humanity.

Conclusion

The use of the qualitative method research was one of the best ways to explore whether the Maya culture will survive in the United States. Also, based on the literature review, Maya children, specifically, face huge challenges. Most Maya American children have not developed self-identity, nor have they developed self-esteem or Maya cultural pride. However, the phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to understand the participants' experiences with preserving May culture and identity.

The interviews and the research literature revealed the experiences of Maya American youth. The interview participants shared their experiences, struggles, challenges, and their Maya identity and cultural pride. Based on the participants' experiences, the Maya culture is alive in the United States. They may not speak the Mayan languages but they have found other ways to express and keep their Maya identity and culture alive.

This dissertation research was created for the benefit of the educators of Maya children in schools in the United States. However, it is hoped also that the results of the study will serve as a motivation and inspiration to Maya American children and their parents. The findings in this research can contribute to the education of other Indigenous students as well.

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APPENDIX A

Online Survey

Survey Link- [http://bit.ly/Maya AmericanIdentitySurvey](http://bit.ly/MayaAmericanIdentitySurvey)
Questionnaire

Participant #:

1. Place of birth:
2. Sex:
3. First Language:
3. Languages spoken at home:
4. What is your opinion of the Q'anjob'al language?
5. Are you attending college now? What year are you? Which college are you attending?
6. If you are a graduate, what degree did you complete?
7. Have your parents encouraged you to embrace your Maya Identity?

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Maya Q'anjobal American Youth: Part 1

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. What do you know about Maya Culture? Explain.
3. Do you identify yourself as a Maya Q'anjob'al? Explain.
4. What Maya Q'anjob'al cultural expressions do you value the most and why? e.g. Maya music, language, spirituality, clothing, etc.
5. If you do not speak the Mayan Q'anjob'al language, would you be interested in learning it?
6. What experiences do you have as being a Maya in the United States? Explain
7. What are some of your challenges and strengths of expressing your Maya identity?
8. Do you think that the Maya culture will have a future in the United States? Explain.

Please answer question either #9 or #10

9. Do you think that a secure sense of identity helped you do well in college?
10. Do you think that not having a secure sense of identity hindered you or made college difficult?
11. Please tell me your general views about being a Maya Q'anjob'al in the United States.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Maya Q'anjobal American Youth: Part 2

IRB #:

Participant Study Title:

AFFIRMING THE IDENTITY OF MAYA YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES

Formal Study Title:

THE IDENTITY EXPERIENCES OF MAYA Q'ANJOB'AL AMERICAN YOUTH AND MAYAN LANGUAGE LOSS: A POST-COLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY.

Authorized Study Personnel

Principal Investigator: Juanatano Cano, MA Office: (818) xxx-xxxx

Key Information:

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- (Males/Females) between the ages of 20 to 30 years old
- Procedures will include (contacting participants using the recruitment script, informed consent, data collection via structured interview, transcription of data, analysis of data, documentation of findings)
- One online survey and one virtual interview are required
- The virtual visit will take approximately one hour
- There is minimal risk associated with this study
- You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation
- You will be provided a copy of this consent form.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an undergraduate or graduate Maya American student. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate.

What is the reason for doing this research study?

LeBaron (2016) shares the experience of a young Maya student who said that on her first day of school in the United States, knowing little English and Spanish, made her feel ashamed of her Maya background. She said that she and other children preferred to claim Mexican as their identity because they thought it a higher status (LeBaron, 2012). Other Maya youths ask hard questions such as the following: Who am I? What is my identity? Can I identify myself as Maya even though I no longer speak the Mayan language? (Pastoral Maya Conference-2012).

The future of the Maya in the United States seems uncertain, particularly on how the new generations will view their Maya heritage (Camposeco, 2019). Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Maya American youth of the Q'anjob'al ethnic group in Los Angeles and in other states. It will examine whether American-born Maya children affirm their indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al background and if they perform better in school and have a better adjustment to life if they have a secure sense of identity.

What will be done during this research study?

You will be asked to complete one online survey using an internet-based questionnaire. The survey will take 5 minutes to complete and you may complete them from your home computer. Based on your response to the survey questions, you may be selected for an interview. The interview will take about approximately to one hour.

How will my data be used?

Data will be used to examine whether American-born Maya children affirm their indigenous Maya Q'anjob'al background and if they perform better in school and have a better adjustment to life if they have a secure sense of identity.

What are the possible risks of being in this research study?

This research presents minimal risks of emotional and/or psychological distress –this is a risk because the survey and interview involve sensitive questions about recounting stories, negative personal or professional experiences of racism that might trigger negative past experiences or feelings of being Indigenous.

What are the possible benefits to you?

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this study.

What are the possible benefits to other people?

The Maya Community in the United States is relatively new. There has been little research done on Maya in the United States. Furthermore, in Guatemala, there has been research done on the Maya K'iche, Mam and, Kakchiquel but very little is known about the Maya Q'anjob'al. Therefore, this study will not only benefit society and academia but also the many generations of the Maya Q'anjob'al to be known worldwide.

What will being in this research study cost you?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Will you be compensated for being in this research study?

You will not be paid any amount of money for your participation in this study.

What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact the person listed at the beginning of this consent form.

How will information about you be protected?

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 3 years after the study is complete. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

What are your rights as a research subject?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Phone: 1(310)568-2305
- Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University (list others as applicable).

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

Documentation of informed consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Participant Name:

(Name of Participant: Please print)

Participant Signature:

Signature of Research Participant

Date

My signature certifies that all elements of informed consent described on this consent form have been explained fully to the subject. In my judgment, the participant possesses the capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

Juanatano Cano
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

02/10/2021
Date

APPENDIX D

Pepperdine IRB Approval



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 25, 2021

Protocol Investigator Name: Juanatano Cano

Protocol #: 20-12-1497

Project Title: THE IDENTITY EXPERIENCES OF MAYA Q#ANJOB#AL AMERICAN YOUTH AND MAYAN LANGUAGE LOSS: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY.

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Juanatano Cano:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX E

CITI Certification



Completion Date 31-Mar-2018
Expiration Date 30-Mar-2021
Record ID 26648729

This is to certify that:

Juanatano Cano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Graduate & Professional Schools HSR (Curriculum Group)
Graduate & Professional Schools - IRB Members and Reviewers (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Pepperdine University



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w23469964-0911-4810-8200-9b5c808ad07e-26648729