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NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH EXPLORING AND EXPRESSING WHO THEY ARE THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING

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NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH EXPLORING AND EXPRESSING WHO THEY ARE THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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Abstract

This holistic single-case study aims to understand the impact of digital storytelling on the identity development of Native American youth. The question that guides the study asks, "How do Native American adolescents in a rural, tribal-run after-school program for Indigenous youth explore and express who they are through digital storytelling?" Five Indigenous youth enrolled in the tribal-run program participated in the study, and they completed a digital storytelling project that contains multiple components and interviews. Data sources include funds of knowledge maps, shields, storyboards, and interview transcripts. In addition to using thematic analysis as an overarching method to identify themes, depending on the specific data type, the researcher also conducted constant comparison, content analysis, and/or intertextual transcription to analyze the data. The findings indicate that the youth engaged in the process, explored and solidified their personal identity, and discovered personal strength through reflection. The findings suggest that digital storytelling enabled the youth to draw on Indigenous knowledges and literacy, enact agency and voice, and exercise sovereignty and self-determination. The findings additionally reveal the continued presence of racism in school as well as the need to transform schools into more inclusive, multicultural sites that embrace and support the cultures, languages, and identities of all students. Overall, digital storytelling is an especially valuable activity for Indigenous youth, and it can facilitate a transformation within the educational system.

Keywords: Native American adolescents, Indigenous youth, digital storytelling, identity, case study

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When I first began my doctoral program, I had a general notion that I wanted to pursue a line of research that focused on adolescent and multimodal literacies; however, my intentions lacked any further development or direction. Adolescent multimodal literacy is an interesting and certainly relevant topic, but I questioned its ability, at least in this broad conceptualization, to contribute meaningfully to the existing body of research and literature. After co-authoring a paper that reflected on literacy and socialization within Indigenous communities, I felt that I had found the direction my research should take. The topic was of personal interest in part because my oldest child is Muskogee (Creek), and as I progressed through my coursework, I was able to better understand the impact that historical, social, and educational factors have had on my child as well as my child's father.

I developed a strong interest in respectfully exploring and understanding Indigenous cultures as well as ways to improve educational experiences for American Indian youth. Through a friendship that developed at the beginning of my doctoral program and through my research, I was challenged to question my assumptions and beliefs, and I came to realize that I lacked a significant understanding of the decimating effects that settler colonialism had, and continues to have, on the cultures, languages, and identities of Indigenous peoples. As I explored the topics of literacy and identity in regard to Native American adolescents from the various perspectives of Indigenous scholars and allies, I more critically understood the imperative need for educators to interrogate their own biases and perceptions of education and literacy in order to effectively support the academic, social, and cultural development of all students. Educators cannot describe their teaching practices or their curricula or their pedagogies as transformational or empowering without an acute understanding that schools have long been tools of oppression and assimilation.

Teachers must examine themselves, their positions in society, their roles in the classroom, and the effects that these have on their curricular and pedagogical choices.

I have worked with the program director and the youth enrolled in a rural, tribal-run after-school program for over one year, and the process of establishing relationships with them has been extremely insightful. The program's goals include supporting the youth academically, encouraging their cultural development, and establishing good habits to be both mentally and physically healthy. Having interviewed a few of the youth for a previous project and having observed them during homework time, I better understand the need for educational reform not only at the policy level but at the site level as well. There is also a great need for the youth to develop a more holistic understanding of themselves and of their languages and cultures as well as the historical events which have endeavored to eradicate their languages, cultures, and identities. By understanding how the effects of these historical events are manifested in their communities, their families, and their own personal lives, the youth are able to enact agency and advocate for themselves and their communities. It is my hope that this research project will empower the youth in this program to give voice to their experiences and identities and to share them with others.

Problem Statement

The overall academic and literacy achievement scores of Native American youth continue to be significantly lower than those of their White peers. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported a nationwide average graduation rate of 85% for all students in 2017. The average graduation rate for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students was 72% in 2017 compared to 89% of their White peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Additionally, NAEP (NCES, 2018) Grade 8 average reading scores indicate

that only 22% of AI/AN students scored at or above proficient while 45% of their White peers scored at or above proficient. This discrepancy in scores is comparable to the Grade 8 math scores as well: 18% of AI/AN students and 45% of their White peers scored at or above proficient (NCES, 2018; Ninneman et al., 2017).

In Oklahoma, the average graduation rate in 2017 for all students was reported at 83% which includes an average graduation rate of 83% for American Indian (AI) students and 84% for White students (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2018). The OSDE (2018) reported that, on average, 38% of all students in grades 3-8 scored at or above proficient on their state reading assessment. AI students scored at or above proficient (34%) at a significantly lower rate than their White peers (44%). The reported math scores reflect a similar trend. Overall, 34% of all students in grades 3-8 scored at or above proficient in math. Only 30% of AI students scored at or above proficient while 41% of their White peers scored at or above proficient (OSDE, 2018).

The national and state graduation averages are slightly higher than the three school districts that are currently being served by the after-school program in this research. District 1 reported an overall graduation rate of 88% in 2017 with ≥ 90% of White students graduating; however, the graduation rate for AI students in this district was redacted. District 2 reported an overall graduation rate of 100%. While District 2 redacted the graduation rate data of White students, it reported that ≤ 50% of AI students graduated in 2017 which calls into question their overall graduation rate of 100%. In 2017, 73% of all students graduated from District 3 which included 73% of their White students. District 3 also redacted the graduation rate data for its AI students (OSDE, 2018).

The national and state assessment score data were also higher than the averages across the three local school districts. On average, approximately 34% of all students in grades 3-8 in these three districts scored at or above proficient in math which includes 26.5% of AI students and 41.3% of White students. Only 26.7% of all 3rd through 8th grade students in all three districts scored at or above proficient on their state language arts assessment. Among AI students, 18% scored at or above proficient, and 21.7% of their White peers scored at or above proficient (OSDE, 2018). These scores seem to reflect the continuation of assimilatory school practices that have largely ignored the inherent cultural, political, and social aspects of literacy (Gee, 1991; Street, 1984) and that separate Indigenous youth from their cultures, languages, and identities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Indigenous youth are often forced to abandon their cultures and identities in the classroom in order be considered academically successful students by the Euromerican-centered education system. This is because neoliberal education policies (Hursh, 2007), which forward standardization and accountability, favor the literacies and literacy practices of the dominant culture at the expense of the literacies and literacy practices of all other cultures. Accountability education, according to McCarty and Lee (2014) often "privilege a single monolingual and monocultural standard" (p. 119). Because their literacy practices often do not align with those espoused by standardized curricula, Native American youth are prevented from acquiring school-based literacy skills at the same level as their White peers (Banister & Begoray, 2013; Deyhle & Swisher, 1996; McCarty & Lee, 2014).

Educational reform movements also extend the historical demand for assimilation of Indigenous youth because these reform movements require all students to achieve proficiency in the literacies of the dominant culture. Deyhle and Swisher (1997) stated that insisting Indigenous

youth assimilate into Western culture was the foundation of the boarding school system and that the literacy instruction associated with these schools often required the youth to become "'White'" (p. 115). Additionally, they argued that these assimilatory practices are "still evident in teachers' beliefs, pedagogy, and curricula" (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997, p. 116). Requiring Indigenous students to become White has had long lasting and drastic effects including, and perhaps most detrimental, separating them from their cultures, their languages and ways of knowing, and their identities. Standard approaches to literacy refuse to allow these students to fully engage in school-based literacy and literacy practices, they defy effective and relevant literacy practices (Banister & Begoray, 2013; Moje, 2015), and they will not increase in the academic success of Native youth.

Background

Settler colonialism established new narratives that have long served to privilege Western epistemologies and ontologies at the expense of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, languages and identities. Western binary thinking and hierarchical ways of living are maintained through ideological hegemonic narratives (Coulthard, 2010; Gramsci, 1999; Hixon, 2013; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 20078; Marx et al., 1997), and schools became the tools through which Indigenous youth were assimilated into Western culture. Although residential boarding schools were not able to successfully assimilate youth into Western culture, they did significantly weaken the youths' connections to their communities, families, cultures, and languages (Battiste, 1984; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Reyhner & Eder, 1988).

Current neoliberal education policies often serve to perpetuate assimilatory schooling practices and often result in a deficit model of schooling (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Hursh, 2007). Within these frameworks, American Indian youth are often prevented from participating

fully in school-based literacies, and their cultural knowledges and literacies are often neglected (Banister & Begoray, 2013; Battiste et al., 2010; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002). In response, many Indigenous scholars and researchers as well as their allies have called for Indigenous languages, knowledges, and ways of knowing be valued by and be integrated into the Western systems of research and education. Denzin and Lincoln (2008), Kovach (2010), Lomawaima (2000), and Smith (2012) have advocated for decolonized approaches to research that demand tribal sovereignty be recognized, Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies be centered, power relations within the academy and research be critiqued, and relationships be established that benefit the community members involved in the research.

The recognition of tribal sovereignty is imperative in education. Battiste (2002), Brayboy and Castagno (2009), Castagno and Brayboy (2208), Deyhle and Swisher (1997), and McCarty and Lee (2014) have asserted that culturally responsive, sustaining, and revitalizing pedagogies not only recognize tribal sovereignty but also support the linguistic, cultural, and academic development of Indigenous youth. This recognition requires an understanding of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing (Battiste, 2002; Brayboy & McCarty, 2010; Curwen Dogie, 2003). Additionally, Writer (2001) called for a critical examination of Native American identities along with others' perceptions of and assumptions about Native identity. Doing so, she contended, is imperative in order to disrupt not only the stereotypical identities imposed upon Indigenous peoples by those of the dominant culture but also the assimilatory schooling practices which perpetuate these stereotypes. The works by these scholars and allies demonstrate the need for practices that connect and integrate cultural, recreational, and academic literacies.

Literacies are the textual and symbolic ways of knowing as well as the sharing, making, and communication of meanings and norms within and across various groups. The application of these literacies within a group are the group's literacy practices. Therefore, literacies and literacy practices are socially and culturally situated (Gee, 1990, 2010). The processes of becoming and being literate are contextually specific and contribute to the development of cultural identities as cultural identities are constructed within the transactions of a particular group (Ferdman, 1990; Hall, 1996).

Indigenous literacies are the means by which Indigenous peoples make sense of the world and develop both their individual and shared identities. Stories and storytelling are most often the means by which Indigenous literacies and knowledges are transmitted and sustained across generations (Banister & Begoray, 2013; Battiste, 2002; Hare, 2005; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Therefore, stories are often the means by which Indigenous youth develop and express their identities. Employing stories, and digital stories in particular, is a culturally responsive practice that supports the literacy and identity development of Indigenous youth both within and apart from the classroom (Adelson & Olding, 2012; Banister & Begoray, 2013; Battiste, 2002; Eder, 2007; Hare, 2005; Iseke, 2013; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Moorehead & LaFramboise, 2014).

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this case study was to explore how Native American adolescents employ literacy and literacy practices in order to explore their identities and express their voices through the digital storytelling process. Exploring who they are may help the youth develop their identities, and this identity development may empower agentive learning as the youth determine the discourse related to their identities and academic achievement.

The question that guided this study was the following: How do Native American adolescents in a rural, tribal-sponsored after-school program for Indigenous youth explore and express who they are through digital storytelling?

Definitions of Key Concepts and Terms

Cultural identity

Cultural identity is the agreed upon norms, values, traditions, and symbols of a particular group; therefore, cultural identity is both collective as the group agrees upon the facets of its identity and individual as the group's members decide the extent to which they identify with the group's collective identity. Cultural identity is also a part of ethnic identity which is the political and social recognition of cultures within a society (Ferdman, 1990; Hall, 1996; Nagel, 1994).

Digital storytelling, digital story, digital video

Digital storytelling is the multimodal narration of a story through digital media, and the terms digital story and digital video refer to the final product of the digital storytelling process. Hartley and McWilliams (2009) described digital storytelling as "a workshop-based practice in which people create short audio-video stories, usually about their own lives" (p. 3) while Rice and Mündel (2018) referred to digital storytelling as multimedia storytelling because "'multimedia' encompasses the diverse media forms and genres from which we draw (such as creative writing and performance) and 'story' places emphasis on the constructivist, storied nature of all knowledge claims" (p. 215). The goals of digital storytelling are, among others, to empower the story creators and transform society (Gubrium & Turner, 2001; Hartley & McWilliams, 2009; Lambert, 2009; Rice & Mündel, 2018).

Indigenous, American Indian, Native American

Although the terms Indigenous, American Indian, and Native American are often used interchangeably, their meanings are slightly different. The term Indigenous refers to the original inhabitants of a particular place. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) offered the following definition of Indigenous:

> Indigenous peoples are those who have inhabited lands before colonization or annexation; have maintained distinct, nuanced cultural and social organizing principles; and claim a nationhood status. Indigenous peoples are both self-identified and are recognized by members of their community. Importantly, the recently approved Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides an internationally recognized statement on the rights of Indigenous peoples throughout the world to maintain their cultures and languages. (p. 944)

It is important to acknowledge that the term Indigenous is an umbrella term, so it should not be assumed that all Indigenous peoples are the same. Each group, or Nation or Tribe, shares a common history, language, culture, and traditions. American Indian and Native American are often used interchangeably and synonymously with the term Indigenous; however, these are settler-imposed identifiers. Horse (2005) concurred that the terms American Indian and Native American are often treated as analogous. He stated that "when I hear the term *American Indian*, I immediately think of people like myself who are citizens of America's indigenous nations" (p. 63); however, hearing the term Native American evokes a different response: "I know the term includes me because I was born in this country…[but] I know too that anyone born in this country can rightfully claim to be a native American" (p. 62).

Neoliberal education policy

Hursh (2007) stated that the goal of neoliberal education policy "is to convert the educational system into markets and, as much as possible, privatize educational services" (p. 501). With federal and state-specific education reform policies such as No Child Left Behind, the effects of capitalism and deregulation are manifested in standardized testing and accountability models that equate student and school progress measures with a business model of measuring the success of production outcomes. These policies provide for-profit businesses opportunities to capitalize on the inevitable academic achievement gap through prepackaged and teacher-proof curricula as well as through vouchers and charter schools (Baines, 2019; Giroux, 2002; Hursh, 2007). The net result of neoliberal education policy is inequitable education and educational opportunities for minority students.

Storytelling and oral tradition

According to Beltrán and Begun (2014), "in Indigenous cultures, storytelling and oral tradition encompass some of the most essential ways by which historical knowledge such as protocols, language and important tribal customs are preserved" (p. 162). Hare (2005) described storytelling and oral tradition as the means by which "cultural knowledge and teachings are expressed" and that these "stories are passed down from one generation to another, telling us who we are, identifying our place in this world, and directing us how to live in a respectful way" (p. 257). Oral traditions include "prayer, song, drama-ritual, narrative, or storytelling, much of it within ceremony--some of it outside of ceremony--which is religious and social" (Ortiz, 1981, p. 9).

Settler colonialism and colonialism

Although some use the terms interchangeably, settler colonialism is vastly different than colonialism. Veracini (2011) posits that they "are not merely different, they are in some ways antithetical formations" (p. 3). Colonialism is the act of ruling or controlling a people from a remote location, or the metropole, for economic gain, and, theoretically, it is a temporary act: the colonizer can withdraw its presence and subjugation at any time. The goal of settler colonialism, however, is the ownership and domination of the land itself with complete disregard for the land's indigenous inhabitants. It is, therefore, permanent, and, as the settlers separate themselves from the metropole, settler colonialism extinguishes itself although its effects and systems remain in place (Hixon, 2013; Veracini, 2011).

Sovereignty and self-determination

Sovereignty is the autonomous right to self-govern and self-educate. Sovereignty also includes self-determination: the ability for individuals and groups to make decisions about what is best for that individual and that group (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; McCarty, 2009; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Because the term sovereignty is associated with the Western concept of monarchies, its definition is often limited to the settlers' conception of the ability to self-rule. I argue, as do many Indigenous scholars and allies, that sovereignty extends beyond this narrow scope. It is the freedom for Indigenous peoples to live, think, and create in relation to their group's ontologies, epistemologies, and ideologies without the imposition of those of the settlers.

Significance of Study

Stories, including those used to convey one's identities, are socially, historically, and culturally situated, and stories are a crucial component of Indigenous literacies and ways of

knowing. Rice and Mündel (2018) posited that there are two interrelated approaches to stories: story in theory and story as theory. From a story-in-theory perspective, stories are by-products of Western thought and social structures, and the ways in which they are organized and shared can be theorized. Story as theory, however, is an Indigenous approach which states that the stories themselves are theories, so they hold great power. Native scholar and author Thomas King (2003) wrote of this perspective. He stated that "the truth about stories is that's all we are" (p. 2) and warns that "once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world" (p. 10).

It is imperative to examine and challenge the stories of the social structures that serve to oppress so that these stories, and the lives of those oppressed by them, can be transformed. Literacy, then, becomes a tool for individuals to not only critique their position in society but to also empower them to re-story their lives. In research, digital storytelling has increasingly become a culturally responsive way to understand the perceptions, experiences, literacies, and identities of Indigenous peoples because of its alignment with Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. Many researchers and scholars have advocated for and espoused the benefits of digital storytelling with Indigenous populations (Beltrán & Begun, 2014; Cunsolo Willox et al., 2012; Rice & Mündel, 2018; Trout et al., 2018).

By following a workshop model in which stories are collaboratively developed and produced, insight into how participants are exploring and expressing their identities as they critique social structures and make sense of the world around them is gained (Gubrium & Turner, 2010). Digital storytelling holds transformative and emancipatory potential for research in Indigenous communities because community members are able to maintain connections to their traditional knowledges and ways of knowing (Palacios, 2012). It also allows community

members to control and speak their own stories (Hopkins, 2006). Digital storytelling, then, espouses the critical literacy, multimodal, identity, and Tribal Critical Race (TribalCrit) theoretical frameworks. It also emphasizes the importance of individuals' agency and voice as they negotiate the creation of their stories and as they reauthor and reconstruct their identities by critically examining their identities and positionalities within society (Lambert & Hessler, 2018).

Research on the use of digital storytelling with Indigenous youth that focus on the identity development of the youth is limited. Current reviews of research on digital storytelling (de Jager et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2018) and the creation of art in participatory action research with Indigenous populations (Hammond et al., 2018) confirm the lack of research on this topic. A review of the available literature (e.g., Blue Bird Jernigan et al., 2011; Eglinton et al., 2017; Monchalin, et al., 2016; Petrasak MacDonald et al., 2015; Riecken et al., 2006; Sloan Morgan et al., 2014; Stewart, et al., 2008; Wexler et al., 2014) indicates that digital storytelling is an effective and culturally responsive tool for research with Indigenous youth. It offers a medium through which they can explore, develop, and support their native cultures and languages while also critically examining the world around them. Through this process, Indigenous youth are able to reconcile differences and express their self-perceptions and identities through a multimodal presentation that also supports the acquisition and development of their Indigenous literacies and knowledges.

The research also demonstrates that digital storytelling has the ability to empower Indigenous adolescents to develop and take pride in their cultural identities. Digital storytelling espouses the critical literacy and multimodal literacy frameworks as well as the TribalCrit framework because it emphasizes the importance of individuals' agency and voice as they negotiate the creation of their stories, as they critically examine their identities, positionalities,

and authority within society, and as they reauthor and reconstruct their identities (Lambert & Hessler, 2018). Through their choices in storylines and multimodal components, individuals are able to construct their identities, enact agency, and develop their voices.

While some research on digital storytelling with Indigenous youth offers beneficial conclusions from the youths' creation of their digital videos, and interviews with the participants when applicable, the research often lacked an in-depth exploration of the youths' perspectives of the videos themselves. It is possible to conduct this type of research through a transformative framework and actively collaborate with the youth during the creation process. However, this approach cannot end when the production of the videos ends. If researchers are dissecting the videos, inspecting the components that they contain, and drawing conclusions about what the youth are representing and communicating, the youth must also be involved. Otherwise, their voices are silenced, and their agency is negated.

Further research is needed that seeks to understand Indigenous youths' identities from perspectives other than health and wellness although this is not to suggest that health and wellness are irrelevant to Indigenous youth. From a critical approach, understanding how these youth perceive and construct their identities in relation to social power structures will provide the youth more opportunities to enact sovereignty and self-determination by resisting assimilation and insisting on transformation. Further research that is intentional about including the voices of Indigenous youth is also needed. Analysis of data produced by the youth should be brought back to them not only so that they can confirm the analysis is correct but also so that they can enrich the discussion about how they expressed their identities.

This study sought to explore the identity expressions of the youth in the after-school program beyond surface-level representations. It also sought to understand the youths'

expressions of their cultural identities through the critical literacy, multimodal literacy, identity, and TribalCrit frameworks. Through an in-depth understanding of their cultural identities and how the youth explore and express them, it was the intent of this research to contribute to improving the youths' academic achievement.

Limitations of Study

The number of youth who participated in this study is a limitation. Many of the youth who attend the program play basketball for their respective schools, so the total number of youth present on a daily basis during basketball season was greatly reduced. While this reduced the overall amount of data, it did allow me to establish more meaningful relationships with the five students who completed the project which, in turn, increased the depth of data collected. The youth were able to complete the project as designed, but unfortunately, because schools were closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to share the videos in a whole-group setting.

Additionally, the findings in this study are highly contextualized as there are few, if any, programs that are funded through federal grants and that have adopted the same goals and curriculum as this program has. However, the scope of the interview questions and participant observations yielded data which mirrors the experiences that Indigenous youth in other multimodal and digital storytelling studies have expressed. While the entirety of this study cannot be universally transferred, it offers significant contribution to the body of research on Indigenous youth, cultural identities, and digital storytelling.

Organization of Dissertation

In this dissertation, I sought to understand how Native American youth in a rural, tribal-run after-school program explore and express who they are through digital storytelling. It is

organized into five chapters which I describe below.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research. It includes a brief description of the historical context of assimilatory practices that were subsequently adopted by schools and the impact of these practices on Indigenous languages, cultures, and identities as well as on the academic achievement of Native American youth. This provides the context for the research project and research question. This chapter also reviews gaps in the existing literature that contribute to the significance of this research.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the relevant literature and the theoretical framework that guided this research study. The literature review explores settler colonialism, Indigenous knowledges and identity, decolonization, and culturally responsive schooling practices. The theoretical framework describes the critical literacy, multimodal literacy, identity, and Tribal Critical Race theories as well as their relationships to each other and to the context of the study in general.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of this study. It reviews the case study design and explains the process of and the types of data that were collected during this study. Detailed data analysis procedures are also provided in this chapter.

Chapter 4 provides the findings of the research data including participant profiles and the major themes that emerged from the data. These themes include engaging in the process, exploring and solidifying personal identity, and discovering personal strength through reflection.

Chapter 5 includes the interpretations of the findings which indicate that the youth employed Indigenous knowledges and literacies, they enacted agency and voice, and they exercised sovereignty and self-determination. I also include implications of the findings as well as the limitations of the research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter I review the literature and define the theoretical perspectives that support the purpose of this research project and its research question. I begin with a discussion on settler colonialism and its effect on Indigenous peoples within the United States. Next, I examine the components of Indigenous identity including the effect of stories and pop culture on Indigenous identity. I then review sovereignty and self-determination, and I describe Indigenous knowledges and literacies. Finally, I analyze both the historical role and the current role of schools as well as the need for culturally responsive pedagogies. After I review the literature, I present my theoretical framework which includes critical literacy, multimodal literacy, identity, and Tribal Critical Race theories.

Settler Colonialism

Although colonialism and settler colonialism may often be thought of as synonymous, unique differences separate the two. Veracini (2011) states that the goal of both colonialism and settler colonialism is to acquire new territories and to assert control over the acquired lands, but it is at this point that the two diverge. Colonizers exert their control exogenously and typically view the indigenous population with relative apathy because the colonized are the means to an economic gain (Hixon, 2013). Exploitation of the colonized routinely occurs from the metropole which reduces the need for the colonizer to extensively populate the colonized territory (Dunbar-Ortiz & Gilio-Whitaker, 2016). Additionally, the colonizer's often indifferent attitude toward the colonized is a result of the hierarchical nature of their relationship whereby the colonized will always be subordinated, and it is also a result of the generalized responses of the colonized toward the colonizers which include resisting and fighting back (Veracini, 2011).

Conversely, the settlers' procurement of land extends beyond economic gain and includes the ownership and domination of the land itself with complete disregard for the land's indigenous inhabitants. Therefore, instead of remotely ruling from a metropole, the settlers invade and colonize the territory, and, because they have no intention to vacate the land in the future, they terminate their connection to the metropole. The settlers then establish and extend structures and institutions to ensure a permanent status in their new location. In colonialism, the colonizer's detached control relies on reinforcing and sustaining differences between the two groups. Settlers, however, dominate through a power imbalance; they deem the indigenous inhabitants as extinguishable, so the Indigenous inhabitants' most effective response to the settler is survival (Hixon, 2013; Veracini, 2011).

As settlers arrived on this continent, they brought with them not only their goals of ownership and domination of the land but also a complete disregard for the land's indigenous inhabitants. In an attempt to legitimize their subjugation of land and to eradicate the land's native populations, the settlers fabricated new creation stories through which they sought to construct new identities that falsely claimed an indigenous link to the land. These creation stories not only controlled the dominant grand narrative, but they also served to delegitimize the stories of others and the connections others had to the land and to their histories (Hixon, 2013; Veracini, 2011). Wa' Thiong'o (1992) described this grand narrative as a "cultural bomb" that is used to

> annihilate a peoples' belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. (p. 3)

Rewriting the stories of a peoples' past has, and continues to have, dramatic and detrimental effects.

Rhetorical Imperialism

As the early colonizers shifted into settlers, their intentions evolved, and their conceptions of Indigenous peoples transformed. The early colonizers recognized Indigenous sovereignty and entered into treaties as "equal" parties. However, a shift from colonizer to settler marked the inception of rhetorical imperialism. Lyons (2000) defined rhetorical imperialism as "the ability of dominant powers to assert control of others by setting the terms of the debate" (p. 452). So, while colonizers may have recognized the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations, settlers, by nature, could not and would not because doing so would interfere with their intentions and disrupt their new narrative. By redefining the terms "treaty" and "nation" as well as the nature of the relationships between the two groups, settlers ensured that they maintained their control.

Merriam-Webster stipulates that a treaty requires both political authorities and negotiation. Colonizers recognized the political authority of Indigenous Nations, so they engaged in a truer, albeit flawed, form of treaty-making with Indigenous peoples. Rhetorical imperialism (Lyons, 2000) shifted the settler's conceptions of the nature of treaties between the Tribes and the federal government because an agreement between two equal parties conflicted with the settlers' quest for domination. Chief Justice Marshall articulated this rhetorical imperialistic view of treaties in his *Worcester v Georgia* decision. He wrote that the definitions of treaty and nation differed when referring to the Cherokee Nation because the Cherokee Nation's relationship with the United States reflected that of a parent-child or civilized-savage dynamic rather than an equal one (Lyons, 2000).

In the same vein, it was imperative that the settlers also redefine the term nation as it related to Indigenous Nations. Seton (1999) stipulated that a nation consists of a cohesive people who share a common but unique and long-enduring culture and ancestry and who also share "a historically common territory" (pp. 5-6). Therefore, settlers could conceivably enter into treaties with Indigenous peoples because their Tribes met the definition of a nation. However, Seton (1999) emphatically asserted that "no nation has ever deliberately dispensed with their territory, resources, or identity" (p. 6). So, while Tribes may be considered nations for the sake of treaties, a shift in power allowed the federal government to take advantage of Tribes and instill in Indigenous peoples a profound distrust of the federal government.

The United States may define itself as a nation on the basis that it is "civilized," but it does not meet the criteria of nationhood as set forth by Seton (1999) and the Fourth World Perspective. Instead, the U.S. satisfies the specifications of a state: a "political entity...a legal creation which comes into being on a specific date" (Seton, 1999, p. 5). In spite of this contradiction, the U.S. upholds its rhetorical imperialistic convictions and deems that although American Indian Nations may technically qualify as nations, their "savage" and "uncivilized" nature negates their claims to such classification. This serves to perpetuate the United States' attempt to subjugate and eradicate its Indigenous populations (Lyons, 2000).

Indigenous Identity

Indigenous identity in the United States has political/legal, cultural, and racial components. The settlers' new narrative not only imposed upon Indigenous peoples a binary way of thinking and hierarchical way of living (Coulthard, 2010), but it also affected the identities of the Indigenous peoples. Settlers used the terms "Indian" and "Tribes" to name those who needed no new name. The renaming of Indigenous peoples in terms deemed "appropriate" or "civilized"

served, and still serves, to not only delegitimize and diminish Indigenous cultures and ways of being but to also limit the sovereignty "granted" to Indigenous peoples by the settlers. The danger of defining "Indian" and "Tribe" is that definitions often remain static while peoples, cultures, and identities change (Lyons, 2010).

Political/Legal Components

Garroutte (2001) summarizes the complexity of the political/legal components of Indigenous identity: "There are a large number of legal rules defining American Indian identity, and they are formulated and applied by different actors for different purposes" (p. 224). The commonality of these complexities, however, is the definition or qualification of being "Indian."

Qualifications for Tribal citizenship qualification are defined by each Tribe, and the majority of Tribes use ancestral ties whereby lineage with another Tribal member must be established. Although some may be broad and allow any direct descendent to become a citizen, others require a direct maternal or paternal lineage. Some Tribes may rely on blood quantum while a few Tribes have other distinct criteria (Garroutte, 2001, 2003). Each Tribe's ability to define its citizenship criteria is not without consequences as significant issues arise when thresholds are not met and legal claims to identity are denied. Those who do not meet the criteria for Tribal citizenship may not be able to fully participate within the Tribal community, may not be able to live on their Tribe's reservation, and may otherwise be ostracized despite having significant ties to the Tribe and its other members. These definitions, like those of the settlers, can be limiting and delegitimizing.

Indigenous identity in the eyes of the federal government may vary widely as well. Although one all-encompassing definition of Indian identity does not exist, a slew of other definitions do exist, and they often do not favor Indigenous peoples. Some define identity based

on blood quantum, a static definition that fails to account for changes in culture and society. Basing one's indigeneity on the amount of "pure" blood poses significant issues when the threshold is not met and legal claims to one's Indigenous identity are denied. However, "pure" blood is not collective; rather, it is based on individual Tribes. To have one's Indigenous identity legitimized, one must possess the qualifying minimum amount of "pure" blood from one Tribe--not a combination of two or more Tribes. Having ancestry based in more than one Tribe further "dilutes" one's blood quantum and serves to perpetuate the settlers' intention of eradicating Indigenous peoples. If settlers are able to define a person as Indian or deny their claim as such because of the amount of "Indian blood" they possess, settlers are, in a legal sense, able to eradicate Indigenous peoples in a relatively short period of time (Garroutte, 2001, 2003).

Although blood quantum definitions remain static and inflexible, they are not universally applicable. In stark contrast to Indigenous peoples, the one-drop rule ensured that African Americans could not escape their blackness even with the most minute amount of "black blood" (Garroutte, 2001). Therefore, as Forbes (1990) (as cited in Garroutte, 2001) posited, while blacks cannot escape their identities, Indians cannot lay claim to theirs.

Federal definitions of Indian identity may also be rooted in ancestry as it relates to the Dawes Rolls. Those whose ancestors chose to register with the Dawes Commission are able to legally claim their Indigenous identities as well as the rights associated with these identities. However, those whose ancestors did not register, often because of rightful mistrust or resistance, cannot legally lay claim to an Indigenous identity even if they can prove their lineage through Tribal documentation (Garroutte, 2001, 2003). Clearly, these political and legal definitions of Indigenous identity also have significant consequences whereby federal protections are afforded to those who meet the specified criteria and withheld from those who do not meet them.

Cultural Components

Lyons (2010) quoted the "Declaration of Indian Purpose" which states that culture is not inherent although the right to protect it is and that culture is not definable by "practices or ceremonies" but by values (pp. 73-74). Additionally, culture is a social construct, so while legal definitions of identity may be static, cultural definitions of identity certainly are not. Settlers' attempts to eradicate Indigenous peoples could not eradicate their cultures nearly as easily as they anticipated, but the settlers' efforts to do so had a devastating impact on the cultures of Indigenous peoples. Their push to "civilize" Indigenous peoples by forcing them to abandon Indigenous spirituality and convert to Christianity and to adopt Western-based knowledge and standards in lieu of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing severely hampered the ability of their cultures to thrive and continues to have lasting effects (Lyons, 2010).

The attempts to define indigeneity and Indigenous cultures in static terms also serve to delegitimize and diminish Indigenous identity. Indigenous peoples who do not fit into the cookie-cutter molds that define what an Indian is or does are deemed non-Indigenous and subsequently lose their claim on their Indigenous identity. Culture, though, is not static; it is fluid and adapts to the changes around it. Additionally, as Lyons (2010) pointed out, many Indigenous languages, like the Ojibwe language, have no word for culture. Rather, they use a collection of action terms to illustrate how to do or perform their culture. Therefore, Indigenous peoples cannot be separated from their cultures because they do not conform to a static definition or because they do not meet legal identity qualifications.

Racial Components

The racial components of Indigenous identity are both independent of and tied to the legal/political and the cultural components of identity. Racial identity, though, is typically based

on phenotypes: Indigenous identity is often recognized and legitimized by how "Indian" one looks. Having other ethnic ancestry or being a descendant from multiple Tribes can significantly affect the extent to which one "looks like" an Indian. Those who fit the stereotypical, settler-conceived notion of Indian typically have their identities validated while those who do not must often "prove" their identity to those around them.

Having one's identity validated does not exempt one from racial discrimination. Settlers not only constructed and propagated the stereotypical Indian phenotype, but they also did the same with behaviors and expectations. In much the same vein, those who behave like an Indian and match the expectations set forth by the settlers have their identities validated while those who reject and resist these behaviors and expectations are forced to prove theirs (Lyons, 2000).

Disequilibrium

Because definitions imposed on Indigenous peoples are often static while society and culture are not, disequilibrium may occur as the two try to reconcile. This disequilibrium can be seen in the Mashpee Indian case. The Mashpee sued to restore several thousand acres of land they claimed was improperly taken from them. Over the course of the litigation, the Mashpee were at particular times considered to be or to not be an Indigenous community, and the legal definitions put forth by the court were in direct conflict with the changes in their community and in society at large (Clifford, 1988).

The basis of the Mashpee claim was a 1790 federal law which states that Tribal lands cannot be taken without approval from Congress. This meant that the Mashpee must have met the legal requirements and definitions of a Tribe. The official definition employed in the case stated that "a body of Indians of the same or similar race united under one leadership or government and inhabiting a particular, though sometimes ill defined territory" (Clifford, 1988,

p. 198). Clifford (1998) contended that under this definition, the Mashpee satisfy the qualifications of an Indigenous Tribe: their ancestors were Indigenous although the survival of their community necessitated marriage to outsiders, they lived in the same generally-defined area for generations, they were governed by a body of Tribal leaders, and they lived in a community that was known regionally as an Indian town. They also met the qualifications of an Indigenous Tribe because they were under a modified plantation status so that their "immaturity" could be protected. Their progress toward Western-defined modernity was slowed because they were deemed incapable of competently handling and navigating the hazards of White society.

However, their claim to their lands and their indigeneity were ultimately denied because they had seemingly surrendered their Tribal status at convenient points in time: when the 1790 law was passed, when their Tribal community was incorporated into a town, and when they filed their lawsuit to reclaim their land. In this particular case, the incomplete written narratives and histories of the Mashpee, not their rich oral traditions, were admitted as evidence at trial, and they were unable to successfully counter the mainstream, settler narratives. And, instead of recognizing and rectifying the disequilibrium between the various definitions of identity, the court stripped the Tribe of their Indigenous identity because, at particular points in time, their culture and their behavior did not exactly match an archaic definition. While the Mashpee were entitled to the designation of being an Indigenous Tribe, they were stripped of their indigeneity whenever it benefitted White society. Unfortunately, the Mashpee's are once again engaged in a struggle for their lands as the Bureau of Indian Affairs has taken their lands out of trust (Cromwell, 2020). The "ways of looking" (Clifford, 1988, p. 184) at the tribe were, and continue to be, contingent upon the rewards.

Disequilibrium can also be seen in everyday contexts. Lyons (2010) recalled an account of his daughter's interaction with a group of boys at a powwow. Because she did not fit the stereotypical phenotype of an Indian, they chose to delegitimize and diminish her claim to an Indigenous identity. She, however, fought back and reclaimed her identity in the Ojibwe language. The very word "Indian" can be a source of disequilibrium. It can be a label defined by settlers in an attempt to subjugate and diminish Indigenous identity; however, it can also be a term claimed by Indigenous peoples to separate themselves, their languages, and their cultures from the settlers as an act of survivance and resistance (Lyons, 2010).

Stories of Indigenous Identities

Stories are imperative to sustaining the settlers' control over Indigenous peoples, but they are also the sustaining source of Indigenous cultures as well. Howe (2002) proposed "that America is a collection of stories. Teaching the stories of Native authors along with stories of historians will be both illuminary and, at times, illusionary" (p. 46). When examining the often-complex relationship between Native peoples and settlers, it is apparent that this collection of stories muddles rather than defines these relationships.

Deloria (1998) stated that "we construct identity by finding ourselves in relation to an array of people and objects who are not ourselves…[and that] nationalism links land, substance, political identity, and group destiny together, creating a clear-cut boundary between insiders and outsiders" (p. 21). As so-called cultural cops, settlers solidified culture and defined identities in terms of what someone is or is not which produced frontiers and territories. Owens (1998) described the frontier as "always unstable, multidirectional, hybridized, characterized by heteroglossia, and indeterminate" while its dichotomous companion territory "is clearly mapped,

fully imagined as a place of containment, invented to control and subdue the dangerous potentialities of imagined Indians" (p. 26).

Owens (1998) further explained that while the frontier had been "a dangerously unstable place…[it] had become a stable and fully appropriated territory, its boundaries marked and known in the Euramerican imagination" (p. 27). Deloria (1998), meanwhile, drew from Bakhtin and postulated that carnival and misrule actively contributed to the settlers' desire to "stake their claim on an essential Indian Americanness" (p. 14) which allowed for an appropriation of the mythical, ideological Indian construction and which resulted in the division of Indians into two groups: real and ideal. Narratives have been consistently imposed on Native Americans by Euromericans, and the notion of the ideal Indian was warmly welcomed within the boundaries and was glorified as the basis of the settlers' new national identity (Deloria, 1998).

The Ideal Indian

The ideal, or imagined, Indian became the identity to which all Indigenous peoples were held. Indigenous peoples living on the borderlands of the frontier found themselves having to prove their Indianness to those within the border while also demonstrating it to other Indigenous peoples around them. What commenced was a struggle for self-identification and representation and for self-determination--political and social goals achieved through self-imagination (Deloria, 1998; Lyons, 2010). This rigid, static definition of what it meant to be Indian stood in stark contrast to the evolving, dynamic nature of the settlers' identity which shifted and adapted to an ever-evolving culture.

Steinman (2012) posited that the "struggle at the margins of state systems involves the possibility of revising, resisting, or rejecting identities and associated norms, processes that may occur apart from the state rather than in direct reaction to or against it" (p. 1085). Embracing the

settler in order to redefine one's identity challenges not only the borders but also the settlers' narrative. Howe (2002) stated that

> every Indian I meet is writing a story...I realized that they were doing what our ancestors had done for millennia: they were pondering the mysteries of their experiences, telling their stories, and creating a new discourse at the end of the 20th century...They were integrating oral traditions, histories, and experiences into narratives and expanding our identities. (p. 46)

The integration of both past and present experiences and the expansion of identity allowed for the creation of what Steinman (2012) called social actors who challenge the existence of the borders between insiders and outsiders. Social actors "creatively work to induce cooperation among others that promotes their own interests" (p. 28), and they are distinct from conventional power contests.

The ideal Indian identity extended into Wild West shows and Westerns where, "in the smothering omnipresence of a white racial gaze, show Indians were, in fact, *always* performing Indianness, whether they wanted to or not, twenty-four hours a day" (Deloria, 2004, p. 67). Indians having to perform their Indianness is, perhaps, one of the most detrimental impacts of the settler on Natives outside of genocide and exploitation.

Performing Indianness

When Indians are forced to perform Indianness, their authenticity and self-identification are questioned. The construct of the ideal Indian requires Natives to portray themselves in the same fashion as an ideal Indian lest their identity be questioned or negated. Euromericans expected Indians to perform Indianness, but other Indians also expected Indians to perform as well so that their authenticity as Native American could be affirmed.

Constantly having to prove one's identity as an Indigenous person significantly impacts one's identity as such. Pop culture's portrayal of Indians can often stand in stark contrast to a Native's self-imagined identity which grows from authentic experiences within their families, cultures, and languages. Reconciling the two constructs and having to seek legitimization of identity results in significant tension and frustration. While Indians performing Indianness can thwart the construction of identity, it can also enhance it. When Indians perform their Indianness by engaging in cultural traditions, they not only legitimize their personal identities but also their cultural identities, and their authenticity is reaffirmed.

Stories of Identity Reclamation

Native nationalists ignited a movement to reclaim their indigeneity. Lyons (2010) explained that "Native nationalists seek both cultural survival and political power; that is, both nationhood and nationality, and not just resistance to the dominant culture" (p. 133). In order to achieve this, nationalists "investigate the cultural past and bring its 'meanings' into the present in a way that makes their modernization appear entirely possible" in order to not only "produce a clear sense of cultural difference but [also] the prospect of likely community renewal" (p. 147). Language via stories becomes an essential component of the nationalist movement. Womack (2008) described language has having a "tricksterlike capacity to take on many guises, shapes, and manifestations, [and] has the potential to liberate Indians from static definitions" (p. 70). Therefore, meaning within language cannot be singular; meaning, instead, is multifaceted and limitless (Womack, 2008), so Indigenous peoples can imagine how they define themselves and how they engage in self-Indigenization whereby they appropriate settler ideas into their own culture.

Self-Indigenization and self-determination allow Indigenous peoples to "resist this ideology of containment and to insist upon the freedom to reimagine themselves within a fluid, always shifting frontier space" (Owens, 1998, p. 27). They also allow for what Womack (2008) called the "denaturalization of the nation" which requires "opening up the canon to those who have been marginalized within the construct of the nation" and "questioning…the totalizing structures within the nation-state that create a monolithic story that overlooks diverse relations within, without, and across its real and imaginary borders" (p. 36).

When the borders between insiders and outsiders, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous are opened, a space emerges in which a new narrative can be written. Womack (2008) related Vizenor's claim that these new narratives "can contribute to such liberation by allowing Native people to go beyond fixed, terminal definitions and empowering them to articulate identities whose only limits are their imagination" (p. 66). Additionally, the new space affords an opportunity for the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous to be reconstructed. Davis et al. (2017), though, posited that "transforming social relations is not just a matter of befriending Indigenous people; it means developing long-term relations of accountability, engaging in meaningful dialogue, and respecting Indigenous laws and jurisdiction" (p. 394). This process relies on Derrida's (1997) work which "change[s] the way many people view reality by problematizing the referentiality of language and rejecting truth as a stable ahistorical foundation rather than as socially constituted, shaped by culture, and subject to change in different time periods and places" (Womack, 2008, p. 4).

Understanding that culture evolves over time and, therefore, the identities which are rooted in culture must also evolve helps release Indigenous peoples from the static, frontier-based definition of the ideal, imaginary Indian and posits them as modern, authentic, and

complex peoples with cultures and identities worthy of inclusion into the national narrative. This new narrative, what Howe (2002) called a tribalography or "a story that links Indians and non-Indians" (p. 46), "comes from the Native propensity for bringing things together, for making consensus, and for symbiotically connecting one thing to another" (p. 42). Tribalographies, according to Howe (2002), "seem to pull all the elements together of the storyteller's tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in past, present, and future milieus" (p. 42).

Indigenous self-determination drives the nationalist movement and deconstructs the boundaries between territory and frontier. As Indigenous peoples self-Indigenize, the relationship and dynamics between Indigenous peoples and settlers are transformed. However, this transformational process is often one-sided with a majority of the burden falling on Indigenous peoples. Settlers must recognize their roles in the process of rewriting the national narrative by questioning the existing narrative rather than seeing it "as the authoritative final word that has come down to us in some pure form" (Womack, 2008, p. 55). Once this happens across all contexts, boundaries can be completely deconstructed.

Sovereignty and Self-Determination

McCarty and Nicholas (2014) argued that "indigeneity must be understood from the vantage point of tribal sovereignty" (p. 109) and that the United States' systemic and historical endeavors to erase Indigeneity engenders the demand for survival in the form of rhetorical sovereignty among Indigenous peoples. Rhetorical sovereignty, according to Lyons (2000) directly contests the rhetorical imperialistic revisions of sovereignty, and it contends that peoples have the inherent right of self-determination and self-rule as well as the ability to do so. The reclamation, according to Lyons (2000), is "the general strategy by which we aim to best recover

our losses from the ravages of colonization…[and] is an ideal principle, the beacon by which we seek the paths to agency and community renewal" (p. 449). Rhetorical sovereignty initiates the recovery of identity as both authentic individuals and Nations. It confronts the settlers' creation stories and narratives, and it empowers the deconstruction and revision of false histories and narratives. While the reclamation of narratives and identities may be emancipating, it is an incomplete liberation because societal constraints, which are a result of the extinguishing nature of settler colonialism, still remain.

Successfully reclaiming and retaining indigeneity, Lyons (2000) argued, necessitates directly challenging rhetorical imperialism. Current narratives must be rewritten, and current discourse must prominently include and promote Indigenous voices. This is because agency yields power to not only name oneself, one's place in society, and one's relationship to the land but also the power to eradicate stereotypes, social structures, and the silencing of indigeneity. The education system furnishes the most ideal location for this process to occur provided that it undergoes sufficient restructuring so that its focus shifts to actively integrate the voices which have long been silenced.

Schooling of Indigenous Peoples

Schooling in the United States has long been an instrument of power and oppression rather than a site of education and opportunity. Early settlers recognized the importance of maintaining one's heritage and language, but there was an underlying presumption that immigrants would both learn English and assimilate into American culture. Bilingualism was initially encouraged, and many schools existed that provided instruction in a language other than English including the schools that missionaries established to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity (Crawford, 1989; Fitzgerald, 1993; Heath & Mandabach, 1978). However, these

beliefs shifted in the mid-1800s, and public schools became the "the institution to create a unified conforming citizenry…[and] to organize the linguistic and cultural knowledge and behavior of U.S. citizens" (Heath & Mandabach, 1978, p. 17), and in 1868 the Indian Peace Commission mandated the cultural and linguistic genocide of Native Americans through schooling (Crawford, 1989).

Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) articulated the difference between education and schooling: education is "passing along discrete knowledges *and* the cultural definition of what counts as useful" while schooling concerns how education "coincides with schools' content and practices" (p. 83). The dichotomous division of knowledges into useful and all others, where useful knowledges are those recognized as valid by the White settler and other knowledges are those not understood by White settlers or those deemed as unscientific (Battiste, 2002), laid the frameworks for the devaluation, marginalization, and criminalization of Indigenous knowledges (Deloria et al., 2018) and for assimilatory schooling practices.

Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) described the history of American Indian education as "a grand experiment in standardization" (p. 282), and to ensure that Indigenous peoples assimilated into the dominant culture, boarding schools were established. However, boarding schools proved to be ineffective as a tool for assimilation; rather, they served to weaken Indigenous youths' connections to their languages and cultures and, as a result, their identities (Battiste, 1984; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Lipka, 2002; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002). Additionally, they generated "intergenerational effects...on parenting and child rearing…[through] the deprivation of culturally appropriate socialization and child-rearing models" (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997, p. 146) and instilled in them a mistrust in the educational system.

Despite a series of federal legislation to end assimilatory schooling efforts, they continue today, and they continue to deny Indigenous peoples their rights to sovereignty and self-determination. The effects of these efforts manifest themselves in several ways including racism within school systems. Drawing on the works of several Indigenous scholars and allies, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) stated that the racism that students face includes "paternalism, prejudice, harmful assumptions, low expectations, stereotypes, violence, and biased curricular materials…[and] the use of euphemisms" (p. 950). Deficit models of education continue to demand assimilation, to result in the lack of academic achievement for many students, and to stifle the development of students' cultures, languages, and identities (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002).

Indigenous Knowledges and Literacies

Indigenous knowledge has long been an enigmatic curiosity as its ubiquitous nature resists definition, categorization, and classification by Western standards and measures. Battiste (2002) stated that "other names for Indigenous knowledge (or closely related concepts) are 'folk knowledge,' 'local knowledge,' 'non-formal knowledge,' 'culture,' 'indigenous technical knowledge,' 'transitional ecological knowledge,' and 'traditional knowledge'" (p. 7). The danger, however, in attempting to label and define Indigenous knowledge is that it is often reduced to a set of static and rigid skills trapped in the past when, in fact, it is both traditional and responsive (Battiste, 2002).

The local land is the underpinning foundation of Indigenous epistemology. It is based in relationships and is experiential, ubiquitous and sacred: all of creation is inextricably linked. More significantly, Battiste (2002) posited that "knowledge is not what some possess and others do not; it is a resourceful capacity of being that creates the context and texture of life" (p. 15).

Learning, therefore, cannot be confined to a specific set of skills acquired through formal schooling (Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018). Instead, learning is a continuous process in which individuals use their gifts and abilities to not only develop their capacities to be successful and understand their world but to also embody values needed to build relationships and to become responsible and respectful (Battiste, 2002; Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018). Learning through educative experiences is vital, and it occurs through a "consciously designed, intentional, sustained, and thus formal" system (Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018, p. 84).

Describing Indigenous languages and literacies en masse may lead to the assumption that homogeneity spans all Tribes and communities and that what is true for one community is true for all others. This is, in fact, untrue, but there are some commonalities threaded throughout, and the descriptions that follow are indicative of these commonalities. Indigenous literacies cannot be separated from Indigenous knowledges nor can they be categorically defined. Indigenous literacies are the life-force and the learning process which create and sustain knowledge across generations most often through the oral tradition. Indigenous literacies value and foster creativity and innovation, critical thinking, and relationship building, and they are analogous with place, community, and survival. And, they are the means through which education, identity, sovereignty, and self-determination are enacted (Adelson & Olding, 2013; Banister & Begoray, 2013; Battiste, 2002; Eder, 2007; Hare, 2005; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014; Moorehead & LaFramboise, 2014).

Indigenous literacy is the means by which Indigenous youth make sense of the world and develop their individual and shared identities (Battiste, 2002; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Hare (2005) described Indigenous literacy as:

> intimately connected to our rich cultural expressions, alternative systems of representations, and relationships with land and family. Our dance, music, and ceremonies are 'text' that spells out meaning with each beat and step about who we are and our place in this world. Our stories, shared through oral tradition, ensure cultural continuity and define language, traditions, and identity. (p. 261)

Literacy education, then, consists of "language-rich activities and instructions to develop communicative, sociocultural, intellectual, and moral competencies" (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. 32 as cited in McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Curiosity and motivation are vital in nurturing individuals' creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving capabilities (Banister & Begoray, 2013; Battiste, 2002; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014).

Because Indigenous literacies and knowledges were incomprehensible and undefinable to settlers, they deemed them inferior. They pushed to eradicate Indigenous literacies through assimilatory schooling practices and to replace them with the literacies of the dominant mainstream culture. Forcibly alienating Indigenous youth from their language and literacies decimated their identities and communities (Deloria et al., 2018; Brayboy & Lomawaima, 2018; Hare, 2005; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; McCarty, 1993). Educational reform movements like NCLB sustain this trend as Indigenous languages and literacies continue to be restricted by teaching decontextualized and discrete skills devoid of any cultural relevance (Hare, 2005; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014). Language reclamation and revitalization as well as culturally responsive literacy instruction must be at the forefront if Indigenous youth are to reconnect with their heritages and traditions, to secure a relevant and equitable education, and to enact self-determination and sovereignty (Banister & Begoray, 2013; Battiste, 2002; Deloria et al., 2018; Hare, 2005; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014).

Educative Practices

The need for changes in schooling practices for Indigenous youth have been evident within the Indigenous community since the federal government implemented assimilatory schooling. Indigenous scholars, researchers, and allies have long championed for pedagogical changes and the active incorporation of Indigenous knowledges, languages, and literacies in schools. This includes the restoration of sovereignty and self-determination by including Indigenous communities and parents in discussions about curricula and pedagogies (McCarty, 2008, 2009). What results, McCarty (2009) argued, are "promising practices" (p. 22) that require "educators...to make a conscious decision to nurture Indigenous knowledge, dignity, identity, and integrity by making a direct change in school philosophy, pedagogy, and practice" (Battiste, 2002, p. 30). Implementing promising practices secures equality and diversity in education for all students by challenging and revising assimilatory schooling practices which maintain the settlers' institutionalized racism and discriminatory agenda.

Much research exists which demonstrates the effectiveness of validating and incorporating the cultural and community norms and the literacies that marginalized students participate in outside of the classroom through culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogical practices. These approaches highlight the need for an intimate comprehension of and connection between in-school and out-of-school literacies and literacy practices so that students, especially Native American students, are able to develop their cultural identities. Endeavoring to bridge the differences between in-school and out-of-school literacies, researchers have sought to understand students' out-of-school literacies and literacy practices as well as the benefits of merging these literacies and literacy practices.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) acknowledges that, traditionally, teaching and learning have operated from a deficit perspective which views "the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). It is an extension of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), first termed by Ladson-Billings (1995), which recognizes the sociocultural and sociopolitical nature of education and which argues that maintaining and incorporating the cultures of students from the non-dominant culture is imperative to their academic success. Ladson-Billings extended the works of other scholars who emphasized the importance of congruity between home cultures and academic achievement.

Paris (2012) advanced that while the intentions of Ladson-Billings' (1995) CRP construct were beneficial, they did not go far enough to address the issues of power and (dis)empowerment related to deficit approaches to education; therefore, he submitted the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). While this approach foregrounds the need to actively respond to changes in scholarship and culture, it more importantly demands educative experiences which simultaneously support and sustain the cultures of students marginalized by societal power structures while also empowering them by providing them access to the language and literacies of the dominant culture (Paris, 2012).

Efforts to continue to refine CSP are exigent to the academic success and the cultural identity development of students who are marginalized by social structures. Paris and Alim (2014) further explored the relationship between languages and literacies and access to social power, and they proffered that CSP practices may result in marginalized students having more of

a social advantage than students from the dominant culture. Additionally, they highlighted the danger of an oversimplified, dichotomous view of languages, literacies, and cultures that define their associated practices as either traditional or evolutionary because these definitions can be continued manifestations of deficit approaches to schooling. Instead, CSP advocates for the inclusion of both heritage (past-oriented) practices and community (future-oriented) practices. Finally, they stressed the role of critical analysis and reflection to ensure that cultural practices are empowering for students rather than reproducing and propagating social inequities (Paris & Alim, 2014).

Much research supporting culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies exists. Heath (1983) studied the literacies and literacy practices within three Piedmont Carolinas communities, and she concluded that discrepancies between home and school literacy practices directly affected student outcomes. Ladson-Billings (1992), meanwhile, related the classroom practices of teachers of African American students who effectively teach literacy through culturally relevant approaches. Working in Tucson with working-class Mexican communities, Moll et al. (1992) found that including students' funds of knowledge in the classroom allowed students to connect their in-school literacy practices to those common in their cultures and communities. Furthering the work of Moll et al. (1992), Moje et al. (2004) examined how various funds of knowledge and their associated literacy practices could be used to effectively engage Latinx students in science literacy.

Culturally Responsive Schooling

While appreciating the work of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy in supporting the cultural identity of students who are not from the dominant culture, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) contended that specific issues of sovereignty and self-determination, racism, and

epistemologies as they relate to educating Native American youth must be addressed in relation to culturally responsive schooling. First, it is vital for schools and educators to appreciate the legal relationships which exist between the federal government and Tribal Nations. Because they are recognized as sovereign nations, Tribal Nations have the right to govern and dictate the way their youth are educated in schools, and neoliberal education policy often infringe on the sovereignty and self-determination of Tribal Nations and their youth. Discerning the multitude of ways racism is manifested in schools and the manifestations' impact on the success Indigenous youth have in school is also essential because racism is detrimental to the academic success of Native youth. Finally, it is crucial that schools and educators recognize that students, especially Native American youth, may hold different epistemologies than they do. Therefore, acknowledging and validating students' epistemologies in the classroom and incorporating them into the curriculum will assist in increasing the academic achievement and positive individual growth of students (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

As an augmentation of CSP, they proposed the concept of culturally responsive schooling (CRS) which delineates between relevant and authentic educational experiences and the practices of schools which focus more on assimilating students into the dominant culture, language, and literacy because assimilatory practices may neglect the critical aspects of educating Native American youth as discussed above. Indeed, when educators and schools shift their perspectives and actively seek to include and nurture students' cultures, languages, and literacies, students benefit academically and socially as demonstrated through ethnographic research across multiple communities. Although not as extensive as research across all marginalized youth, some research exists which highlights the impact of the inclusion or exclusion of home cultures on Indigenous youths' academic success, their cultural and literate identities, and their overall well-being.

Phillips (1972) investigated the classroom participation habits and interactions of children from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, and she established that the students' cultural norms and literacies were not invited into their classrooms. She concluded that culturally responsive schooling practices and the sovereignty of the Tribal Nation were imperative to the academic, identity, and holistic development of each child. Cleary (2008) collaborated with Indigenous youth to gain insight into their perspectives of neoliberal education policy, especially No Child Left Behind. She presented vignettes which clearly show the negative impact of this policy on students' literacy development and their motivation to engage in school literacies. In their reviews of research and literature related to the schooling and education of Native youth, Castagno and Brayboy (2008), Deyhle and Swisher (1997), and Pewewardy (2002) confirmed the imperativeness of culturally responsive schooling practices especially in regard to the cultural identity development of Indigenous youth.

Connecting In- and Out-of-School Literacies

Underlying the research on culturally sustaining pedagogies and culturally responsive schooling is the crucial connection between students' in-school and out-of-school literacies and literacy practices. Indeed, in their review of literature on students' out-of-school literacies and literacy practices, Hull and Schultz (2001) called for research in four areas: how out-of-school literacies can be incorporated and extended into the classroom, how teachers can recognize and appreciate their students' out-of-school literacies and social practices by forming classroom communities of practice, how in-school and out-of-school literacy practices can be balanced in order to provide empowering literacy education, and how after-school programs can help support students' literacy development. Their call for culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogical research confirms that if schools and educators are to implement culturally responsive schooling

practices, they must understand not only the literacy practices but also the youth cultures their students engage in outside of the classroom and strive to incorporate them into the curriculum.

Moje (2002) highlighted the importance of literacy in the lives of youth. She stated that "youth use literacy and text to navigate, synthesize, and hybridize multiple spaces…[and] that literate practice gets complicated and changed by social and political practices demanded in a globalized, technologicalized, and hybridized world" (p. 115). If the literacies and literacy practices of youth are not validated and brought into classroom practices, then they may be unable to establish a coherent sense of identity in various contexts (Moje, 2002, 2008). Moje and Hinchman (2004) examined how using culturally responsive practices that bring youths' out-of-school literacies into the classroom affected their academic literacy development across content areas. Likewise, Skerrett and Bomer (2011) also demonstrated the benefit of merging in- and out-of-school literacies, but they extended their analysis to include the impact of the teacher establishing a collaborative environment in which she was willing to share the roles of teacher and learner. Finally, in their recent study, Cummings et al. (2018) verified Skerrett and Bomer's (2011) work and concluded that positive literacy development occurs "when teachers take the time to learn about children's literacy-related activities, give explicit social recognition to the competencies they are developing, and allow students to incorporate their identities into classroom texts" (p. 113).

Research also reveals similar results for Indigenous students. Noll's (1998) case study of Zonnie and Daniel conveyed the adolescents' struggles to reconcile their out-of-school literacies and their cultural identities with those imposed on them by the school. It also highlighted that teachers can employ students' funds of knowledge to create a culturally responsive curriculum and collaborative communities within their classroom. Banister and Begoray (2013)

substantiated the benefits of including culturally sensitive literacy education practices which center around developing positive relationships, incorporating Indigenous knowledges and spirituality, and allowing youth to express their knowledges in a variety of forms. Finally, several Indigenous community schools can attest to the value of culturally responsive schooling practices. McCarty (2009) highlights some of these community schools in response to the continued lack of academic literacy achievement of Native American/Alaska Native youth. The Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u (Nāwahī) Laboratory School in Hawaii (Wilson & Kamanā, 2001), the Navajo Nation's Tséhottsooí Diné Bi'ólta (TBD) school in the Window Rock Unified School District (Arviso & Holm, 2001; Johnson & Legatz, 2006), the Puente de Hózhǫ́ school in Flagstaff (Fillerup, 2005), the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) in Hawaii (Keehne et al., 2018), and the Rough Rock Demonstration School (McCarty, 1989) all show positive literacy, culture, and identity development in their students as a direct result of active inclusion of native cultures and languages.

Students' Voices and Perspectives

Students' perspectives are essential in bridging in-school and out-of-school literacies and implementing culturally responsive pedagogies. Cook-Sather (2002) underscored the essential role that students play in education, and she stated that far too often students, especially those who are not of the dominant culture, are silenced in the classroom and by policymakers because they are perceived as not having a valid opinion or insight. However, they do have the perspectives that can enable educators, researchers, and policymakers to understand what is important and relevant to them, how we can best support and serve them, and what changes need to be made to ensure school practices are effective for all students (Cook-Sather, 2002). Castagno and Brayboy (2008) concurred and argued "the importance of recognizing all voices in

the classroom and ensuring that Indigenous students are not silenced in the school process" (p. 958); however, research which centers Native students' voices and their identities is limited.

Hare and Pidgeon (2011) examined the schooling experiences of First Nation youth and how they responded to the challenges they faced. Savage et al. (2011) explored the perceptions that Indigenous students had of their teachers' implementation of culturally responsive pedagogies. Deyhle (2012) conveyed the lessons that Native youth have taught her over her thirty-years of working with them. These lessons include building meaningful and personal relationships, recognizing and validating contemporary Native American identities, encouraging and supporting Indigenous students by challenging them, understanding the importance of their cultures and languages, and accepting and appreciating the authenticity of Native students. These lessons stand in contrast with the experiences of the Native Americans students in the works of Masta (2018) and Quijada Cerecer (2013) who delved into the experiences of Native American youth who are marginalized within schools and schooling practices.

Multimodal Approaches

While the studies on culturally relevant pedagogies and connecting the in-school and out-of-school literacy practices are insightful, they do not often include the perceptions, insights, or voices of the youth involved in the research. The research presented above demonstrates not only the imperative need to include the cultures, languages, and out-of-school literacies and literacy practices of Indigenous youth in schools, but the research also demonstrates the inextricable link between the cultures, languages, and literacies of Indigenous youth and their cultural identities. However, much of the research has been conducted and analyzed through a sociocultural framework and does little to encourage the youth to critically examine how their cultures,

literacies, and identities are contextualized in different locations or to empower the youth to name their worlds and construct positive cultural identities.

Multimodal approaches to adolescent literacy instruction and research have been proven effective. Moje (2015) and Vasudevan (2011) posited that multimodal and digital tools connect in- and out-of-school literacies, and they encouraged youth to critically examine identities and positionalities and to enact agency as they define their current or future possible selves. These assertions have been confirmed by other researchers and scholars (e.g., Davis & Weinshenker, 2012; Doerr-Stevens, 2016; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Johnston-Goodstar & Sethi, 2013; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Multimodal approaches have been especially efficacious for Indigenous youth. Banister and Begoray (2013) used multimodal literacy as a medium through which Indigenous girls were able to express their knowledges and identities. Brown and Begoray (2017) examined the use of graphic novels as a culturally responsive practice through which Indigenous youth could critically examine the role and impact of power on their lives. Mills et al. (2015) examined the cultural knowledges presented in the multimodal productions of Aboriginal youth in Australia.

Digital Storytelling

One particularly effective multimodal practice in research and education is digital storytelling (DST). Lambert and Hessler (2018) described DST as being "founded out of the legacy of anti-colonial, liberationist perspectives that carried a critique of power and the numerous ways rank is unconsciously expressed in engagement between classes, races, and genders" (p. 136). They hoped that digital stories would provide spaces for oppressed individuals to exert agency and authority as they give voice to their identities and experiences. This is evident in the foundational principles of StoryCenter, one of the first organizations to offer

digital storytelling workshops, which state that individual's stories are unique and meaningful and that they will share their stories when they feel their story is valued, that individuals are diverse and will construct their stories and derive meaning from them in unique ways, and that creativity is a universally accessible trait that can be facilitated through computers and technology (Lambert, 2009). Therefore, DST espouses the critical literacy and multimodal literacy frameworks and emphasizes the importance of individual's agency and voice as they negotiate the creation of their stories, as they critically explore their identity, position, and authority within society, and as they express their identities (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1988; Hagood, 2002; Holland et al., 1998; Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Moje & Lewis, 2007).

Reviews of research on DST in education and literacy reveal that, through DST, youth are able to enact agency and develop their identities as they critically reflect on past experiences and reconcile them with future aspirations (de Jager et al., 2017; Greene et al., 2018; Hammond et al., 2018; Rice & Mündel, 2018; Smeda et al., 2014). Research exists that utilized digital storytelling video production to support the literacy and identity development of students, and they often employed critical literacy frameworks (e.g., Angay-Crowder, Choi, & Yi, 2013; Bellamy, 2018; Hall, 2011; Pirbhai-Illich, 2011; Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2009; Saunders, 2014).

DST within Indigenous communities has been proven especially relevant because it is grounded within storytelling which is an imperative component of Indigenous literacies. Scholars and researchers, including Adelson and Olding (2013), Beltrán and Begun (2014), Cunsolo Willox et al. (2012), and Hare et al. (2017), have advocated and espoused the benefit of DST with Indigenous populations. DST has been used as a tool to identify sources of food insecurity within a reservation community (Blue Bird Jernigan et al., 2011), but this study did not specifically focus on the youth within the community. DST has been used to explore

characteristics of youth leaders in HIV prevention (Monchalin et al., 2016) and youth resiliency (Petrasak, MacDonald et al., 2015; Riecken et al., 2006), but these studies did not delve into specific identities; rather, the relationships which existed within the youths' communities were not at the forefront. Stewart et al. (2008) used DST to improve health literacy, but they analyzed how these videos reflected the participants' critical consciousness about the health literacy in relation to their community. Eglinton et al. (2017) and Wexler et al. (2012) both analyzed digital storytelling videos in order to understand how they reflect the youths' cultural identities, but the youth were not invited to provide additional analyses or confirm the findings that the researchers gleaned from the videos. Sloan Morgan et al. (2014) examined how youth construct their cultural identities and envisioned their futures through DST videos. While the data provide information on how DST can help Indigenous youth to construct cultural identities by reconciling the past, present, and future within their communities and cultures, the research did not specifically focus on how the youth explore and express their identities across multiple contexts. Finally, although Blue Bird Jernigan et al. (2011) and Sloan Morgan et al. (2014) acknowledged a critical stance, the others did not specifically identify that their studies were analyzed through a critical literacy, multimodal literacy, identity, or TribalCrit theoretical framework.

While some research demonstrates the potential of DST in research with Indigenous communities, little research exists which examined how DST empowers Indigenous youth to develop their cultural identities, and even less research exists which examined DST with Indigenous youth through the critical literacy, multimodal literacy, identity, and TribalCrit theoretical frameworks. These frameworks are essential to understanding the cultural identities of Native American youth. Analysis through these perspectives can illustrate how the youths' stories have the power to construct and shape their identities as they confront, analyze, and

disrupt or resist stories imposed upon them by others (Greene et al., 2018; Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Rice & Mündel, 2018). Additionally, the process of constructing the videos offers the youth the opportunity to enact agency as they decide what stories they wish to tell, to what depth they tell them, and with whom they share their stories (Gubrium & Turner, 2011; Hull & Katz, 2006). Additionally, their voices are developed as they negotiate their identities and make sense of their experiences and convey their identities and experiences in meaningful ways (Gubrium & Turner, 2011; Hull & Katz, 2006; Lambert & Hessler, 2018).

Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives which guided my investigation are critical literacy, multimodal literacy, identity, and Tribal Critical Race Theory. In this section I describe the theorists and research which support these perspectives, discuss contrasting or conflicting theoretical views, and reconcile the conflicts.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is founded on the work of Freire (2000) who sought a transformation of educational practices with Indigenous communities in Brazil. He argued that oppressors stole the humanity of the members of these communities and then perpetuated that dehumanization by conditioning the oppressed to adopt the mindset of the oppressors. That is, through ideological conditioning (Marx et al., 1977) and rhetorical imperialism (Lyons, 2000), oppressors are able to maintain their control not only by reducing others' capacity to realize their social positioning but also by instilling in them a fear of freedom. Therefore, the social reality created by the oppressor's ideology and maintained through hegemony (Foucault, 1970) must be transformed in order to liberate the oppressed (Freire, 2000).

This ideology of oppression, Freire (2000) argues, is perpetuated through the banking model of education which grants teachers complete control over all aspects of learning and knowledge and which reduces students to empty vessels who passively accept the knowledge deposited into them by teachers. By limiting or even eliminating creative and critical thought, social reality is maintained and the oppressed remain in their position. Transformative education, meanwhile, foregrounds the need to transform social structures through problem-posing education rather than integrating the oppressed into the existing structures. This type of dialogical and dialectical education requires students to shift from being objects to subjects who recognize their objectivity in society by critically reading and reflecting on the world around them (Freire, 2000). In this framework, Giroux (1988) posited, "to be literate is *not* to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future" (p. 65).

Critical literacy recognizes that literacies and identities are socially and culturally situated and, therefore, are directly affected by power ideology. It is a tool to critique the role that power plays in language and literacy within social, cultural, historical, political, and economic contexts and the impact of that power on identity and agency. These literacies and identities can be summarized through what Gee (1990) conceptualized as Discourses and defined as:

> distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading *coupled* with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities. (p. 155)

Each individual is socialized into a specific or primary Discourse but has the capacity to acquire additional Discourses; the application of literacies within a specific cultural community are its

literacy practices, and it is through these literacy practices that community members form their identities.

A sociocultural approach to literacy and literacy education accounts for the sociocultural contexts and ideological considerations that posit that particular literacies or Discourses are more sophisticated and civilized than others (e.g.., Gee, 1999; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984). However, this approach tends to limit its focus to the literacy practices within specific communities and communities of practice (e.g., Wenger, 1998) including digital communities (e.g., Lankshear & Knobel, 2008; New London Group, 1996). Additionally, although it addresses access to Discourses and dominant literacies, this approach often does little to address the reason why access is granted or denied (Mills, 2015).

While the sociocultural approach is valuable, it often has little impact on societal transformation beyond an increased awareness of the unique literacies and literacy practices of particular communities. An awareness of differences is an essential part of more equitable educational practices since students are presented with and expected to acquire multiple Discourses at school. However, because power impacts their ability to access or acquire the additional Discourses needed to be a full participant in society, it is crucial that the systems of power be critiqued in order to transform them (Freire, 2000; Gee, 1990, 2010).

Power

Because of power's integral role in language and literacy, its nature and manifestations must be discussed. This framework provides an opportunity for me, as an outsider to the Indigenous communities, to interrogate my own positionality. Within a construct based on the works of Foucault (1980) and Bourdieu (1977), power is a system of relational interactions in specific contexts, and within these interactions there exist conflicts over access to various types

of capital including cultural and symbolic capital. Power is constructed and reproduced through ideological principles as individuals participate in the system. These participants are not relegated to roles as static forces predetermined to reproduce the system; rather, they have the ability to push back against the power structures as well as against other participants who seek to subvert them (Lewis et al., 2007; Lewis & Moje, 2003; Marx et al., 1977; Moje & Lewis, 2007).

Ideology in the Western system of power is the inverted reality that the elite and powerful have created in order to maintain their power and status within society (Gee, 1990; Marx et al., 1977). Based on Marx's beliefs of economic and capitalistic relationships, interactions between people in society are used to acquire and maintain their wealth--both material and intangible--and ideologies determine what is valued and who has access to what is valued. Within this paradigm, "power becomes the property of dominant groups and operates to reproduce class, gender, and racial inequalities that function in the interests of the accumulation and expansion of capital" (Giroux, 1983, p. 262). Ideology, therefore, determines which forms of capital, knowledge, identity, and literacies are legitimized and recognized and those which are deemed invalid or uncivilized. Reproducing this ideology is imperative to those who wish to maintain their elite status and power within society (Gee, 1990; Giroux, 1983; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2008; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Luke, 1995; Marx et al., 1977; Mills, 2015).

Identity

Identity, like power, is found within relational interactions. Holland et al. (1998) contended that identities extend beyond the familiar which "form in relation to major structural features of society" and include "practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed 'worlds': recognized fields of social life" (p. 7). Therefore, some identities may be fixed while others can be fluid and shift according to

situational contexts and interactions therein (Ferdman, 1990; Gee, 1999, 2002; Hall, 1996; Holland et al., 1998; Hull and Greeno, 2006).

Hagood (2002) concurred with these descriptions of identity, but she also argued that identities made available through texts are often reflective of the dominant culture. Therefore, she proposed a poststructural approach to subjectivity which "acknowledges and attends to the ideas of constant movement, mobility, traveling, and journeying of the self" (p. 255) and which counters the idea of multiple identities with the notion of a decentered self. This decentered self is able to not only take up multiple identities, but it is also able to push back against and resist identities. The locus of power, then, shifts to the subject who agentively creates meanings and constructs identities.

The subjective nature of identity, however, is problematic as well. Those in power may impose specific identities upon others or restrict others' ability to self-construct or self-author their identities, and social constructions and ideologies may dictate and demand specific identity enactments. The subjectivity of identities also serves to reproduce the systems of power by affirming and recognizing those identities which conform to the dominant group while denying or invalidating all others (Ferdman, 1990; Freire, 2000; Hagood, 2002; Holland et al., 1998; Lewis et al., 2007; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Williams, 2018).

Ethnic and Cultural Identity

Nagel (1994) stated that ethnic identity is comprised of culture and identity and that it is analogous to a shopping cart: the shape and construction of the shopping cart is ethnicity while its contents, which are selected by members of a particular group, is cultural identity. Ferdman (1990) further delineates between group and individual cultural identities and states that "by its very nature, culture is meaningful only with reference to the group, yet it is enacted by

individuals. This is why culture is a central concept in understanding how the person and the collective are connected" (pp. 189-190). At the group level, cultural identity is comprised of the values, features, characteristics, and elements of a group which are agreed upon by its members as being symbolic and meaningful. This includes, according to Nagel (1994) the "art, music, dress, religion, norms, beliefs, symbols, myths, [and] customs" that we construct by "picking and choosing items from the shelves of past and present" to load into the ethnic shopping cart (p. 162). Individual cultural identity, then, is the extent to which the group's members adopt the group cultural identity (Ferdman, 1990).

These identity constructions, then, are not static; rather, they are subject to changes in society. Cultural groups may construct new cultural identities which reflect or adapt to societal changes over time. Cultural identities are also constructed at the borders of the cultural group as insiders and outsiders compare and evaluate each other. This may result in the adoption of a positive or negative identity perspective within the group or within an individual depending upon the perspective imposed upon the group (Ferdman, 1990; Nagel, 1994).

Indigenous Identity

Weaver (2001) stated that "identity is shaped, in part, by recognition, absence of recognition, or misrecognition by others" (p. 243) and that power often has an extreme impact on identities, especially Indigenous identity. She argued that "there was no Native American identity prior to contact with Europeans...Before contact, indigenous people identified themselves as distinct from other indigenous people and constructed their identities in this way" (p. 242). Weaver (2001) also asserted that there is some choice in the adoption of this cultural identity, but that specific phenotypes can impact the amount of choice one has to adopt or deny a Native identity. The cultural identity of specific communities is "inseparably linked to sacred

traditions, traditional homelands, and a shared history as indigenous peoples" (Weaver, 2001, p. 245), and the relationships that exist within Indigenous communities are vital to the well-being and identity of its individual members. Settler colonialism, then, significantly impacted the individual and group cultural identities of Indigenous peoples.

Acculturation is the extent to which a person takes on Native cultural identity. Choney et al. (1995) proposed a model consisting of levels of acculturation, which include traditional, bi-cultural, assimilated, and marginalized, across four domains which include cognitive, behavioral, affective/spiritual, and social/environmental. Their model recognizes and accounts for the lingering effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous communities and individuals. At the traditional level, individuals retain their native languages, and they place high priority on participating in the ceremonial, social, and cultural practices of their Tribes while those at the bi-cultural level have knowledge of their tribal languages and choose to participate in the ceremonial, social, and cultural practices of their Tribes in balance with other social activities. Individuals at the assimilated level possess little to no knowledge of their Tribal language and do not participate in the ceremonial or cultural practices of their Tribes. Finally, at the marginalized level, individuals do not feel connected to their Indigenous group, but they also do not feel connected to mainstream society.

Agency

When discussing identity and subjectivity, it is also necessary to include a discussion on agency and voice because they are intimately intertwined with identity and subjectivity. Agency, as defined by Williams (2018) is "the perception, drawn from experiences and dispositions, that the individual can, in a given social context, act, make a decision, and make meaning" (p. 9). Moje and Lewis (2007) expanded on this definition and describe agency "as the strategic making

and remaking of selves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools and resources, and histories, as embedded within power relations" (p. 18). Agency in and of itself is not an attribute which can be granted or denied by society; every individual has the capacity to enact agency. However, power has the ability to enable or restrict the perception of agency within individuals depending on the situation or context (Hull & Greeno, 2006; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Williams, 2018). By diminishing or reducing individuals' perceptions of agency, power structures are upheld, socially defined identities are enforced, and the voices of non-dominant groups members are silenced. Therefore, agency is a site for individuals to reproduce social structures or resist and transform them (Freire, 2000).

Voice

Voice is both the internal, identity-authoring constructions shaped by society and the external expression of self that is shaped by identity (Holland et al., 1998). Both internal and external voices serve to facilitate or hinder the development of identity and the enactment of agency. Internal voices include "individuals' unique thoughts, beliefs, and feelings" (Moore & Cunningham, 2006, p. 132) which drive agentive decision making and which serve as a connective fiber between self-constructed and self-authored past, present, and future identities. External voices, meanwhile, are the messages that the system of power sends to individuals about the identities and positionalities that exist for them within society with the goal to reproduce the existing power structure. These external voices can either affirm or deny individuals' specific identities, and they can serve to amplify or silence individuals' voices depending upon their positions within the system of power. Individuals, then, respond to these voices by assimilating their messages, accommodating them, or resisting them as they

continuously reconstruct and author their identities (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 2000; Holland et al., 1998; Hull & Greeno, 2006).

Youths' literacies, experiences, and voices are all vital components of critical literacy as youth work to push-back against and to resist oppressive forces. The aim of critical literacy, then, is "the critique and transformation of dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems" (Luke, 2012, p. 5) by actively engaging and incorporating the literacies, literacy practices, languages, cultures, and experiences of those who are oppressed in society. Literacy becomes a tool to examine the roles that language and meaning play to perpetuate a system of power and inequity, for examining the identities and positionalities of those within the system, and for transforming the inequitable distributions of power within society (Freire, 2000; Hagood, 2002; Hull & Schultz, 2001; McLean et al., 2009; Mills, 2015; Moje & Lewis, 2007).

Multimodal Literacy

Founded, in part, by Halliday (1978) and continued by Kress and Jewitt (Jewitt, 2008; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 1997), multimodality is grounded in social semiotics and explores the ways meanings are constructed, conveyed, and understood through various modes of communication. These modes include "image, gesture, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech, and so on" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 246) although others, including the New London Group (1996), may identify or categorize modes in slightly different ways. Multimodality and social semiotics recognize that modes, or sign-systems, are socially and culturally contextualized. Semiotic modes are partial and interdependent; meaning making, then, demands the recognition and incorporation of all modes. Therefore, restricting literacy to reading and writing printed texts limits an individual's ability to fully construct and express meanings (Halliday, 1978; Jewitt,

2008; McLean et al., 2009; Mills, 2015). Like critical literacy, multimodal literacy is similar to the sociocultural approach to literacy in that literacies, literacy practices, and sign-systems are socially and culturally situated. However, while the sociocultural approach focuses on the meaning-making processes within specific communities, multimodal literacy is more concerned with the process of employing modes to create meaning (Mills, 2015).

Mills (2015) applied the concept of transmediation to differentiate between multimodal literacy and other literacies. Transmediation "involves searching for connections between sign-systems to make meaning" (p. 67) and consists of three principles. First, constructing multimodal texts requires the transformation, not reproduction, of knowledge as meanings are translated across various modes. Second, constructing multimodal texts requires the ability to critically alter and modify the ways knowledge is presented in order to fit the constraints of various modes. Finally, constructing multimodal texts requires the translation of knowledge from one mode to another, especially across digital platforms.

Multimodality opens the possibility for more equitable and relevant education as students are able to transmediate their knowledges across multiple modes. Additionally, they are able to merge the various literacy practices that they engage in across a variety of contexts. Because sign-systems are socially and culturally situated, multimodal constructions convey and represent the unique cultures, languages, and interests of different communities and individuals. However, they are also subjective and can be influenced by power. Therefore, Mills (2015) argued that "multimodal approaches to research can be strengthened by critically interrogating the intersections of power, race, whiteness and society that shapes texts and textual practices" (p. 90) which reflects the aim of critical literacy.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) is an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) which was partially borne out of Crenshaw's (1988) conceptualization of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender within the judicial system and its relation to civil rights. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) extended Crenshaw's work, as well as the works of others (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) into the field of education. CRT posits that race is a social construct and that racism has been normalized in society. Because racism has been normalized, social justice can only result from interest convergence because, as Ladson-Billings (2013) stated, "we cannot expect those who control the society to make altruistic or benevolent move toward racial justice" (p. 38). CRT also emphasizes intersectionality and rejects essentialism which reduces identities and positionalities into a homogenized other. Finally, critical race theory embraces storytelling and the potential of the counter-narrative (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Brayboy (2005) extended CRT and proposed Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) in order to address the endemic nature of colonization within society that subverts Indigenous peoples' right to autonomy, sovereignty, self-determination, and self-identity. TribalCrit maintains that, while racism is normalized within society, so too is white supremacy. Additionally, colonization is endemic and has decimated Indigenous communities and their cultures, languages, and identities through "civilizing" efforts. These efforts include imperialistic and capitalistic legislation that, in the name of Manifest Destiny, stole land from Indigenous communities "leading to a series of events that left many Indigenous peoples dispossessed of lands that held not only life sustaining crops, but also spiritually sustaining properties" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 431). Because of legislation and treaties with the federal government, Indigenous

peoples have both legal/political and racial identities, but their legal/political status is rarely acknowledged. Therefore, TribalCrit seeks to reclaim and assert Tribal rights to sovereignty through self-identification, self-determination, and autonomy. Finally, TribalCrit aims to challenge Western/Eurocentric concepts of power, culture, and knowledge by examining them through an Indigenous lens.

TribalCrit recognizes the dual nature of culture as being tied to nature via specific landscapes but also dynamic as it shifts in response to social changes. It also recognizes three types knowledge fundamental to Indigenous communities: cultural knowledge and academic knowledge which combine to create survival knowledge. Power, then, comes from these knowledges as individuals and communities enact sovereignty in order to "define themselves, their place in the world, and their traditions" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 435), and power is vital for the survivance of Indigenous peoples and their communities, languages, and cultures. Finally, TribalCrit decries assimilatory education practices in favor of culturally responsive schooling practices which maintain the cultural integrity of Indigenous youth (Brayboy, 2005; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008).

Conclusion

Through the frameworks of critical literacy, multimodal literacy, and TribalCrit, literacy has the potential to transform the cultural identities of Native American youth as they critique the power structures which exist in society, read their identities within the world, and transmediate their knowledges, cultures, languages, and literacy practices in multimodal compositions (Banister & Begoray, 2013, Battiste, 2002; Brayboy et al., 2007; Brown & Begoray, 2017; Dehyle & Swisher, 1997; Lee, 2015). These frameworks guided data collection and data analysis in an effort to understand the purpose of this research study and to answer the following research

question: How do Native American adolescents in a rural, tribal-sponsored after-school program for Indigenous youth explore and express who they are through digital storytelling?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research sought to examine how Native American adolescents use digital storytelling to gain insights into their tribal communities, their families, their schools, and their own lives in order to express their identities. I was also interested in finding out if multimodal literacy and critical literacy empowered the youth to critically explore the complex relationship between the past and the present, the lingering effects of colonization on their identities, and the critical aspects that shape their identities. The broad research question that guides this study is the following: How do Native American adolescents in a rural, tribal-sponsored after-school program for Indigenous youth explore and express who they are through digital storytelling?

Research Design

This study employed a case study design, and the aim of case study research is to develop an in-depth understanding about a case. Merriam (1998) described the intent of case study research and the selection of a case as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. She stated that "the case itself is important for what it reveals about the phenomenon and for what it might represent" (p. 29). The case is a bounded system which Stake (1995) describes "as an object rather than a process" (p. 2) that is delimited by a specific time and place (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In this research, the case was the youth who are bounded by the particular context of being enrolled in the after-school program.

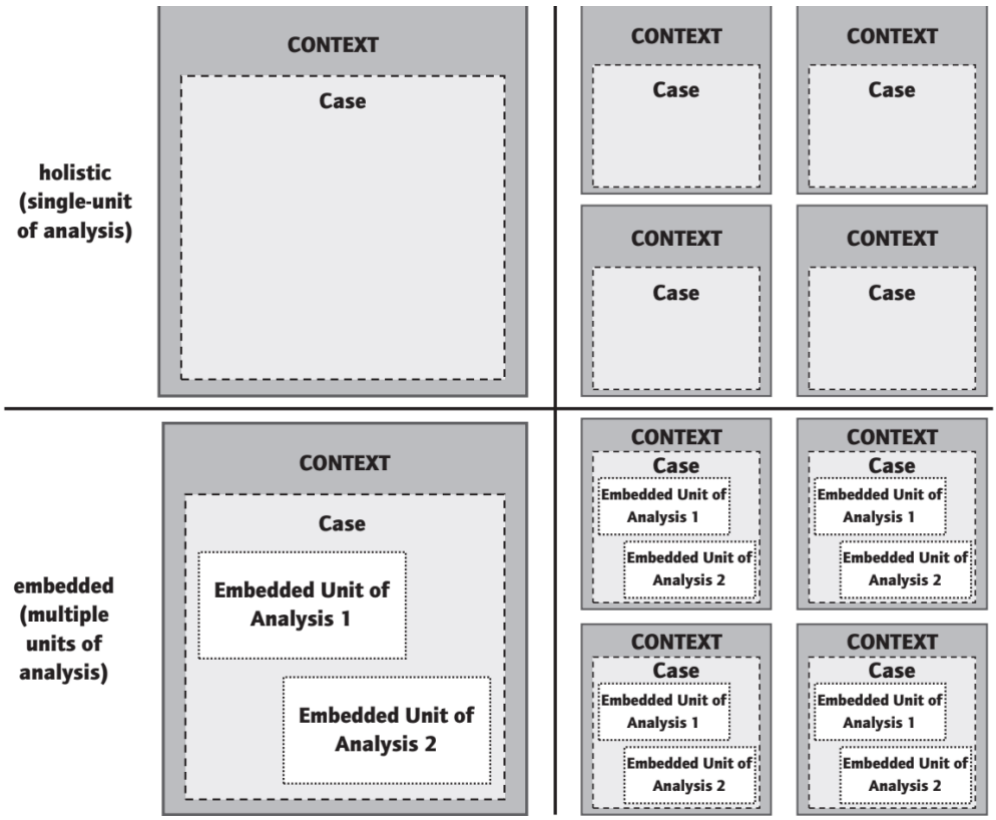
I chose case study over a phenomenological design for several reasons. First, I was concerned with understanding the "how" of the phenomenon, how the youth explore and expressed who they are, and not their lived experiences or the universal essence of creating the digital stories. I also chose a case study design because some of the youth may not have been able to accurately articulate their experiences; therefore, using phenomenology would not be able

to capture the essence of their experience. I used multiple data sources to understand how the youth explored and expressed themselves rather than relying on multiple in-depth interviews with the youth (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Finally, I provided thick and rich descriptions of the context of the case, the participants, the themes, and the implications of these themes (Merriam, 1998). A phenomenological design would have demanded descriptions of what the youth experienced and how they experienced it as well as a discussion of the essence of their collective experience.

Yin (2009) outlined four types of case study designs: holistic single case, embedded single case, holistic multiple case, and embedded multiple case (see Figure 1). These types of case studies are determined by the number of cases and the cases' relationship to the contexts being studied. This

Figure 1

Case Study Design (Yin, 2009)



research meets the requirements of a holistic-single case because the case (the youth) is analyzed within one particular context (the rural, tribal-sponsored after-school program). This research also meets the requirements of an instrumental case study because it is designed to understand a specific topic or issue. The case, then, is criterion-based rather than interest-based because the case was selected in order to study the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995). That is, this research is focused on a specific criterion, a specific issue, so this particular case was selected in order to study how Native American youth within this particular after-school program explored and expressed who they are. This contrasts with intrinsic case studies which study specific cases because they are unusual or unique (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995).

Participants

The participants in this research included the Native American adolescents who attend a tribal-run after-school program in a rural community, and they were selected through purposeful criterion sampling. The recruitment strategy included identifying after-school programs that serve Native American youth in a rural area near a university town and then refining these results in order to identify an after-school program in a rural area which was specifically designed to develop and cultivate the native language and cultures of Native American adolescents. After the program was identified, I was able to establish a relationship with the program director who served as a gatekeeper to the group (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The criteria for the selection of youth participants included the following: having been enrolled in the program and attending the program consistently for at least one semester and having received cultural and native language instruction from the program director and other invited experts in the after-school program. Additionally, the youth must attend one of the four middle or high schools within one of the three communities in the rural area, and they must be

between the ages of 12 and 18. The total number of participants was five. Although nine students were enrolled in the program when this project began, two students stopped attending shortly after they began the project, and the other two students were reluctant to participate, so their data was insufficient to analyze.

After-School Program

The program began in June of 2017, and it currently being funded through a Department of Justice grant and a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant which are both set to expire at the end of this summer. The program is associated with a particular Tribal nation, but the program director stated that he has creative license in running the program. Also, enrollment in the program is not limited to youth who are members of this particular Tribe; students ages 12-24 from all Native American tribes are encouraged to attend. The program meets daily at a local elementary school during the fall and spring semesters as well as for eight weeks during the summer.

The program's goal is for the youth to become mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually balanced. It is the program's hope that if the youth are balanced, then the Tribal community can also be balanced. They use a variety of curricula to support the youths' well-being and holistic development including American Indian Life Skills, which was initially developed by the Zuni in Arizona and researched by the Cherokee Nation, and Native Youth Leadership, which was developed by Tribal communities in the Pacific Northwest, and both programs have been named best practices by several organizations including SAMHSA.

The program employs several activities and resources as they pursue their learning outcome of balancing the youth. To support their physical health, they help establish healthy habits through physical activity time. During the school year, they engage in at least thirty

minutes of physical activity, and during the summer, they engage in at least one hour. They also offer lessons on and encourage healthy eating habits and hygiene. Developing life skills is also an imperative part of the program, and they focus on life and social skills which range from chores around the house to preparing for job interviews and applying to college. They also instill in the youth the need to graduate from high school or obtain their GEDs so that the youth are prepared for the workforce.

The program also provides opportunities for the youth to connect with their Native culture, language, and traditional community, especially for the students who are not active or connected to their culture. The youth director believes that by becoming familiar with their language, the youth are more comfortable with exploring and connecting to their culture. The youth learn about their traditional lifestyles, they visit cultural sites, and they receive history lessons so that they understand the context of their relationships with the world around them and so that they can address the lingering effects of historical trauma.

By focusing on these aspects of the youths' lives and by offering lessons to support the youths' growth and development, the program hopes that the youth will lead drug- and alcohol-free lives. Additionally, the program hopes not only that the youth become active participants in their Tribe and community but also that the Tribe and the community come to value the youth more. The program director stated that he would like to see more youth representation and voice at council meetings and Tribal planning meetings because the youth are the future of the Tribe and because they have a vision for their community.

The goals and activities of this program separate it from one other after-school program for Native youth in the county because the other program does not offer lessons on Native culture and language or in health and well-being. Rather, the other program provides a place for

Native youth to gather and eat and to hang out with their friends and play video games (personal communication, November 9, 2018; personal communication, January 27, 2020).

Program Director

The program director has been working with youth for the past ten years, and this year marks his third in directing this particular after-school program. His background is in psychology and Native American studies, and he currently holds a bachelor's degree in sociology. Additionally, he is a certified youth worker, and he has completed trainings and certifications in suicide prevention and mental health first aid. He hopes to help the youth attain the skills necessary to be successful, to promote healing from historical trauma in both the students and their families, and to create a community of support, compassion, and understanding for the students which includes their parents, schools, and teachers. The program director also believes that it is imperative that the youth are able to explore and express who they are. He stated that it boots their self-confidence and helps balance them because, in their culture, if the youth know who they are and are able to express themselves, they are healthier overall.

Assisting the youth in the acquisition of their Native language is also an important goal for the program director because, he stated, being able to learn and speak their language improves the youths' self-confidence, attitudes, and self-worth. The program director uses a variety of activities to help the youth acquire their language including dictionary, jeopardy, recitation activities, and Christmas caroling for the Elders in the community during the holidays. They also participate in a yearly native language fair sponsored by the university that encourages Native youth from all Tribes to demonstrate their Native language acquisition through a variety of literacy-based activities (personal communication, November 9, 2018; personal communication, January 27, 2020)

Location

The program is located approximately one hour outside of a suburban, midwestern university town in a 632 square mile county that has a population of approximately 25,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The county's history, as well as that of the town, has been entwined with the effects of colonization. With the establishment of Indian Territory and subsequent Indian Removal Act in the mid-1800s, the Tribe was relocated to this area. However, because they were relocated into the same area as another Tribe, this particular Tribe was afforded self-governance only to the extent that the laws of the other tribe allowed.

In the late-1800s, the Dawes Commission established allotments for the Tribal members who agreed to sign the rolls. Unscrupulous colonizers, however, took advantage of many families and gained control of allotments, and the oil boom in the early 1920s only served to exacerbate this seizure of land. Today, approximately 36,000 acres are associated with the Tribe and its members, and many of the Tribal offices and programs are located just outside the largest town in the county.

Currently, the program's office as well as the school that hosts the program are located in the county's largest town. The town, with a population of approximately 7,200, is primarily demarcated by two state highways. Off the north-south highway is the town's shopping district with two car dealerships with small lots, a national discount clothing store, a local discount grocery store, and a few fast-food restaurants. The historic downtown area has bricked streets and is just southeast of this major strip. Although there are a few local small businesses, including a boutique and a couple of restaurants, many storefronts stand empty. Off the east-west highway is one of the county's largest employers, a garment manufacturing plant, as well as popular and highly interactive museum for children.

The school building which hosts the program is located south of the garment manufacturing plant off of the east-west highway, and the program makes use of the cafeteria, gymnasium, and outside areas of the school. The cafeteria is of average size with a food-serving area on the east side and approximately 20 round tables at which the schools' students eat during the day. During the program, the cafeteria serves as an area for the youth to complete their homework, often with the assistance of program staff, to work on various projects, to practice their native language, and to interact with tribal Elders.

The gymnasium has a full-sized basketball court with large bleacher-like structures on either side. These steps serve as an area for the youth to congregate and check-in after school and to store their bags and other belongings; however, the youth have also used them as a place to stretch out and relax after a long day at school or early in the morning during the summer. Because the space does not have air-conditioning, large fans in the ceiling as well as a large portable fan are used to move the air. While the youth enjoy playing basketball and other games in this space, the noise from the fans often makes it difficult to utilize the space for other activities when the weather is warm outside.

Schools

The program serves three school districts in the area, and the schools have a total enrollment of approximately 2400 students in grades kindergarten through 12th grades. The program director hopes to expand its outreach to other schools in the area; however, the federal grant funding the program is set to expire at the end of the summer, and no additional funding has been appropriated. An exploration of the graduation rates and standardized test performance data highlights the disparities between Native American students and their counterparts. These differences are congruent with the statistics reported in the research by Indigenous scholars and

their allies. Graduation rates for the American Indian population were significantly lower than the overall graduation rates of the school. Additionally, state standardized test data reflect a similar pattern. Between 58% and 94% of American Indian youth scored below proficient in math, and between 64% and 90% of American Indian youth scored below proficient in English Language Arts (OSDE, 2018).

Data Collection

Case study research relies on the collection of various types of data in order to fully understand the unique case and the themes which emerge during data analysis. The sources of data within this research consist of observations, interviews, artifacts, and other documents which were collected through the heritage project, digital stories, participant observations, and interview protocols. I acknowledge that the data belong to the youth, and, as co-researchers, they determine what they wish to share and to what extent.

Participant Observations

Having spent over a year working with the after-school program, I am familiar with its goals and routines as well as with many of the students and program staff. Additionally, many of the youth and the staff have gotten to know me, and they allowed me to both observe and participate in a natural manner. For this research, I utilized field notes to record observations of the youths' behaviors as well as the interactions between the youth and between the youth, program director, and the program staff and Elder. These interactions spanned the entirety of the research project and include, but were not limited to, lessons and conversations. Participant observations were employed as I continued to establish rapport with the youth and staff and as the youth collaboratively engaged in the digital storytelling process.

Interviews

Data for this project included interview transcriptions. Two sets of semi-structured interviews with the youth were conducted at the school site, and interview protocols were implemented to guide the interviews (see Appendix B & Appendix C). I first interviewed the youth to obtain specific demographic information as well as information related to their family structures and practices. These interviews lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes each. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with these participants after they completed their digital storytelling videos. These interviews provided the youth with the opportunity to reflect on and describe the significance of their videos and their components as well as the process to create them. Because of the detailed nature of these interviews, these interviews were approximately one hour each.

A semi-structured interview with the program director was also conducted. The interview, which lasted approximately one hour, took place at the program's office which is located in a converted house off of one of the major highways in the rural community. Through this interview, I hoped to more thoroughly understand the program director's background, his role in the program and his community, the program's goals and philosophies, and the program's relationship to other programs in the community and across the nation. An interview protocol guided the interview (see Appendix D), and the program director's answers provided more specific context to the program and its effect on the development of the youth's identities.

Artifacts and Other Documents

The artifacts collected during the research include the documents the youth produced during the heritage project (Dixon, 1993) and the process of creating their digital storytelling videos as well as the digital stories themselves. The heritage project was designed to assist the

youth in examining themselves and their family backgrounds so they could more easily select and write about a topic for their digital storytelling video. The stories the youth wrote and brought to the talking circle at the beginning of the digital storytelling video workshop as well as any subsequent revisions based on peer feedback were also collected. Finally, the digital storytelling videos were collected after they were completed.

Heritage Project

The goal of the heritage project was for the youth to appreciate not only their life experiences but also how their experiences help shape and mold their perceptions of the world and themselves. Additionally, the heritage project allowed the youth to begin to perceive the interrelatedness and intersectionality of their identities. Together, the activities in the heritage project helped support students as they began to construct their stories for the digital storytelling project. I transcribed the funds of knowledge maps and the shields the youth produced during this project for analysis.

Funds of Knowledge Map. The funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) activity was designed to assist the youth in the program to discern the experiences and knowledges which contribute to their heritages and cultures, and to help define what makes them who they are by focusing on the people, places, events, and other relevant information that have had a lasting impact on their lives.

In this activity, the youth brainstormed important people in their lives, places they have lived or visited, significant events in their lives including holidays and milestones, and anything else that has helped shaped their way of thinking and doing things and the way they live. They then created a visual representation of how these brainstormed ideas are interrelated and connected to each other through a format that makes sense to them.

Shield. The shield activity allowed the youth to visually symbolize who they are. Each student was provided a paper with a photocopied shield as well as appropriate writing and coloring utensils. Drawing from the information on their funds of knowledge map, they each created unique shields using symbols, objects, words, and color to represent how they perceive who they are.

Personal Narrative. The youth drew from their funds of knowledge maps and their shields in order to construct a personal narrative that describes who they are and how their experiences and cultures have shaped who they are. This personal narrative was the initial script of their digital storytelling video. Using a graphic organizer if they chose, the youth outlined their basic storyline and brainstormed possible components to include in their videos. Finally, they created a rough draft of their stories for their digital stories.

Digital Storytelling Video

The adolescents in the program began the process of creating their digital storytelling videos after they completed the rough draft of their stories and after they identified and collected the components needed to construct their videos. The youth followed the workshop model offered by Lambert (2009) which is divided into five phases. The storyboards as well as the digital storytelling videos were transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

Phase one: Overview of digital storytelling. In this phase, we examined digital stories and how they are successfully constructed. We identified the common elements of digital stories including the soundtrack, script, visual objects, special effects, and text. The youth were provided the opportunity to brainstorm additional elements they would like to include in their stories.

Phase two: Talking circle. The youth then brought the rough drafts of their stories and met with their peers in a talking circle. Each person had the opportunity to share his or her story with the rest of the group. The youth then collaboratively encouraged their peers and offered ideas for improving the clarity of their stories. They used the feedback to draft a final script for their videos, and they also finalized the components to be included in their videos.

Phase three: Storyboard. In order to ensure the digital storytelling process was productive and successful, the youth created storyboards. The storyboards allowed them to initially assemble and align all of the components of their stories including their scripts. After they completed their storyboards, they read their scripts and notated the time needed to not only read the script but also to include the components that are associated with each segment. Once they completed their storyboards and practiced reading their scripts multiple times to ensure fluency, they were able to move into the production phase.

Phase four: Production. In this phase, the youth began constructing their digital stories. Using iMovie, they began assembling the visual components of their videos based on the storyboard layout and the time notations for each segment. Once the visual components were combined, they added a voiceover of their script as well as any additional sound effects or soundtracks.

Phase five: Sharing. Because this project was collaborative, it was imperative that the youth had an opportunity to share their final products. A celebration was planned after the project had been completed. During this celebration, the youth were to invite their family and friends to a special screening of their videos. The celebration was to take place during the after-school program, and the youth who created a digital story were to be afforded the opportunity to

share their videos and experiences. Because of the pandemic, however, this final phase was not completed as schools and the program were closed.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as an overarching data analysis method, was adapted to fit this study and allowed me to identify critical themes across the data to answer the research question. Shank (2002) and Morse (1994) described thematic analysis as an inductive approach that relies on feedback and comparison until saturation is achieved. Thematic analysis consists of identifying patterns across the data sources, and these patterns can be considered themes after data analysis has been completed.

I began with the first-cycle coding process of open coding. During open coding, the data is broken down into discrete parts; in this case, it was broken down line-by-line. After the data have been broken down, the parts are examined and compared for similarities and differences. Assigning meanings line-by-line allowed me to identify any similarities and differences that emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). I also used memos to keep track of my "analysis, thoughts, [and] interpretations" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 110), and I generated code books as I moved through the process of coding the data.

Constant comparison was an integral part of this data coding and analysis. I analyzed new data against the coded data until no new codes emerged. At this point, I moved on to the second phase of coding which began to categorize the codes from the first cycle. During this phase of data analysis, the codes were more intentionally analyzed for patterns in order to group the codes into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Memos continued to be an imperative part of data analysis, and an additional code book was created to connect the categories, their codes and meanings, and examples from the data. Once the codes were assigned to categories, I moved into

the final phase of data analysis. In this phase, I examined the relationships between the categories in order to identify themes across the data which helped me answer my research question.

I used different analysis methods for each type of data in order to triangulate the data (see Table 1). The application of these data analysis methods was an iterative process, and, using the constant comparison method, I identified themes across the data until no new concepts emerged. The data analysis consisted of three phases. First, the digital storytelling videos were transcribed. After transcription, the videos were further analyzed through interviews with the youth during which they assisted in coding the videos. The second phase included the analysis of all the other data. Finally, in phase three, I identified themes across all the videos which related to the research question.

Table 1

Methods of Data Analysis

Data Type	**Analysis Method**
Interview transcripts	Constant comparison
Observation data	Constant comparison
Field notes	Constant comparison
Memos	Constant comparison
Heritage Project artifacts: funds of knowledge maps, shields	Content analysis, constant comparison
Digital storytelling videos	Intertextual transcription, constant comparison method

Phase 1

The digital storytelling videos were analyzed through what Gubrium and Turner (2010) described as "an intertextual transcription method…[which helps] understand how people make meaning across the different modalities of visual, chronological, aural and oral, gestural, and textural elements found in the digital story" (p. 478). Transcribing the videos in this manner not only helped analyze the content of the videos but also provided points-of-reference during interviews with the youth about their videos. These "elicitation device[s]" (Gubrium & Turner, 2010, p. 479) allowed the youth to reflect on and describe the significance of the components within the videos.

The transcriptions which result from this method of analysis offered an additional opportunity for collaboration as the student and I were able to collaboratively "co-construct interpretations of the story" (Gubrium & Turner, 2010, p. 481). Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, this analysis method provided the opportunity for me, as a researcher, to understand "the meaning participants make in their media and to show changes in how they chose to represent themselves...by selectively cutting, pasting, and combining resources, to represent, produce, and perform identities and the knowledge they are constructing" (Gubrium & Turner, 2010, p. 482).

The initial step of the analysis was to identify and delineate each coherent segment of the video. A coherent segment consisted of a set of frames which, when combined, produced a cohesive scene available for interpretation. Then, for each coherent segment, the following elements were identified: time elapsed, the soundtrack playing, the voiceover script, the location being represented, the visual object(s) present, and special effects (see Appendix E).

After the videos were transcribed, the youth provided additional insight and commentary on the components of their videos as well as the process of creating them. Their comments were transcribed and included as an additional element in the video transcription. The video transcriptions, including the youths' commentary and the meanings they attached to the components of their videos, were iteratively analyzed as described in the previous section on field notes and transcriptions. The data analysis results were cross-checked and presented to the program participants for member checking.

Phase 2

In this phase, I analyzed the other types of data including the interview transcript with the program director as well as observation data, field notes, and memos using the constant comparison method. I also analyzed the Heritage Project documents using content analysis and constant comparison.

Phase 3

The third phase of data analysis was the identification of themes which emerged across all data. I selected themes to report that helped to answer the research question. I also reported on interesting themes that emerged which are related to the purpose of the study.

Trustworthiness

The naturalistic criteria of trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Bella, 1985 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 255). Issues with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed so that trustworthiness is ensured. This project generated a generous amount of data. I ensured that my codebooks were detailed and thorough, and I also used data triangulation to ensure that the codes, categories, and themes derived from the data were accurate. Additionally, I used data

triangulation with the participants. Because they are co-researchers, including them ensures the accuracy of the findings and conclusions presented in this research study. Member checking was also vital to the credibility and confirmability of this research and ensured that the meanings and themes extracted from the qualitative data accurately conveyed the meanings of the co-researchers and not my own constructed meanings.

There is a lack of prior research on this particular topic. Although I was able to locate a few studies which used digital storytelling with Indigenous youth, they were not designed to specifically look at the youths' cultural identities through the same theoretical perspectives that this study employed. However, I was able to draw from and synthesize the works of other researchers who have examined the cultural and literate identities of Indigenous youth through other means and who have used digital storytelling as a method for data collection and analysis to ensure that my findings and conclusions correlate with theirs.

Although the small sample size of co-researchers may impede the transferability beyond other Native American adolescents in rural communities who attend public schools, the case study parameters denote that this is a highly unique case for which the results may not be transferable. Data regarding the co-researchers' perceptions of literacy remained relatively stable and, therefore, dependable, across the research project since data was collected at the beginning of the project.

Subjectivity

As a white female from a suburban middle-class background, I recognize my role as an outsider to Indigenous peoples and their cultures as well as my position within the settler colonial system. As an outsider, I fully appreciate that I am not entitled to full and complete access to all aspects of the community or its culture, languages, knowledges, and practices.

Therefore, my interactions with the youth, the program director, and the tribal Elders were grounded in respect for their culture, language, heritage, and community. I also respected any and all boundaries established by the participants and their community.

Additionally, I constantly engaged in reflexivity. By recognizing, acknowledging, and addressing the power dynamics present within my research project as well as my relationships with the participants, their community, and their culture, my goal was, and continues to be, to forefront their experiences, knowledges, and meanings rather than my own. Therefore, I ensured that I refrained from reducing and refracting their stories to fit within a Western- or settler-oriented perspective.

As a former literacy educator, I hoped that my experience in the classroom would allow me to create meaningful connections, to establish rapport and a relationship of trust with the youth in the program, and to better understand how they explored and expressed who they are through their digital storytelling videos. The participants' identities and the information they disclosed to me is considered private, and every effort was, and is, made to ensure its confidentiality. Physical data was stored within a locked office, and digital data was stored electronically on a password-enabled device. Additionally, obtaining IRB approval provided ethical oversight and ensured that the participants' interests are at the forefront of the process.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I detailed the methodology for this research. I described the holistic, single-case design, and I argued for this application of design rather than a phenomenological design. I provided details about the participants of this case study as well as the selection method, and I also described the after-school program by providing details about its goals, its program director, and its location. I then discussed the data collection methods as well as the

types of data that were collected before I described the methods of data analysis employed in this case study. I concluded this chapter by addressing the trustworthiness of the study as well as my subjectivity as a researcher.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I present the findings of the data. First, I provide detailed descriptions of each of the five participants: Bella, Evpayv, Sarah, Anna, and River. I then report the themes which emerged from the data. These themes include enjoying the process, exploring and solidifying personal identity through digital storytelling, and discovering personal strength through reflection. The question which guided this research is: How do Native American adolescents in a rural, tribal-sponsored after-school program for Indigenous youth explore and express who they are through digital storytelling?

Participant Profiles

Through their heritage project documents and interviews, the youth provided information about themselves, their families, their cultures, and their experiences with school. In order to provide context for the themes, which are presented in the next section, I will first provide details and facts about each of the five participants.

Bella

Bella is an easy-going twelve-year-old girl. She identifies herself as Indian and Italian. She is of average height, has long brown hair that she typically wears down, and wears glasses. Bella loves food, especially fry bread and Indian tacos, and she stated, “If you wanna win my heart, buy me food” (funds of knowledge map). On her funds of knowledge map and her shield, she mentioned some of her favorite things including the band BT, one of the band members, Jimin, and singer Shawn Mendes along with watching Netflix and YouTube videos. She is warm and friendly to the adults associated with the program as well as the other youth, and she talks, smiles, and laughs often with those around her (participant observation; field notes).

Bella and her family, which consists of her mother, father, and brother, are very close. She described her mother as a strong woman, and she detailed her father's sense of humor and storytelling ability in her first interview (January 15, 2020). She also indicated that her sense of humor and storytelling ability mirror those of her father. Both of her parents currently work full-time, but Bella recounted that her father was a stay-at-home dad while she and her brother were younger. Bella described her older brother as being smart and kind but also shy, and she said, "I love him to death. He's always been there for me." The bonds and strong relationships between Bella and her family are evident as she described their interactions including how they can often be found telling stories and "laughing and giggling" with each other on their parents' bed (interview1).

In her first interview, Bella also included her grandparents, uncles, and "a bunch of cousins" in her descriptions of her family. She spoke often of her paternal grandfather who lived with them for a period of time before his death when she was younger. He battled many health ailments, and Bella recognized that his lifestyle choices ultimately had a significant impact on his health. She expressed profound sadness that he suffered and that he is no longer with them, especially, she said, "Because you want your grandparents there by your side every step of the way." Her maternal grandmother has also endured struggles which Bella described as "a lot of evil around her" which included poor health and an unhealthy relationship. However, Bella also fondly recalled that her grandmother would often spoil her and her brother with popsicles and other desserts when they visited her. Descriptions of her family in her first interview also included stories of her uncles coming over for dinner when everyone's schedules allowed as well as so many cousins that she did not discuss them because she said, "Most of them I don't even know yet."

School is not one of Bella's favorite things, and her attitude toward school was often apathetic which is evident on her funds of knowledge map and in her responses during her first interview. She reported that she has been bullied for her weight, and she also reported that there are people who "are going to judge you by your skin color." Skin color seems to both unite and divide students in her school, and Bella detailed some experiences she has had with racism. Bella's core group of friends consists mainly of other Native American and black students although she stated, "Every now and then I get a few white friends." She stated that although she and her friends may "joke around with the white kids," her friends are "really nice people once you get to know them." She went further to assure me that "you don't have to fear anything. We're not gonna gang up on you" (interview 1).

Bella stated in her first interview that she does not participate in tribal activities often except for the after-school program; however, she did recently participate in her Tribal Nation's pageant and won the title of Junior Miss. As she described preparing for this pageant, it is clear that she is familiar with aspects of her native language, culture, and traditions. Participating in the after-school program and the Tribal Nation's pageant have been positive, life-changing experiences for Bella. She appreciates that the after-school program has taught her "how to interact with other people and how to make friends" because prior to attending the program she was very shy, and she said she often struggled to talk with other youth. The program's other participants have played an important role in her transformation because, she said, "Most of the kids that go here are really outgoing and most likely they're going to bring you out of your shell whether you like it or not." Similarly, the pageant also helped Bella come out of her shell. She put forth great effort to prepare for the pageant and stated that the talent portion was crucial to her conquering her stage fright. Overall, in her first and second (February 4, 2020) interviews,

Bella reported that the after-school program and the pageant have provided her opportunities to interact with more people and become more comfortable doing so.

Bella stated that her father often told her and her brother "really funny stories like parodies of the original tall tales" and that the three "would always just laugh our butts off." She also reported that she has learned from the bible stories her parents told her as she was growing up, and she enjoys hearing them especially from her dad who "makes it more interesting just the way he talks." These stories have given her strength and confidence which was evident as she told her own story about being bullied for her weight and about gaining more self-confidence in herself (interview 1; interview 2). Bella also stated that she had heard tribal stories "from a lot of tribal members and band members and a lot of Native Americans." The "old" Elders, according to her, "tell you the long Indian stories. You'll get bored out of your mind. But that's just how they are"; however, she was unable to recall specific examples or stories that she has heard apart from those she learned in school. In school, they have heard stories "not like the bands and clans or something, but just how they [the Native Americans] were and what they hunted and how they traded and stuff like that." She did question the authenticity of the information in her textbook because "those people who wrote those books weren't really born in that time, so you don't really know for sure that's what they did" (interview 1).

In her first interview, Bella also reported that she enjoys telling stories with technology. She uses the app Funimate to make short, funny videos, and she also has made TikTok videos. Her said that her TikTok account has over 115 followers, and the three videos she has posted have over 50 views each. She last posted a video a few months ago. She laughed as she recalled that it is "really funny" because it involves "everybody saying upgrading from their ex-boyfriend," but she is "still single."

Evpayv

Evpayv (eh-uh-BYE-uh), a name which comes from her Native language, is a twelve-year-old girl who wears glasses and is of average height. She identifies herself as half Mexican, half Native. She has long brown hair that she typically wears pulled back into a ponytail. She loves going to the local ice cream and dairy store and eating nachos, breakfast foods, and french fries. She enjoys playing sports, especially basketball and softball, and she does well in school and enjoys math (funds of knowledge map). Evpayv typically works on her homework during homework time at the program, and she is not afraid to ask for assistance. She also giggles often and is engaging with the program staff and other students (participant observation; field notes).

Evpayv is close to her mother, stepfather, two sisters, and brother as well as her young nephew who currently lives with them. In her first interview (January 15, 2020), her second interview (February 4, 2020), and her digital story, she mentions that her mother and father divorced when she was quite young and that she is thankful her mother met her stepfather because he is an important part of her life. She also mentioned her extended family which consists of her grandmother, a grandfather who has passed away, cousins, nieces, and nephews with whom she spends a significant amount of time. Most of the details and contexts she presented in regard to her family are tied to events which are held at or connected with their ceremonial grounds. It was clear that she spends quite a bit of time there and that it plays a significant role in her life.

Evpayv spoke at length of her culture and traditions through her funds of knowledge map, both of her interviews, and her digital story, and she finds great pride in her religion. She reported that she and her family go to ceremonial grounds and that sometimes she also goes to powwows and peyote meetings; however, she primarily attends stomp dances at her ceremonial

grounds. Her mother taught her and her sister how to stomp dance, but her stepfather was instrumental in getting them to attend the ceremonial grounds more frequently and regularly. Now, they go quite often throughout the season, and she and her family participate in stomp dances, ribbon dances, and buffalo dances. She also described a time when she and her mom were invited to a local Head Start program to demonstrate stomp dance (interview 2).

Storytelling is also important to Evpayv although she stated in her first interview that she is not familiar with traditional stories; however, she did report that they tell stories at home and at the ceremonial grounds. She said, "Sometimes at home, we just went in her [mom's] bed, and she'll tell us stories," and when they go to her grandmother's house, her grandmother will end up "telling us stories about our grandpa and stuff." The stories that her mother and grandmother tell about her family in the past, she said, are "the kind of stories that I like." Her mom also tells her about how things used to be, and her grandmother tells her stories about her grandfather who passed away.

Sarah

Sarah is a twelve-year-old girl with a slight build who identifies herself as half Indian, half white. She has medium-length brown hair which she usually pulls back into a ponytail, and she wears glasses. Sarah is active and enjoys swimming and playing basketball and softball. Her favorite color is blue, and she loves rainbows. Some of her favorite foods are ice cream, pizza, McDonald's french fries, and her grandmother's frybread. Sarah reported that she has straight As in school and has "awesome friends" (funds of knowledge map). She can often be observed playing and laughing with her younger sister and the other youth in the after-school program (participant observation; field notes).

During her first interview (January 27, 2020) and in her digital story, Sarah described her family in detail. She stated that her mother and father divorced after her sister was born, and her father has subsequently remarried and has had other children. Her father recently moved into a larger house with a backyard and garage, and he lives approximately two hours northeast of Sarah and her sister. Sarah reported that although he has been to jail a few times since she was born, he has been out of jail since 2018 and that she and her sister are frequently able to spend time with him and go on road trips and boat trips with him. In this period of time, Sarah's mom joined the Air Force, so Sarah and her sister lived with their grandmother for six months while their mother was fulfilling her obligations. Sarah, her mother, and her sister are active, so they can often be found practicing and playing sports in their community. She stated that they are at their community's facilities about three times per week, and that while she enjoys playing, sometimes she would rather be doing other things. However, she was not able to articulate what she would rather be doing.

Her maternal grandmother's house is "the hangout spot," and Sarah, her mother and sister, and her cousins often gather here to have dinner and spend time with each other. They especially enjoy their grandmother's Indian tacos because she makes delicious frybread. In her first interview, Sarah proudly stated that she has eaten one-and-a-half plate-sized Indian tacos before; her younger cousin, however, was able to eat two. Sarah's grandfather, "a great guy," passed away in 2018, and she stated that 2018 was the "hardest year for [her] mom" because her mother and grandfather were best friends. Sarah stated that she was not that close to him, but she did spend significant time with him.

Sarah said in her first interview that she is "pretty familiar" with storytelling because her mother "tells me a lot of stories." One particular story her mother has told her is about the house

that her grandfather and his siblings lived in when they were young. She told me, "[At] my grandpa's grave, there's this house, and it's all messed up and everything--it's falling apart. And my grandpa's brother and them used to live in it. And it was haunted." She went on to say that her grandfather's sisters shared a bed and that one night they "felt somebody sleeping in between them." Additionally, her grandfather and his brother used to "put little army guys on the shelf, and they'd be down on the ground in the morning." Sarah's grandmother also tells her stories, especially about her mom when she was younger. She enjoys these stories as well, and "they always laugh at" the stories (interview 1).

Sarah enjoys creating stories and videos on TikTok and Snapchat for her friends. She stated in her first interview that she's made over thirty videos, and she is quite proud of them. She recently made one with her sister featuring the syrup bottles at IHOP, and her "mom really liked it." She also recounted another video she made after her cousin was involved in a fender bender. She and her father stopped to check on him after the vehicles had been moved, and because the other person involved was being overly dramatic, Sarah decided to make a video about it. She stated that everyone was laughing at the excessive drama, and "we wasn't (sic) trying to be super mean, but I mean, we couldn't help but to laugh." She stated that this video is the only personal video that she has made.

Anna

Anna is a 15-year-old with short hair, and she has recently dyed a portion of it red. She identifies herself as Native American. She loves anime, food, the band BTS, and video games, and she considers herself to be an emo, and she included this information on her funds of knowledge map and her shield. Anna is not fond of school, especially her Spanish class, and she often struggles to maintain her grades. As a result, tension often exists between her and her

mother which tends to exacerbate their tenuous relationship. Anna would prefer to be on her phone while she is at the program, but she is animated while talking to others in the program or participating in program activities (participant observation; field notes).

Anna has three sisters, one of which is older and two are younger, as well as a mother which she describes on her funds of knowledge map and in her first interview (December 16, 2020). She has only recently reestablished a relationship with her mother after having lived with one of her grandfathers for several years. In her interview, she stated that her grandfather, who has passed away, "took me away" because he "didn't want us around" her stepfather. Anna stated that she has a close relationship to another one of her grandfathers, and the affection she holds for this grandfather is evident in a story she recounted of her mother surprising her with a trip to visit him before the holidays. Part-way through the one-and-a-half-hour trip southwest of their home, Anna's mother informed her that they were going to his nursing home to visit him. She stated, "I was like [excited inhale], and she's like, 'Don't start crying now.'" She described visiting with him and pushing him around the nursing home instead of taking him to see the Christmas light display the town is known for because she "didn't want him to get sick cause he's already getting over the sickness that keeps going around" (interview 1).

Anna has switched schools many times, and in her first interview she reported that she is currently a freshman in high school even though she should be a sophomore. She expressed frustration with school especially with teachers who have unclear or changing expectations. Anna often struggles to maintain good grades as she often has missing work. The program director and a tutor, who teaches at Anna's school, offer assistance and set up plans so that she can get caught up, but she often resists their efforts through avoidance (participant observation; field notes). Despite periods of not keeping up with her work, Anna is extremely insightful and

inquisitive, and she is a prolific writer. She enjoys reading and writing stories in her journal although she often keeps her journals to herself so that she does not feel like others are judging her. She stated she began writing at age four or five because she "started getting really depressed," and she thought, "I'll just start writing my feelings out and hope somebody sees it eventually." These writings eventually transitioned into "deep" stories that are contained within her journals (personal communication, January 17, 2019).

Anna has a rich history with storytelling. Although she said she's "not real big on it" in her first interview, she did go on to say, "When people tell me stories, I'll just sit and listen." She also stated that, before her grandfather passed away, "He always told the stories about when he was little and some cultural myths [but that] they kind of scared me cause he made them sound scary." It is apparent, though, that she treasures these stories as she cheerfully recounted that he not only told her stories about shapeshifters but that he also called her a little shapeshifter because, she said, "They would try to look for me and remember where I was, but they didn't know where I was. I was just sittin' there the whole time." She also stated, "After he passed away, I was like, maybe I should tell stories around here or something like that."

As mentioned previously, Anna writes stories in her journal quite frequently and calls herself "a story-writer--somewhat." She writes what she calls "the deepest stuff ever" which usually consists of "sad and lonely people going through stuff and stuff like that." Many of these stories are inspired by how she "grew up" and what she has done "to make it through life." She hesitates to let anyone read her stories because they may "scare" people, and she went on to say that they are "between normal and not normal." She defined a normal writer as one whose writing is "happy" while a not-normal writer "would be like insane or something like that. Like Edgar Allen Poe" (personal communication, January 17, 2019). Anna is more apt to share her

writings with people she trusts. In her first interview, she stated that she would share them with people in the program because, she said, “I know they’ll listen.” She also shared a few of her pieces on online on the website Webpad, and she reported that there were “over like 100 people who read it and actually commented on it saying it was good.”

River

River is a quiet fifteen-year-old male. He is tall, has black hair he wears in a mullet, and wears glasses. River loves basketball, and he can be found playing some form of the game during activity time in the after-school program. Some of his favorite NBA teams include the Clippers, Rockets, Lakers, and Thunder, and he enjoys playing video games featuring the NBA. He also plays Madden, Call of Duty, and zombie games, and he included this information on his funds of knowledge map. He loves to play with two of his siblings who attend the program with him, or any other person who dares to challenge him at basketball. River describes himself as lazy on his funds of knowledge map, his shield, and his first interview (January 23, 2020). It takes some time to get him to open up and speak more than a few words one-on-one, so building positive relationships with him has been crucial to his continued participation in the program (participant observation; field notes). Once he is comfortable with you, though, his funny side is evident. He admits that he likes “to do funny things, “be funny,” and act “crazy” (funds of knowledge map).

River comes from a large family. Despite his siblings and parents acknowledging their affiliation with several tribes, River does not readily identify as Native American. He and his family enjoy watching movies, especially scary ones, even though everyone is not a fan of them. The family has traveled together, and he recalled a time that they traveled out of state to visit a waterpark and go shopping (funds of knowledge map; interview 1).

River stated in his first interview that he and his siblings have chores to complete before they are able to play video games or basketball and that he and many of his siblings enjoy cooking. He went on to clarify, though, that he enjoys eating the cakes and cookies his siblings make more than he does making them himself. On his shield, River illustrated that he works with his dad and that they cut the lawn together.

River and his immediate family spend holidays as well as other major family milestones with their extended family although perhaps not as frequently as other families may get together. He also stated in his first interview that his grandmother and grandfather often tell them stories when they are together, but he described them as "bad stories." Probing further, he admitted that because he thought they were bad, he "didn't listen to them" and instead he would "go hide" in order to avoid them. He does not enjoy many of the stories he has to read in school because they, too, are "boring," but he reads them because his teacher makes him. He also reported that the program director told them several traditional stories over the summer break: "Some of them were boring. I like some of them." The ones he enjoyed "sounded cool" and were often about things "back in the day."

Themes

Several themes emerged from the data, and in this section, I review these themes and discuss the data which support them. I first discuss the youth engaging the process to create their digital storytelling videos. Then I discuss the youth solidifying their personal identities through digital storytelling through meaningful relationships, a connection with Indigenous culture, and an emotional disconnect from school. Finally, I discuss how the youth discovered personal strength by reflecting on their digital stories and the process to create them.

Engaging in the Process

The youth generally expressed that they enjoyed the process of creating their digital storytelling videos. In early November of 2019, we began the process by creating their funds of knowledge maps, and some of the youth, especially River and Bella initially struggled to expand their maps beyond their families. We discussed people, places, and experiences that are important to them or that have had a significant impact on their lives. We also discussed their interests and hobbies as well as why they were interested in those activities. After in-depth discussions, the youth were able to more intricately develop their maps (participant observation; field notes).

The maps that River and Bella constructed were more simplistic with limited use of color. Anna constructed a more complex map which included small pictures throughout her spider-web design, but she primarily used the color black to convey what and who are important to her. Evpayv and Sarah took different approaches to construct their maps. Rather than implementing a spider-web design which linked and connected their components, they chose to scatter their components around the page, but they did keep their names in the middle of the page like the other youth. Sarah used many bright colors and short sentences to convey her ideas while Evpayv relied on pictures and fewer words to communicate hers.

After they completed their maps toward mid-November, they began designing their shields. Drawing from the information already on their maps as well as ideas and connections they generated from analyzing their maps, they used symbols to summarize what is important to them and what represents who they are (participant observations; field notes). The youth displayed these symbols by dividing their shields into sections. Some had proportional sections while others chose to divide their shields into less formal sections. River included captions to

help explain what his drawings represented since he expressed that he was not confident about his drawings. Bella and Anna, meanwhile, prominently displayed pictures on their maps with limited to no writing or captions.

We met over winter break, and during this time the youth drafted their scripts and were able to share their scripts with each other prior to working on their videos. While most of the youth quickly knew the story they wanted to share, River struggled to select a topic because he felt his life was not "exciting." We talked for a period of time and brainstormed ideas which were based on what he included on his map and his shield. Eventually, he decided to write a story about what he does on a typical weekend at his house. He felt that this would most accurately portray who he perceived himself to be, especially his self-described laziness (participant observation; field notes).

Next, many of the youth constructed storyboards to help guide their digital storytelling videos. River settled on a typical weekend for his script, so his storyboard includes five frames which include the activities he engages in on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. Bella decided to develop a story about her experiences with being bullied about her weight and about her ability to overcome and increase her self-esteem. Her storyboard was more complex as she included a large picture of herself in the middle with pictures of the thoughts and feelings she experienced while she was bullied around the edges. Anna initially wrote a script about herself and her life, but when she constructed her video, she chose instead to write about her friends whom she considers to be her family. Evpayv chose to write about her mother meeting her stepfather and how her stepfather encouraged her family to attend his ceremonial grounds more frequently, and she drew a more traditional storyboard consisting of eight frames. In these frames, she drew pictures of her and her family, of them traveling to their ceremonial grounds,

and of them at their ceremonial grounds. She also chose to include an instance of being bullied at her ceremonial grounds which she also addresses in her video. Sarah wrote about the significant events in her life including her parents' divorce and her father's incarcerations and subsequent remarriage. Sarah's storyboard was similar to Evpayv's in that she told her story through six traditional-styled frames.

Each of the youth took a different approach in putting together their videos. Initially given the option to use a computer or their cell phones while we were together over winter break, it quickly became clear that the software and apps they had access to were not compatible across all of the devices and that not all of the youth had knowledge of how to successfully navigate and operate them. As a result, in early January, when we were able to meet again, I brought in a set of iPads for them to use. Utilizing iMovie, VoiceNotes, Photos, and Google, the youth were more equipped to put together the components of their videos. Not all of the youth had used Apple products before, but they all agreed that the iPads were user-friendly and easy to learn and navigate (participant observation).

Reflecting on the stories they told and the pictures they chose during their second interviews, the youth expressed that they were generally happy with the videos they created. In her second interview (February 13, 2020), Anna stated that she enjoyed the project because she "can just, like, speak what I wanted to." River expressed that he thought the project was hard, but "it was cool [because] I never did something like this before." Bella also stated that "it was really fun because I got to put in a lot of funny photos when I was little and a lot of great photos from now...All together, I think...it's really fun." Evpayv as well stated she enjoyed gathering the pictures. She said she liked "everything" about the project "but the main thing was looking for pictures and asking my mom for pictures."

Exploring and Solidifying Personal Identity

In each step of the digital storytelling process, the youth took time to explore their identities, and they referred often to their family and friends, school, their culture, and storytelling. By piecing these components together, the youth were able to solidify their identities in their digital videos. They often defined their identities in relation to their relationships with others, especially the family and friends with whom they have established meaningful relationships. They also named their identities through their connections with their culture as well as their experiences in school which have left them mostly emotionally disconnected to school.

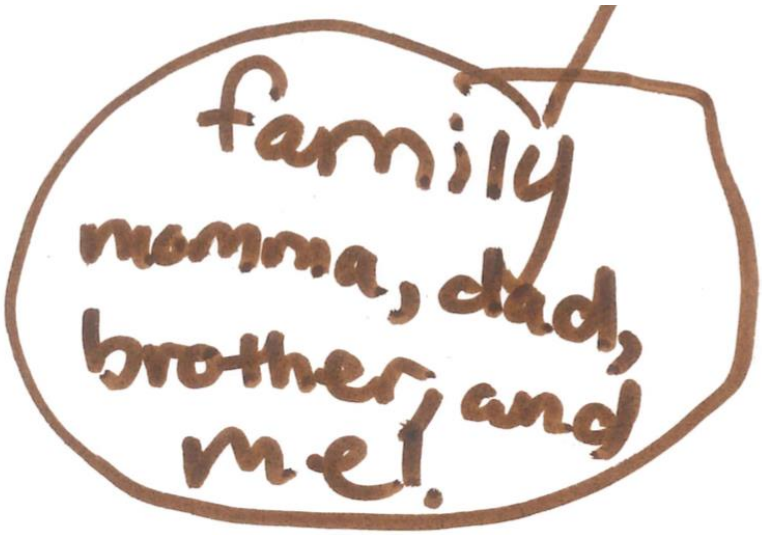
Meaningful Relationships

The youth presented the relationships that were meaningful to them throughout the process of creating their digital storytelling videos, and they often included their relationships with their families and peers. These relationships were present in their funds of knowledge maps, their shields and storyboards, their videos, and their interview responses. The youth also often defined themselves in relation to these meaningful relationships.

Bella, like many of the other youth, included extensive information about her family during the process of creating her digital storytelling video as well as in her digital video. On her funds of knowledge map, Bella included a description of her family which includes the words "mamma, dad, brother, and me!" (see Figure 2), and she talked extensively about her family as well, especially about her mother and father. In her first interview, she described her mother as "powerful," "strong," and "smart," and she stated, "That's where I get my smarts from." She described her father as funny and "outgoing," but she also stated that her insecurity, "you know, the being fat and all that, I most likely got that from him. He used to be the same way."

Figure 2

Portion of Bella's Funds of Knowledge Map



Interestingly, though, she credits her parents for making better lifestyle choices and for helping her to increase her self-confidence. Of her father, she stated, "He never really wanted us to be in the same position...that's why I started exercising." Likewise, she stated, "People used to make fun of her [her mother], but I like her attitude because she didn't care. She never really had the audacity to care what people think about her, so she just stopped caring a long time ago." Reflecting back on her story in her second interview, Bella stated:

> They've [her parents] have been judged and judged all their lives, so it's good that they're passing that down to us and telling us that you shouldn't care what society wants you to be or what other people want you to be. Just be who you want to be and not somebody else.

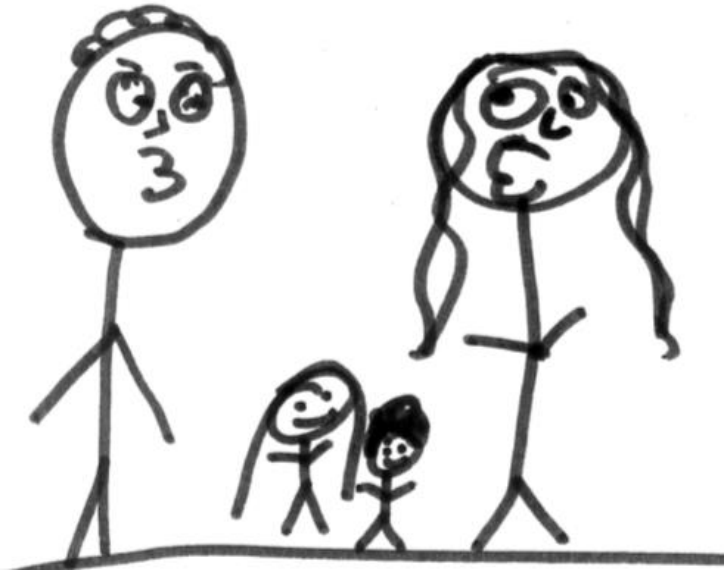
Bella also included several candid photos of herself when she was younger and photos of her family in the first half of her digital story. In her second interview, she stated she chose these particular photos because each one "brings out the happiness [of her story and her life because] I took a lot of crazy baby photos, and I was just being silly, and my parents caught the memories."

She added, “I don’t really remember when I was a baby, but I think it’s really cool that my parents had me take baby pictures cause some parents don’t do that.” Bella described many of the stories her family has told her and the lessons they have taught her, and she acknowledged that “I know that I’m really blessed to have a family like mine” (interview 1).

Evpayv also spoke about her immediate family which includes her mother, stepfather, older sister, and her young nephew who they are raising, and she included a picture of her, her mother, stepfather, and sister on her storyboard (see Figure 3). The family is close and often spends significant time together, especially at their ceremonial grounds. They also enjoy visiting the local amusement park and waterpark together. In fact, in her first interview, she recounted that they visited the amusement park around Halloween and that while they had fun, her sister made her go on a ride, the Brain Drain, which she is “kind of scared of.” She laughingly stated that she asked her sister, “Why would you want to go on that one?”

Figure 3

Portion of Evpayv’s Storyboard



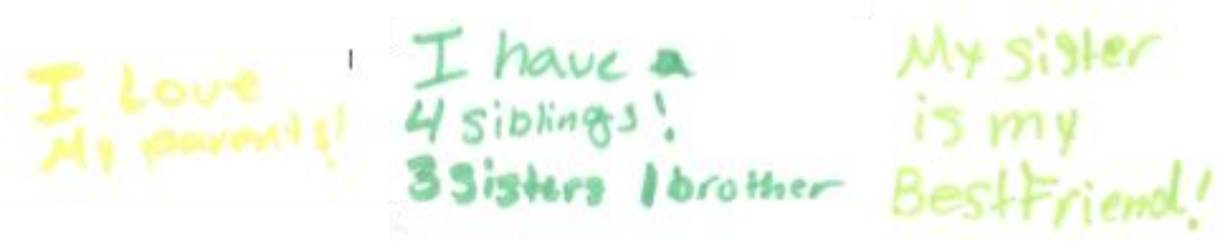
Evpayv centered her digital story around her mother and stepfather meeting, and she included many photos of her and her family together. Of the eight images she used in her digital story, she extracted three photos from a Google search, and the other five consist of Evpayv with her family; none are of her alone. For each of the pictures with her family, Evpayv was able to give explicit context and reasons for including them in her story during her second interview. In her first picture, she is holding her niece, and she stated that she included it specifically because of her niece. She stated, "I could show her that she's in it [the digital video]." Another photo is of her immediate and extended family after their local tribal celebration; she was very proud that their float won first place, and she stated that they used the money to travel to California. The final family photo in her digital story is of her, her mother, sister, and cousin as well as her stepfather with a yellow circle around his head. She stated that she included this one specifically because it features her stepfather.

Sarah also spoke of her family during her first interview and in her digital story. In her first interview, she talked about spending time with her family, especially her maternal grandmother: "We just like to hang out with my grandma and my other cousins, and we'll just hang out there cause that's the hangout spot." Additionally, she stated her grandmother makes the best frybread and Indian tacos. The photos Sarah included in her digital story are eclectic, but they showcase her family. She included a recent photo of her, her mother, and her younger sister, but she also included several with her other siblings as well. She also included a photo of her, her mother and sister, and her grandmother together in their church. These photos help support her story in which she narrated the major events of her young life including her parents' divorce and her father's subsequent remarriage as well as her father's incarcerations.

Sarah also spoke extensively about her family during the process of creating her digital storytelling video as well as in the video itself. On her funds of knowledge map, she wrote, “I love my parents!,” “I have 4 siblings! 3 sisters 1 brother,” and “My sister is my Best Friend!” (see Figure 4). Her shield also contained a reference to her family; in her “Happy” section, she

Figure 4

Portion of Sarah’s Funds of Knowledge Map



wrote the word “Family” indicating that her family makes her happy (see Figure 5). Sarah included several hand-drawn pictures of her family on her storyboard, and these pictures reflect significant events in her life. The first frame is of her, her mother, and her sister with her dad set off to the side behind bars. In this picture, her father is crying. She included another frame with a

Figure 5

Portion of Sarah’s Shield



picture of her, her mother, her sister, and her father who again is set off to the side behind bars. This time, however, they are all sad. In the third frame is a portrait which includes her father, stepmother, and her siblings who can be seen smiling in front of her father's new house (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Portion of Sarah's Storyboard



Sarah also spoke of her family during her first interview and in her digital story. In her first interview, she talked about spending time with her family, especially her maternal grandmother: "We just like to hang out with my grandma and my other cousins, and we'll just hang out there cause that's the hangout spot." Additionally, she stated her grandmother makes the best frybread and Indian tacos. The photos Sarah included in her digital story are eclectic, but they showcase her family. She included a recent photo of her, her mother, and her younger sister, but she also included several with her other siblings as well. She also included a photo of her, her mother and sister, and her grandmother together in their church. These photos help support her story in which she narrated the major events of her young life including her parents' divorce and her father's subsequent remarriage as well as her father's incarcerations.

Like the other youth, River included his family on his funds of knowledge map as well as in other artifacts from the digital storytelling process. On his map, he stated that his family consists of "3 sister, 2 brother, 2 gma, 2 gpa, 2 dogs, 1 cat" (see Figure 7). Additionally, he stated

Figure 7

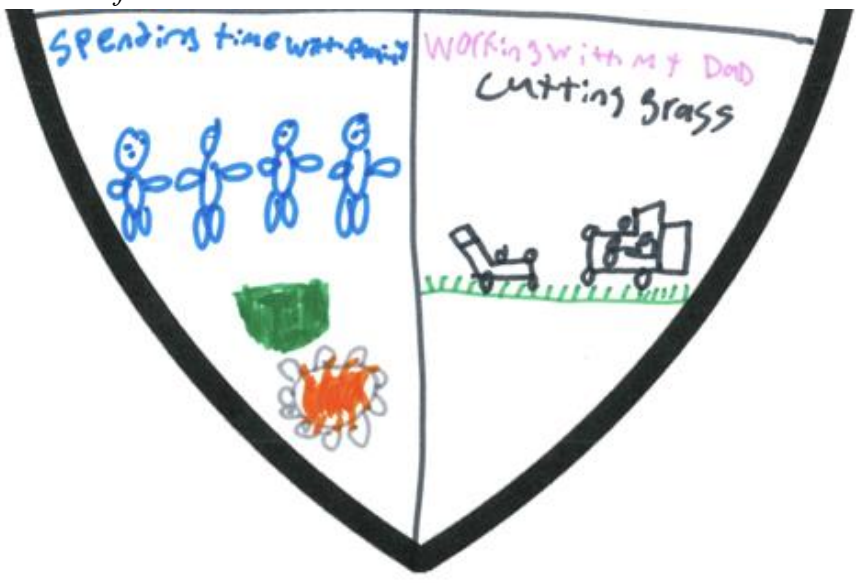
Portion of River's Funds of Knowledge Map



that he "love playing basketball [with] my family." River also highlighted his family prominently on his shield. The bottom half of his shield is divided into two sections (see Figure 8). The first section includes the phrase "spending time with my family" along with a visual depiction of a portion of his large family as well as green grass and a shining sun. The other section includes

Figure 8

Portion of River's Shield



the phrase “working with my dad cutting grass” above a picture of two lawnmowers on green grass. River’s storyboard also contains a reference to his family: he mentioned “go to the city with my dad” as an activity they sometimes do together after eating breakfast and getting dressed on the weekends (see Figure 9). River talked often in his first and second interviews about how he and his family play basketball together, especially out in the driveway, and about how they watch professional basketball games on the television together.

Figure 9

Portion of River’s Storybooard



Interestingly, River did not include any photos of himself or his family in his video although his brother videotaped him telling his story right inside the bathroom at the school. Instead, River included stock images which represent himself and his family, and these stock images include a white couple sitting on a couch, a blind woman baking cookies with the assistance of a male aid, a young white male asleep in a bed, two youth (one white and one black) playing video games, a middle-age white man eating breakfast, and another middle-age white man buttoning the buttons on his sleeve. Reflecting back on the project in his second interview, however, River stated that he wishes he had included pictures of his family.

Anna also spoke extensively about her family. On her funds of knowledge map, she included a "Family" section off of which are three main branches. The upper part of the section includes the words "hard working mother" as well as the word "Talk." To the right, she has a potato-like figure in which she wrote "Two annoying little sisters But I love them to Death." In her first interview, Anna stated that she enjoys spending time with her younger sisters, especially when they draw together or when they sit on the couch to watch tv as a family. She went on to say, "If I could, I would just pause their age and just be like, 'Stay,'" because she felt that they were growing up too quickly. This is also evident on her funds of knowledge map where she wrote "chill with them." Under the main "Family" section, Anna also included a reference her "older sister/cousin" as well as the words "Fight" and "laugh" (see Figure 10). She described her older sister as "a dork" in her first interview, but she went on to recall several fond memories of her and her sister playing together when they were younger.

Figure 10

Portion of Anna's Funds of Knowledge Map



Talking to Anna, a complicated and complex family history is evident. She was taken from her mother at a young age, and her grandfather subsequently raised her. Anna still holds

some animosity toward her grandfather but seems to generally accept the series of events which have defined her life thus far. Having only recently returned to her mother's custody, tension often exists between Anna and her mother. However, in her first interview she stated:

> She's hard, she's kind of hard on me a little bit. But, you know, it's alright because she's hard on me about school and stuff...She says she's not trying to be hard on me or anything about school, but she just wants me to try my best and actually get in somewhere.

The tension is also evident in Anna's attendance in the program. When things are going well at home and she is maintaining good grades, Anna is often present; however, when things are tough at home and she is not keeping up with her work, she often chooses not to attend the program, or her mother pulls her out (participant observation; field notes).

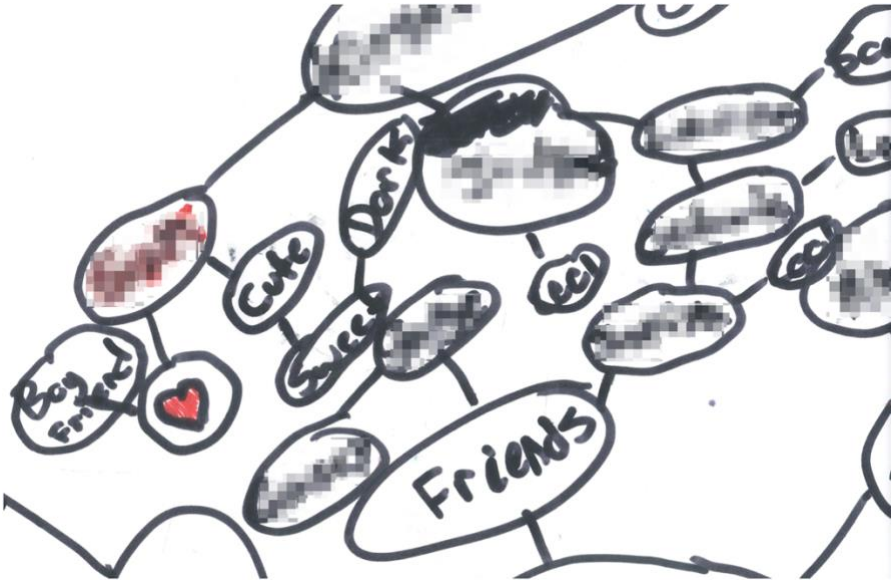
Anna, like the other youth, included family in her digital video. Interestingly, however, Anna instead stated that her friends are her family. The genesis of this can be seen in her funds of knowledge. Opposite of her "Family" section is one designated "Friends" which is much more detailed than her "Family" section. She lists eight friends as well as adjectives she associates with each person. This includes the largest circle which contains her friend's name followed by "/mom." Other descriptions of her friends included "cool," "lame," "scary," "sweet," "cute," and "dork." Taking up a full quarter of her map, Anna's section on "Friends" is also the most detailed (see Figure 11).

In her video, Anna displayed individual pictures of her friends as she narrated her relationship with them as well as a brief history of their friendship. She defined her first friend as "an older brother to me. I met him during sixth grade. I stuck by him whenever his dad died." Anna stated that the second friend is "like my mom. I don't really have a problem with her. Well,

not all the time. But, you know, it's cool. She's always on me." The third friend is "like my dad" and "my best friend." Anna stated, "When he gets out of school...he's going on National Guard" which is "gonna be sad." This friend along with another, who Anna defined as "my stone," are her "bestest friends that I could ever ask for." She stated that another friend will "be there till the day I die, I'll tell you that." After introducing her friends, Anna added a video she made for her friends on the Funimate app. This video features candid photos of her and her friends set to the song "Love Robbery" by Kalin and Myles.

Figure 11

Portion of Anna's Funds of Knowledge Map



Connection with Indigenous Culture

The youth also discussed their connections to their Indigenous culture throughout the process of creating their digital videos. While some of the youth demonstrated a stronger and more direct connection to their cultures and traditions, they were able to articulate the roles they play in their lives.

Evpayv described her connection with her culture in great detail. On her funds of knowledge map, she included a few objects related to stomp dance as well as her church which is

a Native American Baptist Church and offers portions of its services in the congregant's native language (see Figure 12). Her storyboard is dedicated to her attending stomp grounds (see Figure

Figure 12

Portion of Evpayv's Funds of Knowledge Map



13), and her digital storytelling video features photos of her and her family at stomp ground and other cultural activities. In her first interview, she stated that she attends and participates in stomp dances at her ceremonial grounds, and she said, "Sometimes I go to powwows too. And peyote meetings." About her culture and her participation in stomp dance, Evpayv stated, "That's what I like about my life the most."

Evpayv described stomp dancing and her ceremonial grounds in detail in her interviews and her digital story, and she credits her stepfather for getting her and her family more involved in stomp dance. She said that they began attending his ceremonial grounds shortly after he and her mother married. She reported in her first interview that she has "danced for a long time," and she enjoys spending time at her ceremonial grounds especially because she gets to spend time with her family. For example, she stated, "At stomp dance…they have like tables—like big old long wooden tables. Sometimes my mom tells us [stories] there and like when we're just waiting while she's cooking."

Figure 13

Portion of Evpayv's Storyboard



In her first interview she stated that stomp dances are "every Saturday. Well, after the winter or before the winter--they stop before winter comes just so it's not cold while we're dancing," and that "stomp grounds are usually out in the country hidden. The camps are made out of wood. To cook you have to cook on the wood fire." She went on to describe her ceremonial grounds further:

> We dance around a fire, and there's...four arbors facing north, east, south, and west. And we basically dance in the ring until the mornings. Sometimes we start at 11:00 [PM] and then go all the way up to seven. You dance all night and sometimes it can get cold or rain, but sometimes, if it rains, we're dancing on the ground, and it's outside. It gets muddy, so sometimes we have to walk through mud, and then like usually in the middle of the night, it'll dry up, and it'll be really hard the next morning. And then there's also a thing where you play. Sometimes it's just men; sometimes it's men and women. But at the end of each year, the men play a game of stickball north or south. Hang on, I gotta think. I think it's like east and west ballgames. The goal, like they have this little

> ball…[and] sticks, and they just basically throw the ball around their side just so they can win. And after stomp dance, sometimes the men and women, they play, and sometimes even little kids, we play stickball. It's just like a long pole with...either like a buffalo head or fish or something. And you just try to aim at it. So that's what we do. And, like, we have to cook on wood fires at the camps. And, like, we have to...serve the men after they get out cause they're in there all day. So that's what we do at stomp dance.

Of the stickball games, Evpayv states that they "can be rough. Some women hold drums and rattles while the men are usually playing the game rough."

In her first interview, Evpayv also described the different dances performed at her ceremonial grounds:

> We have Buffalo Dance when women wear patchwork skirts and turtle shells. Men wear hats and patchwork vests and dance around a stickball pole. Some stomp dances have Ribbon Dances, but most of them do. In the Ribbon Dance, women wear ribbon skirts and men wear ribbon vests.

She also enjoyed describing her traditional clothing in more detail:

> We have fabric skirts. They're...long skirts like probably down to your ankle. You can patchwork it or put ribbons around it. And on our legs to shake--we shake cans--they have, I don't know what it's called, like milk cans or something, and they poke holes [and] put rocks in it. I think you have to tie them together with a piece of wire. The men wear cowboy hats with feathers and sometimes like a beaded--I don't know what it's called--like a hat band? And then they wear like vests sometimes, and then those can have patchwork or ribbons on...like the side of their stomachs.

Evpayv stated that she and her mother have tried to make their own skirts, but often others, like her mother's cousin, make skirts for them; however, she did clarify that her mother can make ribbon vests (interview 1).

Evpayv enjoys teachings\ others about her religion. In her first interview, she said:

> I kind of want, like, the religion to go around more and be more popular...cause I just want it to be more, like, more people cause sometimes it's not a whole lot of people cause sometimes we're just out in the country.

She also stated that she "taught them [other youth in the program" how to shake cans" and that she and her mother were invited to a local school to demonstrate a stomp dance to the students. She said that "they got to see and experience what it was like at stomp dance cause we made a fire and danced around it like how you would at stomp dance.

Bella stated in her first interview that she does not "participate in a lot of tribal activities," but she does consider the after-school program as one because "it's for Indian youth and stuff like that." However, she went into great detail about competing in and winning her Tribal Nation's annual pageant. Her current role as the reigning Junior Miss has had a tremendous impact on her life, and she included a picture of her as princess on her shield (see Figure 14). In her first interview, she said, "I never expected myself to be competing…[but] it was altogether an amazing experience."

To prepare for the pageant, she had to study quite a bit. In her first interview, she stated, "I had studied even though my parents, my older brother didn't think I was putting effort into it...But little did they know I had that down--I have my speech down, I had my song down, I had my talent down. I had everything down. I was confident about this." She also described what she studied: "the Indian language, like some traditions they do. Definitely had to...like learn some

Figure 14

Portion of Bella's Shield



new phrases in Indian...the traditional dress--definitely had to know about that. Like the snake jaw pattern, the [her] Clan pattern, the rock diamond pattern." In reference to her specific clan's pattern, she stated that in her "Native American tradition, you take after your mom's clan. So, like me and my brother are in my mom's clan...If my dad was a girl, if he was our mom, then we would be [his clan]. So, it just switches around so the dad is just what he is, and all like the mom's kids are her clan, so that's just how we Indians work."

Although Bella does not participate in tribal and cultural activities to the extent that Evpayv does, she does know quite a few words and phrases in her native language (participant observation; field notes), she has learned how to shake cans from Evpayv, and her digital story features many photos of her in traditional dress. Additionally, in her role as Junior Miss, she travels around the state frequently to represent her Tribal Nation and attend other Tribes' activities and events.

Sarah mentioned her connection to her culture. In her first interview, Sarah stated that she attends the same local church as Evpayv and that they sing in their native language. She also stated that she attends with her mother, sister, and grandmother most Sundays unless she is away visiting her father. She did admit that they are occasionally late or miss services because she enjoys sleeping in on the weekends but that her mother can persuade her to get up with a donut or two.

Sarah also reported in her first interview that she used to attend stomp ground. She stated that "before my grandpa passed in 2018...we'd go to the stomp ground, and we do stuff there." She would attend "almost every time we went with my mom," and "it was fun." She recalled one particular time that she and her sister went to sleep in their car while they were at their stomp ground, and she laughed that her sister was small enough to sleep in the trunk. She described her grandfather as the leader at the stomp grounds, but because he passed away, they are not able to go to the stomp grounds anymore, and they will not have any more dances. The program director confirmed that Sarah's grandfather was the Chief of a local ceremonial ground and that "in our ceremonial ways, when someone like that passes, you generally have to take a year off as sort of a cleansing and preparation for a new chief," and during this time, the grounds are considered to be "asleep" and those who belong to the grounds "don't dance anywhere else either." However, since her grandfather passed away suddenly at a relatively young age, "he hadn't even been training anyone else to take over; therefore, they have no one else at this time that fully knows how to conduct everything" (personal communication, February 20, 2020).

In her first interview, Anna stated that although she has participated in cultural activities in the past, she has not recently because she is "terrified of cultural sites" after having been in a tornado while visiting one last spring. She described that the day started out "perfect" and that

the ride to the site was “pretty.” She recalled that she took pictures during the drive, but she later deleted them because “I didn’t want anything to remind me of that day.” She stated that the weather, although nice when they first arrived, quickly changed and that she “had this gut feeling that something’s about to happen.” Shortly after, her ears began popping, and someone pushed her into a small room as the tornado hit. Despite one of the walls falling on her, she escaped with minor injuries including a split lip and injured knee.

Emotional Disconnect from School

The youth are often not able to connect with school, and the school often does not support their Indigenous identity development which negates their cultural identity. This leads many of the youth to develop negative attitudes toward school as they seek to talk back to the system. Most of the youth also discussed their experiences in school although these descriptions were not as extensive as those of their family and friends. Overall, most of the youth stated that they disliked or hated school, but subsequent details they offered demonstrated that their displeasure toward school was not universal.

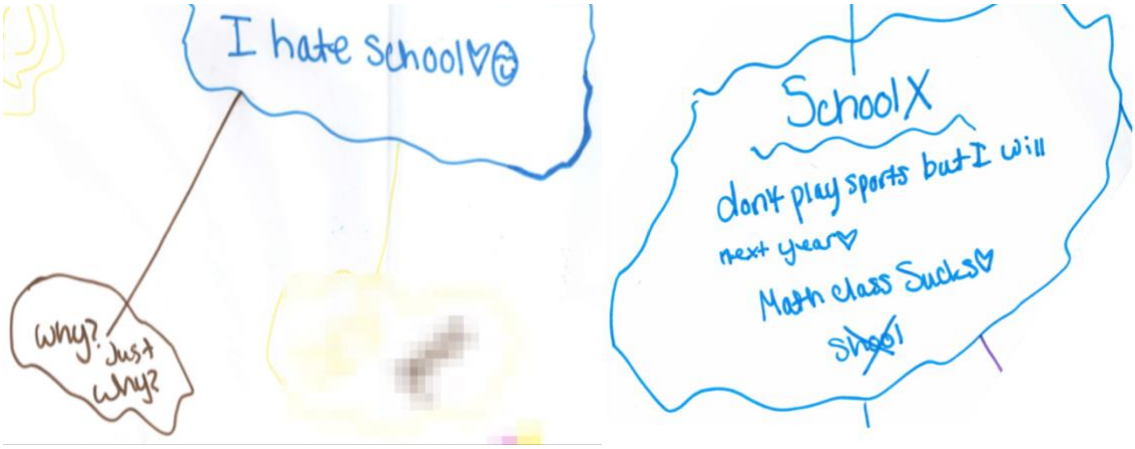
Bella wrote “I hate school” on her funds of knowledge map, and under it she questioned the purpose of school: “Why? Just why?” She titled another section “SchoolX,” and she stated, “don’t play sports but I will next year. Math class sucks” (see Figure 15). On her funds of knowledge map, however, she devoted a large section to her school district by writing the name of her town as well as its mascot, and she puts green hearts around them (see Figure 16). When she recounted her experiences at school in her first interview, one of the first things that Bella mentioned was that “I kind of got bullied because of my weight.” She went on to explain:

> You don’t gotta care. And that’s just how this school is. If you’re gonna be new or not...if you’re going to be in school and survive, you got to actually not care what people think

about you...They're still going to judge you by the way you look. Some people are very superficial at this school....I'm just saying the kids that go here are sometimes very fake and unhonest and just very mischievous.

Figure 15

Portion of Bella's Funds of Knowledge Map



Bella also described being judged by her skin color. In her first interview, she stated:

> There's a lot of Native Americans that go here and to [redacted] schools, and, you know, we like to joke around with the white kids cause that's just how we are--be like, "Oh, white people" and stuff, but that's just how you are. And, it's not like we have this one Native American clique or whatever. We're like with everybody...We're just not like all together in a pack, but if we need to, we're probably going to be in that Native American gang or whatever it is.

She went on to state, "I have white friends, but it's not like something where it's like my whole thing and I'm the only Native American in that group. I have a lot of black and Native American friends," and she stated, "The main reason [for this] is that I've kind of always grown up in a house where it's dealt with racism."

She detailed an instance where she and her mother and brother were shopping at a craft store, and they were racially profiled by employees:

> One day we were looking around and like this white dude with moppy brown hair came in and started sweeping back and forth. It was real clean too….The fact that he was only focused on my mom, my brother, and me really kinda like it didn't pain me cause it's just how people are. But the fact that he thought I was gonna steal something. And it gets on my nerves because like white people, like some white people that are racist, look at me like I'm gonna steal something, like I'm going to grab you just because I'm Indian. Like I'm not that type of person. And it sucks in general being judged by your skin color...It just sucks being judged on your skin color, but that's just how the world works, and that's not fair.

Figure 16

Portion of Bella's Shield



She also recounted instances of racism at school in her first interview: "I've seen other kids go past me and the white teachers have stopped me, just me, from going to my dad after school...You know, I know why they're stopping me...It's mainly because of my skin color."

Bella connected her experiences with racism to what she is studying in school. In her first interview, she stated that they recently learned about the thirteen colonies and "how they cover

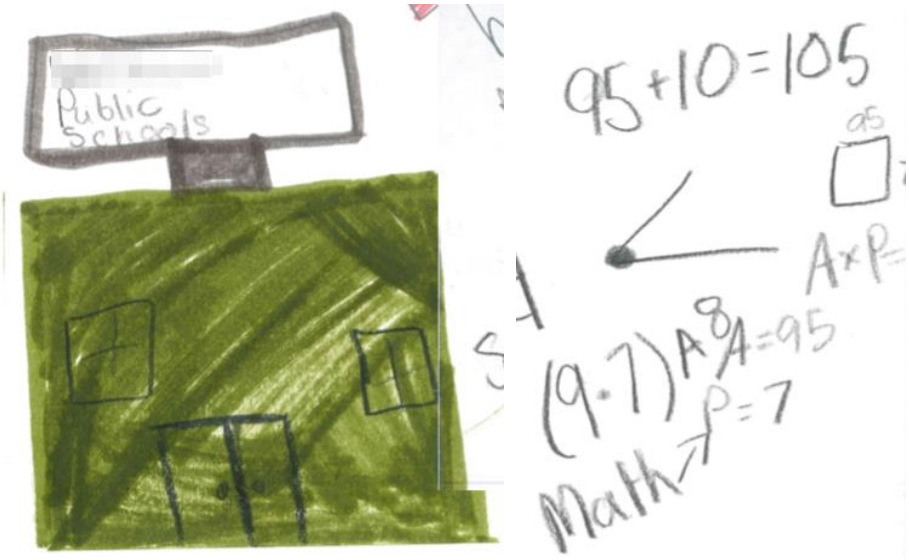
Native American's land [that] got taken away, and, just all together, it's really sad but interesting because we found out how we came to be and how most of us Native Americans are actually coming together." She went on to say that this coming together is:

> Really fundamental. It's not sentimental, but it's sad to a degree, because of how they treated us, how the white people treated us and it's not cool, but it's just how things were back then and still how things are. People are pretty racist, but at least we don't have segregated schools.

Evpayv also referenced school in her digital storytelling project, and she included a picture of her school as well as a few math equations on her funds of knowledge map (see Figure 17). However, she did not provide as many details about school as Bella does. In her first

Figure 17

Portion of Evpayv's Funds of Knowledge Map



interview, Evpayv stated, "I'm a straight-A student. Sometimes I have trouble with friends. Like they can be rude to me or stuff like that." However, she quickly turned her attention to her classes. She stated that she is currently in gym, "and it's not really fun, but I like it because I play basketball, and that's what we're doing." She stated that she also gets

frustrated "sometimes when I'm walkin down the hall [cause] there's always like this big ol group of boys. They just take up the whole entire hall, and they always make us walk through them."

One thing about school that Evpayv enjoys is that they sometimes go to the high school building for enrichment classes which can be exciting, and this quarter, she is in typing class. She particularly enjoys the competitive activities. In her first interview she said, "We race in it too. So that's fun… and sometimes you can invite your friends to the race." Another enrichment class she enjoyed was "kind of like a study hall. You can play games on a computer or something--just basically do what you want. She [her teacher] let us eat in the class and bring drinks and stuff."

Evpayv also described experiences directly related to her being a Native American student in her first interview although she did not offer as many details as Bella. Evpayv states that sometimes, "people ask us questions" because people know that she, her sister, and her cousins are actively involved in ceremony. People often ask her "like what kind of dresses do y'all wear...and stuff like that." She stated, "Sometimes it can be fun to answer, but we only get five minutes to go to the hall, so sometimes I'm rushing, sometimes I'm not." She went on to clarify that sometimes she is bothered by the questions because "some people don't like what we do, you know...sometimes people can not like it [her religion]."

Anna, like some of the other youth, expressed frustration with school, especially with some of her teachers. In her first interview, she provided the example of her gym teacher who often contradicts himself: he instructs students to "exercise like every two minutes" but also tells them they "can be on your phones." This often ends with the students "arguing with him like

every minute and saying ‘If you let us be on our phones, then why are we exercising? He’s like, “I don’t know.’ It’s weird.” Similarly, she discussed her Spanish class:

> Spanish is dumb. He doesn’t even stand up and teach it cause he’s not the Spanish teacher. And I’m like, ‘If you’re not the Spanish teacher, then why are you here?’ He’s a Spanish teacher, but he doesn’t teach Spanish. And he says he’s not a Spanish teacher. Then why do we have Spanish? I didn’t even sign up for Spanish.

Anna also stated that she has “not really that much” control over what she reads and writes in her classes. She stated:

> Cause you can’t really tell the teachers everything cause they’ll just correct you if you’re wrong or something like that...If they have something to say about it or something like that, I’ll just listen to em and do it their way cause that way, if I do it wrong, I’m not getting a bad grade on it or anything like that...If they tell me how to do something, I’ll just do it their way. I ain’t gonna do it any other way.

She continued:

> Teaching, I don’t really pay attention to. I just think, I just see it as teaching. I don’t really care. As long as I’m learning something in school, then I’m fine. I don’t care. And then people say like, “Oh, you don’t care about school?” No, I care about school. I just don’t care what they’re teaching. It’s just teaching. It’s just our own style of teaching. You can’t make them change it.

When asked if she could change it, what would she change, Anna stated:

> Explain it like more thoroughly and like better than what they do. It’s not that I don’t get it or anything. It’s just like, make it easier for the people around me so they get it. Just in case they don’t. (personal communication January 17, 2019)

Attending school as a Native American, according to Anna, is "hard. Like literally it's hard...If you're Native, you get the worst of it. You get blamed for everything." She went on to describe some examples:

> Like if, say if there was a fight that started and we were near it, we get blamed for it. And if, say if someone stole something and we happen to see something but didn't say anything cause we chose not to get into it, we get blamed. And if we argue with something or call someone a bad name, and they say it was us but it really actually wasn't, we get blamed. Like no matter what, we still get blamed. And they say they're [a] good school. No, we get blamed for everything.

She stated that this is why "all I hang out with is...a bunch of Natives. Like, that's my whole group of cousins right there...Like, that's all the friends that we need" (interview 1).

On her funds of knowledge map, Sarah wrote, "I have strait A's," and "I Love Math!" (see Figure 18). She also included the name of her school system and added, "I sorta like reading." Like Bella, she also included school on her shield. In the lower-left quadrant, she drew

Figure 18

Portion of Sarah's' Funds of Knowledge Map



a picture of a school building surrounded by the words "school," "Teachers," and "games" (see Figure 19). She stated in her first interview that "school's boring…...cause you just have to sit in class all day. And then my feet fall asleep. And that's not good cause in like thirty, five minutes later, we have to get up and go do something." She did admit that sometimes school is fun:

"Well, the fun part about school is my friends. Sometimes. But if there's beef with somebody, then that's just not good cause there's always drama at our school." Sarah assured me that she does not get into the drama, however. "I just watch...I think it's fun. Except I don't like whenever they fight. It's scary...I just like when they argue, but then it's not good."

Figure 19

Portion of Sarah's Shield



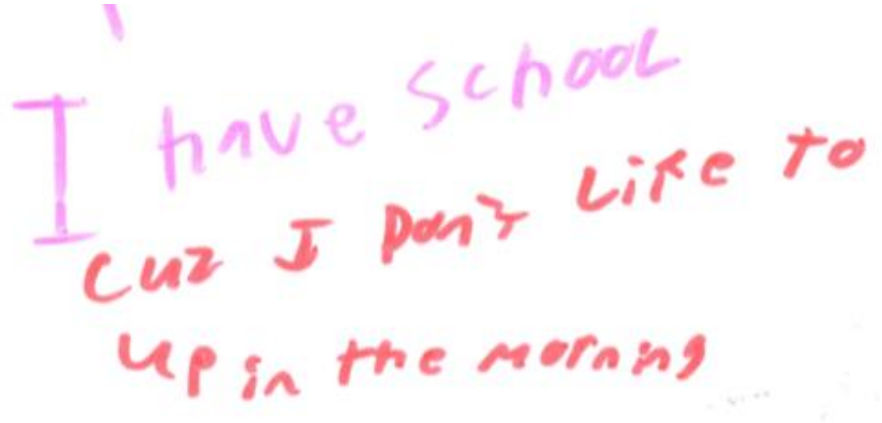
A particularly memorable and "crazy" school experience that Sarah described during her first interview she chipped her tooth while playing the game Red Rover. While they were playing, "these boys just barged in," and when it was her turn, she "started runnin', and then this boy ran into me." The teachers dismissed her when she began crying and saying that her mouth hurt. She looked in the mirror when she got back to class, and she recounted that "I saw that my tooth was chipped. And then we went to the other class that the boy was in, and his tooth is chipped too." Thankfully, she says, "he ran into me at full speed. I was just half speed."

Sarah did not reference any specific experiences in school directly related to her being Native American, but she did state that she often receives school supplies as well as clothing vouchers from her Tribe.

River also provided few details about school. On his funds of knowledge map, he wrote "I hate school cuz I don't like to [get] up in the morning," (see Figure 20) and during his first interview, he stated that school is "boring. Trash...I don't like school. I gotta get up early." Some

Figure 20

Portion of River's Funds of Knowledge Map



of his negative attitude toward school he attributed to math because "it's hard. Math is hard." He grudgingly admitted that he enjoys his reading class, but quickly changed the subject by stating, "Science is fun. Computers is fun." Like Sarah, River did not provide many details about his experiences in school as a Native American student.

Discovering Personal Strength through Reflection

During their second interviews, the youth reflected not only on the process of creating their digital storytelling videos but also on the components of their videos which express who they are as individuals and as members of their families and communities. Bella stated that her story is about:

> How I'm overcoming the insecurity that's bothered me basically my whole entire life. You know, my body, my weight, just obsessing over it in general is not healthy, and it's not good to think like that, so I'm still learning to overcome that obsession and insecurity.

She chose to confront this issue, in part, because of her mother. Bella said:

> My mom reminded me that you don't need to obsess on that...It kind of inspired me even more because I realized that although I might have thought these days that I was completely over it, you don't get over that kind of insecurity that you've had ever since you were young, basically all your life, in a day.

Bella also stated that she chose her story because of her role as her Tribal Nation's Junior Miss. Her role, she said, "Really helped bring me out of my shell and just open up about stuff that could inspire other young girls like me to just power through it and don't care what people think about you." She continued:

> We have different stereotypes and...society wants us to be this size, you know, wants us to look like this. And you can't always look like that…I really hate that, and I would really love to change it because instead of making these women and me feel bad about themselves,...how about you express what it is to truly love yourself?

To help convey the meaning of her story, Bella included several photos of herself when she was young, of her family, and of herself participating in tribal events as Junior Miss. She included 14 pictures of herself as an infant through approximately age five. She stated, "I took a lot of crazy baby photos, and I was being silly, and my parents just caught the memories...Most of these baby photos are very happy to drain the negativity out of the story, so you get to see my happy baby thing and then more happy pictures." She also included more recent photos of herself including one from a day she "was feeling really kinda like irritated." To overcome her mood, she stated:

> I brushed it off. I had some food, and I was good the rest of the night. And you can see my little dimples right there. And I think I really look really good in that photo...I just look actually genuinely happy to be smiling."

Evpayv stated her story is about “how like my mom when she met my dad, and we started getting more, I guess, religious and kept going to or got more used to going to stomp dance.” She chose her story because, she said, “It’s been like my whole life” and “because I have a lot of memories with it so it kind of like come (sic) to mind first because there’s a lot of memories in this story.” The photos she included in her digital story reflect why she chose her story and the important role her religion plays in her life. She included pictures of herself with various members of her family. In one picture, she is with her small niece, and she included this one because, she said, “You can see I’m an aunt, and then...whenever we dance out in the ring, that’s what they call it, you can see the skirts and everything, and it’s just cool cause everyone doesn’t have the same skirt.” She also included other photos because the photos show “our skirts and the traditional wear.” She also chose photos that show her and her family smiling because, she stated, “Whenever we show pictures, you want them to be happy so they [the viewers] can have a good experience, so we’re all smiling.”

The story Anna chose to tell “popped up” in her mind and centers around her friends. She chose to feature her friends because, she stated, “They’re special to me...cause I know they ain’t going to ever leave my side.” The pictures she included are candid shots of her friends, and many of them include filters from popular apps like Snapchat. Anna stated, “Each of those pictures meant something to me that maybe if I showed anybody else, it wouldn’t mean anything to them, but they have meaning to me.” Anna expressed more attachment to and placed more importance on the relationships she has with her friends than she did her relationships with her family. Because of the pain and trauma of her youth, she chose to rewrite the members of her family to include her friends.

River's story focused on what he does on Fridays and the weekends because, he said, "I like it and that's what I do most of the time." His story is short and he chose generic stock photos from the Internet to represent his story; however, River reflected on his digital story, and he shared that if he could do the project again, he would like to "put more people in and more, better pictures and stuff" including pictures of his family "cause I like my family and stuff. And that's not my family. It's like other people, you know, on the internet, but you don't know, so I would put my family there and not people that I don't know." He acknowledged that his laziness may have played a role in choosing the stock photos. However, he stated that he is proud of his family and is proud to be a part of his family and that he wished others could see him and his family together.

The youth also identified and acknowledged the power of digital storytelling and the ability to tell their own stories in their second interviews. Evpayv stated that her video represented who she is because she has taught others about her religion and has "taught them to shake cans, so it kinda like I'm a teacher or something cause like people want to learn." Her story is important, she said, "Because I kind of want like the religion to go around more and be more popular...That's why cause I just want it to be more like more people cause sometimes it's not a whole lot of people [there]." From this project, Evpayv stated she learned "that I can be who I want to be, and like there's nothing wrong with me having my own religion." Additionally, Evpayv stated, "It's really important" for her to tell her own story because "I want more...people to do this religion. This is really important to me." Through the digital storytelling process, she "learned who I am like because I guess because like it's important, so I guess I'm kind of important cause I was like teaching people how to do it. How to shake anyways."

Bella also stated that her story "actually means a lot" to her because "it really feels good to express" her story and her struggles. She said that "it's pretty important" to be able to tell her story to others because "it can inspire a bunch of young girls like me that are slowly getting into their insecurity. And it just makes me feel really proud of myself." Through the process of creating her digital storytelling video, Bella has learned "the moral of loving yourself--not caring what people think" about you.

Like Evpayv and Bella, River also stated that his video means "a lot" to him, and he stated that it's important for him to tell his story to "let people know what I do." He said the process of creating his digital video allowed him to learn more about himself, but he struggled to articulate a specific example. He did acknowledge, however, that he thought the digital video is "cool" because "I never would have told other people" about who he is. Being able to reflect back on his digital video and the process to create it provided River with the opportunity to recognize his importance.

Anna learned about herself through the digital storytelling process as well. She stated that she learned "I'm a more passionate person than I think I usually was." The process allowed her to "speak what I wanted to" and to "say stuff about them [her friends] that I can never say to them in person." She hopes that her video "show[s] that I'm a caring person. Maybe even loving." By assigning familial relationships to her friends, Anna recognized that she could be her true self and express her feelings because she feels safe and accepted among them.

Conclusion

The digital storytelling process empowered the youth in this case study to explore and express their identities as Native American youth. The identities the youth portrayed were solidified through meaningful relationships with their families and friends, through connections

with their culture, and through their experiences in school. They enjoyed engaging in the process because they learned about who they are and about what is important to them, and they enjoyed sharing their identities with others through their digital stories. Reflecting back on the process, the youth expressed pride in themselves, their videos, and the identities they expressed because they recognized their inner strength and their connections to the people and community around them.

Chapter 5: Interpretations, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this holistic, single case study was to understand how Native American youth explore and express themselves through digital storytelling. The major themes which emerged from the data indicate that as the youth engaged in the process of digital storytelling, they solidified their personal identities, and they discovered personal strength through their reflections on the digital storytelling process. In this chapter, I present interpretations of the findings as related to the literature on Indigenous identity and digital storytelling as well as the implications of this research for educators and researchers. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the limitations of the study and areas of future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The youth in this study explored and expressed who they were through the digital storytelling process by drawing on Indigenous knowledges and literacies, enacting agency and voice, and exercising sovereignty and self-determination as they engaged in the digital storytelling process. By doing so, the youth were able to self-Indigenize and to construct and embrace their Indigenous identities in relation to their communities. The identities that they expressed pushed back against the static definitions and characterizations that others have imposed upon them.

Drawing on Indigenous Knowledges and Literacies

The youth drew upon Indigenous knowledges and literacies to make sense of the world around them and to develop their identities as individuals and as members of their communities. They applied creativity and innovation as they completed their heritage project artifacts, and they engaged in critical thinking as they transmediated (Mills, 2015) components of their identities across their heritage project documents and their digital stories. On their funds of knowledge

maps the youth identified the components of and connections between their personal lives, their families, and their communities, and they coalesced and represented these connections on their shield and through their digital stories. Through the relationships they analyzed, the youth better understood how they are connected to each other and the world around them, and they deepened these connections as well. These findings are confirmed by the works of Indigenous scholars and allies who assert that Indigenous knowledges are a life-force through which relationships are built and identities are constructed (e.g., Battiste, 2002; Hare, 2005; McCarty & Nicholas, 2014).

By drawing on Indigenous knowledges and literacies, the youth were motivated and engaged to participate in the project and to explore and express their identities as Native American youth especially because this project took on a variety of authentic forms which were rooted in social contexts. The youth talked with and learned from each other, and this helped them establish their identities as individuals, as community members, and as Native American youth. The identities they expressed were not reflective of the static, ideal Indian. Rather, their identities reflected their ability to name their worlds (Freire, 2000). This reflects Battiste's (2002) assertion that Indigenous youth "must know their own gifts and capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, interests and limits to be able to develop their self-esteem and concept of self" (p. 30).

The youth explored and expressed themselves, and in doing so, they demonstrated the transformative nature of Indigenous knowledges and literacies. So, while they learned about themselves and their strengths and talents, they were also able to apply these strengths and talents as they advocated for themselves, for others, and their cultures. This transformative awareness contributed to a stronger sense of identity, a common finding in other studies that focused on multimodal and digital storytelling projects with Indigenous youth (e.g. Eglinton et

al., 2017, Sloan Morgan et al., 2014; Wexler et al., 2012). These findings also support earlier studies on Indigenous knowledges and literacies which demonstrated that including Indigenous knowledges and literacies in authentic literacy experiences help Indigenous youth establish their cultural identities (e.g., Adelson & Olding, 2013; Banister & Begoray, 2013; Eder, 2007; Moorehead &LaFramboise, 2014)

Although some of the youth expressed a stronger cultural identity than others, they all had access to and drew upon Indigenous knowledges and literacies even if they do not actively participate in their culture (Curwen Dogie, 2003). The cultural identities that the youth expressed could indicate their level of acculturation in various aspects of their lives. Evpayv is actively involved in her ceremonial grounds and her religion than are Sarah, Anna, and Bella which could indicate that she is bicultural while the other three girls are assimilated. River, meanwhile, has little connection to his Indigenous culture, but he also expressed little connection to school and to mainstream society at large which could indicate that he is marginalized (Choney et al, 1995).

Enacting Agency and Voice

The youth in this study utilized the digital storytelling process to enact agency and voice as they told their stories, as they pushed back against the stories that have been imposed on them, and as they gave voice to their identities.

Through critical literacy, the youth explored their experiences, identities, and perceptions of agency across various contexts. In order to enact and express their authentic identities, the youth needed a space that valued their experiences and that gave them the time to engage in critical, creative analyses of their lived experiences and to resist others' constructions of who they are (Greene et al., 2018; Hull & Katz, 2006). I spent many months building relationships with the youth prior to beginning this project, and the relationships between the youth, the

program staff and Elder, and me were imperative. Through these relationships, the youth knew that their ideas and voices would be accepted. They also knew that they could freely question and discuss their experiences with racism, bullying, self-image issues, strained familial relationships, and other traumatic events. As a result of their critical analyses, the youth enacted agency and voice by choosing to take on certain identities while rejecting others.

The youth also enacted agency as they authored their digital stories. They demonstrated their ability to remake themselves and their identities, and they remade and redefined their strengths and abilities as they pushed back on those that have been imposed on them (Moje & Lewis, 2007). Bella described overcoming her experiences with bullying and enacted agency by adopting a more positive sense of self. Anna chose to strategically remake her familial relationships by casting her friends as her family in response to the history of trauma within her family. They also constructed stories that demonstrated the role that culture plays in their sense of selves. Evpayv described the experiences that she has had with her culture and traditions, and she stated that she wants others to know about her religion because it is important to her. These enactments of agency reflect those found in the research by Hull and Katz (2006) and extend the work of Eglinton et al. (2017) and Wexler et al. (2014) who examined the cultural identities of Indigenous youth because findings of these studies lack contextualization of the youths' stories which are derived from interviews and relationships with the youth themselves.

Relationships in their lives were affirmed and remade, and the youth highlighted the roles their culture plays in their identities. By exploring and critiquing their experiences and identities, the youth were empowered to give voice to their authentic identities rather than submitting to the stories that others impose on them. The youths' digital stories were sites of coalesced identities and voices that they explored through authentic literacy activities and through relationships and

reflection. They were empowered to choose the stories they wanted to tell and the identities they wanted to present to their audiences. In fact, a few of the youth sought to control their audiences' perceptions of their expressed identities. They not only chose visual elements to enhance the oral story they narrated, but they also stated they intentionally selected visual elements that conveyed specific tones in order to engage with their audiences. Overall, the youth were proud of their stories and how they voiced their identities, and they were proud of the impact their stories could have on others.

Exercising Sovereignty and Self-Determination

The youth drew upon Indigenous knowledges and literacies and enacted agency and voice by exercising their sovereignty and self-determination. This enabled them to assert their identities, subjectivities, and positionalities in their own words rather than accepting those that others demand of or impose on them.

As the youth explored who they are and the world around them, they were often aware of social, cultural, and historical constraints in their lives. The youth grappled with many of these constraints as they explored themselves, their positionalities, and their subjectivities across various contexts, but they also exerted control over them. This aligns with Lomawaima and McCarty's (2002) argument that self-determination is a struggle between "two very different coexistent realities" (p. 283): the reality of Indigenous communities and the constraints imposed on them by the settlers' reality. The most prominent of these constraints, however, was racism in society and at school. Bella recognized that others' perceptions of her, her experiences with bullying, and her own poor self-image were constraints, and she also recognized the impact that settlers had and continue to have on Indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, racism within school, which manifests itself as stereotypes, harmful assumptions, and low expectations (Castagno &

Brayboy, 2008) and which resulted in the youths' apathetic attitudes toward school, can be seen in River's responses to his constraints. River labeled himself as lazy so that he could passively resist and avoid the expectations that his school imposed on him.

Through sovereignty and self-determination, the youth became social actors (Steinman, 2012) as they determined which aspects of their realities, of their traditions and cultures, and of mainstream and pop cultures they wished to embrace. By melding their traditional cultures with mainstream and pop cultures, the youth resisted assimilation, engaged in self-Indigenization, and asserted Indigenous identities in ways that directly challenge the hegemonic notion of the ideal Indian (Deloria, 1998; Lyons, 2000, 2010). They exercised their sovereignty to enact agency and determine how they wished to express who they are as 21st century Indigenous youth. They also exercised their sovereignty through their digital stories by expressing their unique, self-constructed identities through a medium which demands to be seen and heard.

Implications

This study points our attention to the complex and interconnected relationships between identity, agency, motivation, Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, ethnic stereotypes and racism, and academic achievement. The findings additionally reveal a strong need to reconceptualize school curricula and educative experiences for Indigenous youth. It is imperative that we acknowledge and understand that racism is a reality for these and other Indigenous students as well as students from other cultural backgrounds. Many of the youth in this research described their experiences with racism or felt that they were victims of racism. Because of this, racism is an issue that we, as educators, need to address.

Racism is an important factor to consider when examining the academic performance of Indigenous youth. The racism that these youth experience in school impedes their academic

achievement and their identity development, which is demonstrated, in part, by the poor graduation rates and academic achievement scores reported by the districts serving them. Because of the racism present in schools, schools and teachers must develop effective practices to make schools a welcoming and inclusive environment for Indigenous youth and youth from other cultural backgrounds. This can be accomplished, in part, through a decolonized approach to education. This approach demands that educators analyze and address their biases toward Indigenous youth. It also demands the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges, sovereignty, and self-determination in curricular and pedagogical choices.

Within a decolonized approach to education, teachers must understand that their knowledges, literacies, and ways of knowing are not universal, and they must be able and willing to integrate their students' worldviews and experiences into their classrooms. When teachers value and legitimize the epistemologies and worldviews that their students bring with them to the classroom, then racism and inequitable educational experiences and outcomes can be reduced. A decolonized approach to education also requires the inclusion of sovereignty and self-determination. Apathetic attitudes toward school and a lack of engagement in curricular activities indicate the absence of sovereignty and self-determination. By implementing culturally responsive and sustaining practices, educators are able to incorporate not only their students' worldviews but also sovereignty and self-determination into their classrooms.

Culturally responsive and sustaining practices address the inherent power differentials between schools, teachers, and curricula and the Indigenous students they serve. These practices are transformative because they empower youth to critically examine the world around them, and they can help build meaningful relationships between teachers and students and between schools and communities. Learning activities, like digital storytelling and other multimodal activities,

that connect literacies and experiences at school, at home, and in the community are beneficial because they help students make meaning from the curriculum by connecting their in-school and out-of-school literacies and literacy practices. Therefore, teachers should consider activities such as these to support their students as they make these connections.

Additionally, digital storytelling is a complex and multifaceted learning activity for self-exploration, self-discovery, and self-expression. It validates and supports Indigenous knowledges, literacies, and literacy practices. It promotes critical thinking and highlights the contextual nature of literacy and literacy practices. Youth are motivated to engage in the digital storytelling process because it is an authentic activity, and it can help youth connect their in-school and out-of-school literacies. Through digital storytelling, youth can not only demonstrate their unique strengths and identities across various contexts, but they can reconceptualize their identities as well.

Future Research

Based on the findings of this case study as well as other research involving digital storytelling with Indigenous youth, it is clear that additional research is necessary, especially research which examines digital storytelling in classrooms that serve Indigenous youth and in the families of Indigenous adolescents.

Little research exists which examines the identity development of Indigenous youth through digital storytelling in the classroom. This line of research would be beneficial in examining how both teachers and students perceive and construct their identities within the classroom. It would also provide an opportunity to explore the perceptions that students and teachers have of each other and whether their perceptions change in response to creating and

viewing their videos. This line of research should also be extended to include adolescents from other cultural backgrounds as well.

Little research exists which examines digital storytelling within the families of Indigenous adolescents. This research would be beneficial to understanding not only the identities of each family member, including the adolescent, but also how these identities affect the identity construction of Indigenous adolescents. Additionally, it would provide insight into how the youth navigate the cultural spaces available for them both within and apart from their families. Finally, it would be beneficial in understanding how the youth transmediate their traditional cultures and pop cultures in order to construct modern Indigenous identities as well as their family members' perceptions of these identity constructions. This line of research should also be extended to include adolescents from other cultural backgrounds.

Finally, while the youth in this research were able to successfully complete their digital stories, there are a few aspects of the process that I would do differently. The amount of time we were able to spend on the heritage project activities and the creation of the digital stories was sporadic, so having more time and more consecutive days to delve into all the components would have been beneficial. Had I been in a classroom setting, I would have structured the project so that it supported and was integrated into my curriculum which would help alleviate this issue. If I were to do this project again, I would allow for more time for the youth to explore existing digital stories after they had settled on a topic for their story but before they wrote their scripts. I believe that this would help guide their writing as well as the feedback given during talking circles. To the teachers and researchers who would like to implement this process, I would say that the amount of time you allow your students or participants to engage in the process will equate to the quality of product they produce. I suggest providing ample time for each

component or structuring the project so that they could complete some of the components independently. I also suggest allowing students or participants to have creative freedom over the process; allowing them to complete the components and constructing their digital stories in their own ways will result in more meaningful and authentic representations of their identities.

Conclusion

Overall, digital storytelling is an especially valuable activity for Indigenous youth, and it can facilitate a transformation within the educational system. Youth engaging in the digital storytelling process can confront the stories that are imposed on them and told about them. They can enact agency and voice as they embrace their knowledges and ways of knowing, as they take pride in their cultures and languages, and as they rewrite their own stories. It is also uniquely different than other forms of multimodal performances. Specifically, the youth in this research articulated that through digital storytelling, they are able to express themselves, their stories, and their identities confidently even if they may not feel comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people. Also, the components of the videos themselves help enhance the audience's understanding of and connection to the story being told. As such, it is a culturally responsive teaching and learning activity, and it should be an active part of classrooms that serve Indigenous youth as well as youth from other cultural backgrounds.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Expedited Review – AP01

Date: October 24, 2019 **IRB#:** 11266

Principal Investigator: Melissa Wicker **Approval Date:** 10/24/2019

Status Report Due: 09/30/2020

Study Title: Native American youth exploring and expressing who they are through digital storytelling

Expedited Category: 6 & 7

Collection/Use of PHI: No

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

Requirements under the Common Rule have changed. The above-referenced research meets one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. However, as Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit an annual status report to the IRB.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Obtain informed consent and research privacy authorization using the currently approved, stamped forms and retain all original, signed forms, if applicable.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications.
- Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- **Submit an annual status report to the IRB to provide the study/recruitment status and report all harms and deviations that may have occurred.**
- **Submit a final closure report at the completion of the project.**

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,



Fred Beard, Ph.D.

Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix B

First Interview with the Youth

1. Can you tell me your name and any other names you may go by?
2. Can you tell me about your family?
3. Can you tell me a story about something you have done with your family in the last week or month?
4. What kinds of tribal activities do you participate in and how often?
5. How familiar are you with storytelling?
6. What kinds of stories are you told?
7. Who tells stories in your family?
8. What kinds of stories do they tell?
9. When and where are stories told in your family?
10. When and where are stories told in your culture?
11. Have you heard any tribal stories?
12. Can you describe your experiences in school?
13. Can you describe your experiences in school as a Native American student?
14. How familiar are you with technology?
15. Have you had any experiences with making digital storytelling videos or using a similar technology to tell a story?

Appendix C

Second Interview with the Youth

1. What is your digital story about?
2. Can you tell me why you chose to tell this story?
3. How did you come up with this idea for your story?
4. Tell me about the process of writing this story?
5. What does this story mean to you?
6. How does this story represent who you are?
7. How important is it for you to tell your own story?
8. Have you shared your story with anyone in your family? If so, who and why?
9. What did you learn about who you are through the process of creating your digital story?
10. How is digital storytelling similar to or different from oral storytelling?
11. How is expressing who you are through digital storytelling different from telling your story orally or using other ways to tell your story?
12. Who is the audience of your digital story?
13. In what ways is the audience for digital storytelling similar to or different from oral storytelling?
14. How does this compare to tribal stories?
15. Can you describe your experience creating the digital storytelling video?
16. Why did you choose this component (e.g., text, color, picture, soundtrack, etc.)?
    a. How did you decide to use this component?
    b. How does it help tell your story?
    c. What does it mean to you?

d. How does it represent who you are?

17. What did you like about this project?

18. What did you dislike about this project?

19. What did you learn from this project?

20. If we were to do this project again, what would you like to see changed?

21. Is there anything else you want to share about the project or the video?

Appendix D

Interview with the Program Director

1. How would you describe yourself to someone you just met?
2. Can you describe your cultural background?
3. Can you tell me about your role with the program?
4. How has the program evolved since it first began?
5. What is the organizational structure of the program?
6. How is the program funded?
7. What are the qualifications of the instructors and staff?
8. Can you describe the program's mission or philosophy?
9. Can you describe the curriculum you use in the program?
10. What trainings have you participated in or certifications have you received in order to support the program?
11. How is this program similar or different to other after-school programs in the area?
12. How is the program similar or different to other after-school programs across the nation?
13. Are you aware of other programs similar to this one and where are they located?
14. What are the learning outcomes that you hope the youth meet?
15. What are the values and beliefs you are hoping to instill in the youth?
16. What are some major challenges or issues that inhibit you from instilling these in the youth?
17. What do you hope the youth accomplish during this program?
18. What impact do you hope the program has on the community?

19. What changes to the program would you like to see to better support the youth in your community?
20. What do you hope the program is able to do in the future for the youth in your community?
21. What do you hope the program is able to do in the future for the community?
22. How important is it for the youth to explore and express who they are and why?
23. What are some good ways for the youth to explore and express who they are and why?
24. What are some advantages and disadvantages of using digital storytelling as way for the youth to explore and express who they are?

Appendix E

Example of Intertextual Transcription Method



time elapsed	00:01:24 - 00:01:39 [15s 400ms]
soundtrack	[none]
voiceover script	At the end of each year, the men play stickball games which can be very rough. Some women hold drums and rattles while the men
location represented	Stomp ground
visual objects	black and white traditional drum; traditional drumstick with red and blue markings; fire
special effects	[none]
youth reflection	I chose that one…it doesn't…I didn't really talk about it in the video but it's like whenever you're dancing around the fire, sometimes they beat to the singer's voice, so I just chose that one because it looked cool too in the background, and I also liked the drum.