

Making *Visible* the *Invisible*: Analysis of an Indigenous Community Oral History Program¹

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While oral history is experiencing resurgence in education, there has been limited examination of what this movement means for history education and for history educators. Through the analysis of interview data, this study uncovers how and in what ways the local context, state and local policies, a superintendent, principal, teacher, and members of the Mixtec Indigenous community impacted the development of a sustainable, oral history pedagogical approach that uncovers the histories of an Indigenous community while affording opportunities to redress the historical harms of bullying and exclusion.

Introduction

Educating students remains a challenging and complex process, especially as the flow of migration continues to increase, bringing more diverse people together. Teachers need to tap into the often “hidden” home and community resources of their students to learn, understand, and know their political, historical, and personal situations or their *funds of knowledge*, as defined by researchers Luis Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma Gonzalez.² This type of culturally responsive approach to pedagogy helps to ensure the engagement of instructional practices while supporting the inclusion of culturally diverse students.

This paper uncovers how and in what ways I and the actors interviewed in this study (a superintendent, principal, teacher, Mixtec Associate Director of a community organization, and a Mixtec undergraduate student) negotiated the implementation of the *History Harvest*³ project. This project uses oral history pedagogy to support the development of academic and cultural literacies of the Mixtec Indigenous population who have migrated from Mexico into a district in Oxnard, California. The district in this study values oral history as a method of uncovering *invisible* histories and culture of the Mixtec Indigenous community,

¹ I would like to dedicate this to my father, Norris C. Hundley, jr., who in his quiet and unassuming way, inspired and challenged me and his students to aspire to achieve our best and not settle for less.

² Luis Moll et. al., “Funds of Knowledge: for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms,” *Theory into Practice*, 31, 2 (1992): 133.

³ University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of History’s History Harvest, <http://historyharvest.unl.edu>.

while affording opportunities to encourage an inclusive school culture to alleviate the long term bullying and exclusive practices the Mixtec students have faced.

The *History Harvest* project provides an opportunity for Mixtec students to *see themselves in the curriculum* while supporting the development of academic literacies. The potential impact of this inclusive curriculum is that these students will not only actively engage in it, but that the students' self concept will also be enhanced as they understand that the experiences of their families and ethnic communities are a part of history and play a legitimate role in the curriculum of the school.⁴ According to prolific scholar and educator Joe Kincheloe, using marginalized perspectives as part of a social studies curriculum provides opportunities to study ways of improving oppressed peoples' lives.⁵

While it is true that oral history can be considered a "best practice" for researching and understanding Indigenous populations, there has been limited research focused on the often *invisible* layers of work that need to be in place to launch and sustain a program like the *History Harvest* project. The district in this study has over eighty percent of its students coming from low-income families, of which forty to fifty percent are English Language Learners (ELL), and over ninety percent are of Hispanic origin. Additionally, there is a small population of 200-300 Mixtec Indigenous families, who have multiple children attending schools in the district. Further, this number of Mixtec families can not be confirmed since this Indigenous group will not self-identify as Mixteco due to the harassment and bullying that impacts their lives, both in the workforce and in school. Also, Indigenous children entering the United States arrive with lower educational levels because they come from remote towns in Mexico, where there are minimal or no educational opportunities. Therefore, there is a need to understand what work needs to be in place to implement and sustain a program that not only encourages the nourishing of awareness of students' identities, but also helps to develop the necessary academic skills to be a successful student.

Purpose of Study

This study makes visible the design and purpose of the *History Harvest* project to understand how and in what ways it provides a vehicle through oral history for the development of students' academic, cultural, and ethical knowledge necessary to be successful in our twenty-first century global society. It will also uncover the values and understandings of the key actors who participated in this project, and how they potentially impact its implementation and sustainability. Interviews

⁴ Irma A. Olmedo, "Voices of our past: Using oral history to Explore Funds of Knowledge within a Puerto Rican Family," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 23, 4 (1997): 568-9.

⁵ Joe L. Kincheloe, *Getting Beyond the Facts: Teaching Social Studies/Social Sciences in the Twenty-first Century* (NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), 637.

were conducted to understand the steps taken by the different actors – from its conceptualization to its reformulation – defined not as a fixed model, but instead one that was renegotiated through a dialogic approach. Specifically, this paper analyzes an initial interview response of the superintendent in the district, which led to shifts in the research approach to include additional actors to be interviewed in order to uncover additional themes and contextual information necessary to understand the implementation and impact of the program. Specifically, the interviews made visible five key areas of analysis: 1) the theoretical/conceptual framework of the actors; 2) the state and local policies supporting implementation of this project; 3) contextualizing the impact of bullying and harassment of the Mixtec students; 4) the affects the *History Harvest* project has on discriminatory behavior of Mixtec students, classroom experiences, and parents; and, 5) the potential sustainability of the project.

Context of Study

Mexican Indigenous peoples migrated to the United States during the Bracero Program (1942-1964).⁶ This program is considered critical to the establishment of patterns of migration to the United States.⁷ These migrants not only face the inherent risks of crossing the border, but also are forced to seek long-term status in the United States.⁸ Indigenous migrants find themselves excluded economically, socially, and politically in the United States, and face “entrenched racist attitudes and discrimination from other Mexicans as well as from the dominant society of the United States.”⁹ California holds the largest population of Latinos of Indigenous origin,¹⁰ and high growth rates are noted in Central Valley, Monterey, and in Ventura County.¹¹

⁶ Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, "Building Civil Society among Indigenous Migrants," in *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, eds. Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Salgado-Rivera. (La Jolla CA: Regents of the University of California, Center for US.-Mexican Studies and the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the UC San Diego, 2004), 2.

⁷ Felipe H. López and David Runsten, “Mixtecs and Zapotecs Working in California: Rural and Urban Experiences,” in *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, eds. Fox and Salgado-Rivera, 254.

⁸ Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, “U.S.-Mexico Policy Bulletin,” *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Issue 7* (July/August 2005): 2.

⁹ Fox and Rivera-Salgado, “Building Civil Society among Indigenous Migrants,” 4.

¹⁰ Jonathan Fox, Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, and Juan Santiago, eds., “Voices of Indigenous Oaxacan Youth in the Central Valley: Creating our Sense of Belonging in California,” *Oaxacalifornian Reporting Team/Equipo de Cronistas Oaxacalifornianos (ECO)*, (University of California, Center for Collaborative Research for Equitable California, Research Report Number 1, July 2013): 22. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this population grew from 154,362 in 2000 to 200,551 in 2010, an increase of thirty percent.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

This study was conducted in the city of Oxnard located in Ventura County, California. Racial discrimination continues to impact the Indigenous people in the agricultural fields of California. Widespread use of derogatory terms such as *Oaxaquitas* (little Oaxacans) and *indios sucios* (dirty Indians) is evident in the agricultural fields of Ventura County, as with Sinaloa, Baja California, and California's San Joaquin Valley. Ironically, this discriminatory treatment of Indigenous migrants in California was also the change agent that encouraged them to organize along ethnic lines, using labels such as *Mixtec*, *Zapotec*, and *Indígena*, to describe themselves, thus creating a sense of solidarity necessary to combat the racial oppression they faced as migrants.¹² However, these discriminatory practices are not just limited to the Indigenous farmworkers in the fields. Sadly, similar practices affect their children within the institutional school systems.

Indigenous migrant youth are challenged with lives that overlap multiple cultures – the Indigenous culture of their parents, the Mexican culture, and a diversity of cultures in the United States where they have come to live and where they go to school. As participants in these varied cultures, they experience linguistic diversity, often communicating with their parents through Indigenous languages at home, Spanish with their friends, and in the required English at school. Young Indigenous migrants also understand their parents' struggles as farmworkers, while at the same time they are aware that education can be a pathway to them attaining better jobs.¹³

In Oxnard, Indigenous Mixtec youth historically have been victims of bullying and exclusive practices. As a result of this harassment, many Mixtec students hide their identities and attempt to assimilate using silence as a strategy to deter discrimination by other students, families, teachers, and administrators. Further, Indigenous parents often pursue this same silent strategy by not passing their languages on to their children,¹⁴ due to their concern that promoting tri-lingualism would pose an undue burden on their children,¹⁵ not necessarily being aware of the potential positive impact additional language skills could have in attaining certain jobs in the twenty-first century workforce.

Local policy: Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples (Oxnard, CA)

¹² Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera Salgado, eds., *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in United States* (La Jolla CA: University of California, San Diego, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, 2004), 12.

¹³ Fox, Rivera-Salgado, and Santiago, eds., "Voices of Indigenous Oaxacan Youth," 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵ Gabriela Pérez Báez, "Family Language Policy, Transnationalism, and the Diaspora Community of San Lucas Quiavini of Oaxaca, Mexico," *Language Policy* (2013): 12.

Support for the Mixtec community to address this harassment came through the work of an Oxnard-based Mixteco community-organizing group. According to Gaspar Rivera-Salgado and Luis Escala Rabadán, “the formation of immigrant led organizing groups shows how Mexican immigrants are far from being passive victims of the discriminatory and exploitative conditions they face in the United States, they have responded creatively, building grassroots organizations that make collective action possible in their communities of origin.”¹⁶ The Mixtec community organization in this study provides valuable support to the Indigenous community in Oxnard, helping them provide culturally sensitive educational programs, community service, and other cultural programs designed to promote health and increase language proficiency and self-reliance. This organization holds regular community meetings to provide families with household and baby care supplies and also works with the local school districts to improve culturally and linguistically appropriate educational services.

In 2012, the Mixtec community in Oxnard came together to combat the harassment of their children, with the help of efforts made by this local Mixtec community organization and in conjunction with the local Mixteco-speaking population. Together they formulated a local policy called the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples* to ensure the banning of the use of derogatory terms in the district in this study. The local resolution that was passed and adopted in May of 2012 is seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples

<p>Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples</p> <p><i>WHEREAS, a mutual respect for all cultures and ethnicities is a key to healthy communities; and</i></p> <p><i>WHEREAS, student success and achievement is greatly enhanced in an environment which actively promotes such mutual respect and embraces cultural diversity; and</i></p> <p><i>WHEREAS, 20,000 residents of Ventura County who speak Mixteco regularly face bullying and denigration of their culture and language through the use of words such as “Oxaquita” and “Indito,” and</i></p> <p><i>WHEREAS, the Mixteco-speaking population has come together through MICOP’s “NO ME LLAMES OXAQUITA” (Don’t call me little Oaxacan!) campaign to combat such bullying and its effects on our young people; and</i></p> <p>BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of the Rio School District</p>

¹⁶ Gaspar Salgado-Rivera & Luis Escala Rabadán, “Collective Identity and Organizational Strategies of Indigenous and Metizo Mexican Migrants,” in *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, eds. Fox and Salgado-Rivera, 170.

resolves to prohibit the use of denigrating terms “Oaxaquita”: and “Indito” in its institution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of said school District will promote a climate of cultural respect and diversity by supporting the formation of an anti-bullying committee consisting of administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members. This committee will monitor problems relating to bullying and will make recommendations for promoting a respectful environment. It is anticipate and desirable that representative from all ethnicities, cultural groups, and sexual orientation will participate in the committee.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of said School District will promote Mexican Indigenous History within their curriculum.

This Resolution outlines the policies the district in this study is required to address in order to ensure “a mutual respect for all cultures.” The last statement of the Resolution explains that this “said school district will promote Mexican Indigenous History within their curriculum.” At the time of this Resolution’s passing, the district did not have a curricular program in place to meet this need.

In addition to the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples*, other education policies are at play. On July 14, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law *Senate Bill 48* or the *FAIR Education Act* which requires schools to provide general instruction and textbooks that include information on the contributions of “*Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and other ethnic and cultural groups.*”¹⁷ This law took effect on January 1, 2012, and concerns all instruction in history-social science, including the course of study in grades one through twelve.

History Harvest Program: Context and design

Research presented in this paper focuses on curriculum I developed as an educator/researcher, called the *History Harvest* project. This project’s framework is based on the University of Nebraska’s undergraduate History Department’s *History Harvest* program,¹⁸ but I reframed and designed the curriculum to not only meet K-12 grade level expectations, but to also address the *Common Core*

¹⁷ Introduced by Senator Leno, 2010, Senate Bill 48, http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_0001-0050/sb_48_bill_20110714_chaptered.pdf

¹⁸ University of Nebraska, *History Harvest* project, <http://historyharvest.unl.edu>.

State Standards,¹⁹ the *History-Social Science Content Standards*,²⁰ the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples*, and the *FAIR Education Act (SB48)*.

Learning experiences and instruction

I designed the *History Harvest* curricular project to engage students in an inquiry-based design, utilizing oral history as a pedagogical approach. Students are provided opportunities to be *researchers* who learn how to analyze primary and secondary source documents, photographs, and artifacts, meeting the Common Core State Standards and the History-Social Science Content Standards. The project also affords students with the task of designing interview protocols based on their own interests to learn more about their family's history and culture – an inquiry-based design approach. Students develop these protocols and then conduct oral history interviews with family members to not only uncover their family's history and culture, but also to construct links between their lives and the lives of those students in their classroom. Specifically, this project engages the students in the development of a history-social science curriculum that meets the Common Core State Standards and can be integrated into the already mandated content standards that includes their own family's histories and culture, making their learning experience more relevant and encouraging the development of cultural and academic literacies.

Utilizing the oral history skills they have taken up, students then conduct community-based interviews of Mixtec community members to understand and learn about this *hidden* Indigenous history. Further, through the analysis of these interviews, students are given opportunities to then trace connections between their own, often *invisible*, histories with the Mixtec culture, to understand how these Indigenous histories may link with their own lives and to the curriculum, meeting the local school district's *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples*. Through the community integration of Mixtec Indigenous history, the *History Harvest* program also provides opportunities for teachers to meet the mandates of the *FAIR Education Act (SB48)*. For example, students learn the *roles and*

¹⁹ Taken from the Common Core State Standards Initiative, <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>: "State education chiefs and governors in 48 states came together to develop the Common Core, a set of clear college-and career-ready standards for kindergarten through 12th grade in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Today, 42 states and the District of Columbia have voluntarily adopted and are working to implement the standards, which are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to take credit bearing introductory courses in two- or four-year college programs or enter the workforce."

²⁰ The California History-Social Science Content standards were designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student, by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/>).

contributions of the underrepresented Mixtec Indigenous people allowing for Mixtec students to *see themselves in the curriculum*, promoting Mexican Indigenous history. Further, this project engages students in uncovering similarities and differences between each others' lived experiences, providing multiple lens perspectives on ways of doing in their homes and communities. Therefore, by engaging in listening and learning about their family histories and the Mixtec history and culture, students are provided with opportunities to see themselves *mirrored in the curriculum* as well as build connections with each other, thus encouraging the development of a more inclusive curriculum.

Throughout the process, students work individually and collaboratively to provide written responses and summaries of the work accomplished and then develop presentations at various junctures based on their interpretation of the data collected and formulated in digital archives. The final project is a *community forum*, where the students present to their class, larger school community, parents, and panelists from the community, to share their research findings through multiple types of digital presentations. Thus, this K-12 curriculum supports the collection, preserving, and sharing of the students' family histories and the local communities' Indigenous rich histories through inquiry-based design and oral history pedagogy.

Relevant Literature

Research underlying the design and implementation of this project focuses on the academic and social-emotional benefits of utilizing *oral history* to uncover the “knowledge and skills” or *funds of knowledge* of the students who attend this school in the district.²¹ Research on *culturally responsive pedagogy* was also analyzed to understand the impact of student learning in the classroom when the culture and experiences of diverse minority students were included in the curriculum.

Funds of Knowledge

Curricular focus on Indigenous cultural practices, beliefs, and ways of interacting with members of the local community provides an opportunity to uncover *funds of knowledge*,²² which many researchers describe as an effective way to “service academic goals” of these culturally diverse students.²³ In migration experiences,

²¹ Luis Moll et. al., eds., “Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms,” *Theory into Practice*, 31, 2 (1992): 133.

²² *Ibid.*, 134.

²³ Luis Moll and Norma Gonzalez “Lessons from the Research with Language Minority Children,” *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 26, 4 (1994): 441.

as is the case with the Mixtec Indigenous people, families and communities are separated from their geographic roots, challenging community members to “expand these funds of knowledge so that they are functional in the new environment.”²⁴ Further, children are exposed to different ways of negotiating the economic, political, and social challenges created by these changes and the knowledge, skills, and values they take up from their family members can be resources that are utilized by the teachers to enhance instructional programs for these students.²⁵

Not all educators support this approach. According to professor Michael Genzuk, they instead “devalue the household knowledge of non-mainstream children,” as opposed to considering it as a reserve of knowledge that can foster academic and cultural development.²⁶ Further, many educators who attempt to create this link between the families and classroom, have found it difficult to include these Indigenous families in their children’s education since many of them lack formal education and speak limited English.²⁷ Thus, often times the knowledge and skills that these Indigenous community members possess go unrecognized because the focus is instead put on their poverty status, the discrimination they face, and their lack of English proficiency.

One way to bridge a connection between Indigenous migrant families and the classroom is to provide opportunities to integrate their family histories and cultural backgrounds into the curriculum through an oral history pedagogical approach. By using oral history to uncover the culture of the students’ Indigenous families, families can be valued “as repositories of knowledge that can foster the child’s cognitive development,” as opposed to being viewed as units from which the child must be “rescued,” thus encouraging family input as an integral and necessary part of their child’s learning experiences.²⁸

²⁴ Irma A. Olmedo, “Voices of our past: Using oral history to Explore Funds of Knowledge within a Puerto Rican Family,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 23, 4,(1997): 570.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Michael Genzuk, “Tapping into Community Funds of Knowledge,” in *Effective Strategies for English Language Acquisition: Curriculum Guide for the Professional Development of Teachers Grades Kindergarten through Eight* (LA: Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project/Arco Foundation, 1999), 10.

²⁷ Fox, Rivera-Salgado, and Santiago, eds, “Voices of Indigenous Oaxacan Youth,” 11.

²⁸ Norma Gonzalez et al., “Teacher Research on Funds of Knowledge: Learning From Households,” *Educational Practice Reports: 6* (Tucson AZ: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, 1993): 11.

Oral History as a Pedagogical Approach

Social history continues to be rewritten based on the experience of migrants and immigrants as they establish themselves in their new communities.²⁹ Oral history provides the vehicle to insure that history is not lost, by incorporating these *funds of knowledge* into the curriculum. According to Gail Miller there are three special contributions of the oral history interview: 1) it fills in the gaps left in available written records; 2) it provides access to groups with oral but not written traditions; and, 3) “the tape recording of oral history preserves the speech patterns of the community.”³⁰ Thus, in the case of the Mixtec community, who utilize the oral traditions, there is not only the opportunity of redefining *mainstream* history to include these *hidden histories* into the history curriculum, but to also “fill the gap” to include Mixtec history and culture, ensuring that the Mixtec students can see themselves in the curriculum.

According to James King and Norman Stahl, since oral history seeks to include the “voices of groups that often do not leave documentary records, its subjects can be seen as disenfranchised.”³¹ But, oral history can also be an “empowering context for groups such as ethnic minorities, geographically isolated enclaves, religious groups, and women.”³² Further, by also integrating students’ and their families’ lived experiences along with Indigenous history into the curriculum, teachers can not only help build links between home, school and the community, but this strategy can also serve as a scaffold for the development of academic knowledge and skills.³³

Using oral history to explore a family’s *funds of knowledge* can help to promote dialogue across generations and at the same time challenge stereotypes.³⁴ For example, when the students share about different family experiences with their classmates, often times these presentations can bring forth conflicting points of view. This can also help students to understand another person’s perspective on an event, and they can be guided to see that the historical facts found in textbooks, articles or news stories are also a product of interpretations, thus opening the door to discussions on the importance of looking at events from multiple perspectives.

²⁹ Irma A. Olmedo, “Voices of our past: Using oral history to Explore Funds of Knowledge within a Puerto Rican Family,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 23, 4 (1997): 551.

³⁰ Gail Miller, “Scripting Oral History: An Examination of Structural Differences Between Oral and written Narratives,” *Proceedings of the Seminar/Conference on Oral Traditions* (La Cruces NM: New Mexico State University, 1983), 165.

³¹ James R. King and Norman A. Stahl, “Oral History as a Critical Pedagogy: Some Cautionary Issues,” paper presented at the 11th Annual Meeting of the American Reading Forum, Sarasota FL (December 12-15, 1990), 3.

³² Ibid.

³³ Olmedo, “Voices of our past,” 551.

³⁴ Ibid.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Classrooms today require teachers to understand ways of educating students varying in culture, language, abilities, and many other characteristics.³⁵ A culturally responsive environment “utilize[s] students’ culture as a vehicle for learning,” helping to reduce alienation and hostility in the classroom.³⁶ Therefore, a culturally responsive framework needs to be in place institutionally to ensure engagement of instructional practices that support inclusion of all students.

Cultural responsive pedagogy can facilitate the achievement of all students and is comprised of three dimensions: “institutional” or the administration’s policies and values, “personal” or how teachers self-reflect on their attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others, and “instructional,” which “includes materials, strategies and activities that form the basis of instruction.”³⁷ According to J.W. Little, to be culturally responsive, reforms must take place in three specific areas in the institutional dimension: 1) the administrative structure of the school and the way it relates to diversity; 2) school policies and procedures that impact the instruction to students from diverse backgrounds; and, 3) the institutional approach to community involvement in which families and communities become involved in the school, rather than seeking connections with families and communities.³⁸ The personal dimension reflects the cognitive and emotional processes teachers must engage in to become culturally responsive. For example, teachers need to examine and confront his/her own biases and “explore their personal histories and experiences as well as the history and current experiences of their students and families” as this will help them to “better respond to the needs of all their students.”³⁹ Thus, culturally responsive pedagogy utilizes the students’ culture and language in instruction, thus respecting both the students’ personal and community identity.⁴⁰

The *History Harvest* program utilizes *oral history* to provide a vehicle for uncovering the history and culture of the Mixtec Indigenous people as well as the *funds of knowledge* through the sharing of students’ family histories, reflecting culturally responsive pedagogy. This project also allows for the knowledge to be obtained by the students, not imposed by adults, thus creating a social dynamic among teachers, students, and their families that translates into authentic learning experiences for the students.

³⁵ Heraldo V. Richards, Ayanna F. Brown and Timothy B. Forde, “Addressing Diversity in Schools: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy,” *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39, 3 (2007): 64.

³⁶ Gloria Gladson-Billings, “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” *Theory Into Practice*, 34, 3 (1995): 161.

³⁷ Richards, Brown, and Forde, “Addressing Diversity in Schools,” 64.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

Theoretical and methodological framework

The theoretical and conceptual literature that informs this study provides different lenses or ways of looking at social life within a classroom located in a specific district in Oxnard, California, to understand the conceptual framework for studying the layering of work that needs to be in place in order to implement a new pedagogical oral history approach that supports a diverse, Mixtec Indigenous population.

Qualitative interviews as data

It is important to gain an emic or insider perspective to understand the social environment constructed by the superintendent, principal, teacher, and Mixtec Associate Director, and Mixtec undergraduate student as made visible in the interview data. Specifically, in order to understand how and in what ways the historical and local context, state and local policies, district administrator, teacher, and Indigenous community leader and undergraduate student impacted the development and implementation of the *History Harvest* project, an analysis of a data set of interviews with these actors were used. By analyzing interview data sets, it is then possible to (re)examine members in a collective through multiple layers of analysis. This is done through the systematic collection of archives of interview data records that make visible an event or pattern of practice that can serve as an anchor in the analysis.

A *frame clash* can serve as a *rich point* or anchor, a practice outside the norms and expectations of classroom life.⁴¹ In order to take an emic perspective of this event, it is necessary to seek understandings of what members needed to know, understand, and do in order to predict and evaluate how they participated in everyday events of the social groups.⁴² This can be in a form of contrastive analysis, which can involve forward or *forward mapping* or backward or *backward mapping* in time from this *rich point*, to trace the “roots or routes of particular texts, topics, actions, concepts, and roles and relationships.”⁴³ This is done through the examination of interview data sets, constructing transcripts, and written records. Therefore, for this study, interview data was systematically analyzed to make visible the often invisible layers of work that needs to be in

⁴¹ Michael Agar, *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*, (NY: Morrow, 1994), 142-4.

⁴² Judith Green, Audra Skukauskaite, Carol Dixon, and Ralph Córdova, “Epistemological Issues in the Analysis of Video Records: Interactional Ethnography as a Logic of Inquiry,” in Ricki Goldman, Roy Pea, Brigid Barron, and Sharon Derry, eds., *Video Research in the Learning Sciences* (Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 120.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

place to launch and sustain a new community-linked oral history inquiry-based program in a school within a district that was impacted by the bullying and harassment of the Mixtec Indigenous community that attend this school site.

Research design: Data collection and analysis

This study design takes into consideration the demands of the historical and local context, state and local policies, and each of the actors involved to build a sustainable, transformative, inquiry-based pedagogical approach that uncovers the histories of an Indigenous community while affording opportunities to redress the historical harms of bullying and exclusion. In order to examine what policies and the values of the superintendent, principal, and teacher that needed to be in place to implement this program, I assembled a data set of interviews about the *History Harvest* project, and the people who were involved in the implementation of the project. These interviews make visible what the *History Harvest* project attempts to accomplish, how it fits into the institutional structure, and the purposes it serves for the students. It was necessary for me to ask questions as an observer about what made this *History Harvest* project different from other oral history projects. Thus, different levels of contrastive analyses were conducted on these interviews to examine how and in what ways, under what conditions, for what purposes, with what outcomes or consequences, did this *History Harvest* project become implemented in this specific school district in Oxnard, California.

The qualitative interviews of the actors were conducted after the 2013-2014 school year and after the *History Harvest* project was implemented between January 2014 and June 2014. The initial interview with the superintendent led to the need to interview the principal, and the teacher involved in the project. These interviews further led to the conducting of additional interviews with a Mixtec Associate Director and Mixtec undergraduate student, in order to have interpretations for constructing grounded knowledge of what needed to be in place to implement this *History Harvest* project.

People do not necessarily think or speak in a linear fashion, so interviews need to take this non-linear approach into account. Therefore it was necessary to follow the iterative or recursive pathways to uncover “how interviewees connect their responses into a sustained account, that is, a story, [that] brings out problems and possibilities of interviewing that are not visible when attention is restricted to question-answer exchanges.”⁴⁴ This then led to the need for questions and analysis to be modified (iterative) and sometimes the iterative cycles were applied to the data collection (recursive) for the purpose of further understanding of the

⁴⁴ Elliot Mishler, *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). 61.

culture-in-the-making,⁴⁵ made visible through these layers of analyses. Thus, the *logic-of-inquiry*⁴⁶ guided the different collections of questions in order to develop specific analytical procedures for this study and what was happening within the complexities of the district, school, and classroom as seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Logic of Inquiry: Analytic Process⁴⁷

<p><u>Overarching question:</u> How do the policies and theoretical conceptual framework of the superintendent, principal, teacher, and Mixtec Indigenous community leader and Mixtec undergraduate student impact the implementation, the bullying and exclusive practices of the Mixtec students at the school site, and support sustainability of the History Harvest project?</p> <p><u>Initializing Question:</u> How do the superintendent, principal and teacher view culturally relevant pedagogy, Community-Based Learning, and oral history pedagogy as a best practices for researching and understanding Indigenous populations?</p> <p><u>Representing Data:</u> Interview</p> <p><u>Analyzing Events:</u> Code interview open-ended responses and look for patterns and reoccurring themes</p> <p><u>Initializing Question:</u> What policies are in place that support an inclusive school climate and the Mixtec Indigenous population?</p> <p><u>Representing Data:</u> Interview</p> <p><u>Analyzing Events:</u> Transcribe interview open-ended responses and look for patterns and reoccurring themes by identifying <i>rich points</i>.</p> <p><u>Initializing Question:</u> What impact, if any, has the implementation of the <i>History Harvest</i> project had bullying and exclusive practices of the Mixtec students at the school site? Any other impacts made visible?</p> <p><u>Representing Data:</u> Interview</p> <p><u>Analyzing Events:</u> Transcribe interview open-ended responses and look for patterns and reoccurring themes by identifying <i>rich points</i>.</p>
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⁴⁵ Carol N. Dixon, Carolyn R. Frank, and Judith L. Green, "Classroom as Cultures: Toward Understanding the Constructed Nature of Life in Classrooms," *Primary Voices K-6* 7, 3 (January 1999): 4-8.

⁴⁶ James Paul Gee and Judith L. Green, "Discourse Analysis, Learning, and Social Practice: A Methodological Study," *Review of Research in Education* (1998), 23.

⁴⁷ Interview questions are available from the author upon request.

Participants of study: Background history

The five participants in this study included: 1) Dr. Peters, the district superintendent; 2) Dr. Garcia, the principal at the school site; 3) Mr. Rodriguez, the teacher at the school site; 4) Mr. Mendez, the Mixtec Associate Director of a local Mixtec community organization; and, 5) Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec undergraduate student. Dr. Peters,⁴⁸ the superintendent of the district in this study located in Oxnard, had been in this position three years at the time of the interview. Previously, he had been a superintendent for eight years in another district in Somis, California. Dr. Garcia⁴⁹ had been the principal of the school in this study for four years at the time of the interview, and prior to that, had been principal and assistant principal for seven years in a middle school in this district. The fifth grade teacher, Mr. Rodriguez,⁵⁰ had been teaching for eighteen years; seventeen years at this school site. The Mixtec Associate Director, Mr. Mendez,⁵¹ is from a small town in the Mixteco region called San Francisco Higos, Oaxaca. At sixteen, he moved in order to earn his high school diploma, later became a community organizer and then Associate Director for the Mixteco community organization. Mr. Ramirez,⁵² the Mixtec university undergraduate, was also born in San Francisco Higos, Oaxaca, and migrated to Oxnard, California at the age of eleven, attending schools in another district located in Oxnard, California. At the time of the study, he was an undergraduate college student, who has since graduated and is working on his Ph.D.

Demographics of schools

District demographics were provided through the interview with the superintendent and principal. Over eighty percent of the students were from low-income families, about forty to fifty percent were English Language Learners (ELL), and over ninety percent were of Hispanic origin. Mixtec students don't always self-identify, but according to the superintendent, there were between 200-300 Mixtec families who had multiple children attending schools in the district.

At the project school, over ninety percent were Latino students and as many as eighty-five percent of them were English language learners. About one percent of the Mixteco students identified as Mexican; however, it might be closer to six

⁴⁸ Dr. Peters (pseudonym for Superintendent) in discussion with the author, August 2014.

⁴⁹ Dr. Garcia (pseudonym for Principal) in discussion with author, September 2014

⁵⁰ Mr. Rodriguez (pseudonym for Teacher) in discussion with author, August 2014.

⁵¹ Mr. Mendez (pseudonym for Mixtec Associate Director) in discussion with author, September 2014

⁵² Mr. Ramirez (pseudonym for Mixtec undergraduate student) email interview/transcript, January 2015.

percent which is the district average. The principal estimated that “as high as ten to fifteen percent and probably twenty percent would be a more accurate number,” and further stated that of the 764 who were enrolled in the school in the year of the study, possibly 100-150 students were Mixteco. Further, the classroom that participated in this study was made up of only five Mixtec students, some of whom later self-identified as Mixteco as a result of the *History Harvest* program, or roughly seven percent.

Study findings: Interview responses

The first interview with the superintendent, Dr. Peters, made visible information about the implementation of the *History Harvest* project relational to the district. After conducting and analyzing this interview data, it became apparent to me that a more comprehensive study of the implementation of the project would need to be conducted in order to understand the work that needed to be done and what actors were involved in the launch of this project. Specifically, I shifted the research to include interviews with Dr. Garcia, the principal, and Mr. Rodriguez, the teacher who also participated in launching the pilot program in a specific school in the district. Further, once those interviews were conducted and analyzed, it was important for me to shift the research approach again, this time to include Mr. Mendez, the Mixtec Associate Director who presented in the classroom, and again to include Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec undergraduate student who also presented in both the classroom as part of the *History Harvest* project and to the teaching staff in the school in this study.

The following sections detail the interview responses that formed the data used as evidence to explain the layers of complexities of implementing this *History Harvest* project.⁵³ Findings are grounded in observed recurrent themes or *rich points*⁵⁴ that surfaced during the analyses of these interviews. By identifying these themes, contextual information necessary to understand the implementation process was uncovered.

Analyses of the interviews conducted provided interview data sets that made visible five *rich points* or key areas of focus to understand the implementation of the *History Harvest* project within this school in a district in Oxnard, California. Each actor who participated in the study provided a background history made visible below. A contrastive analysis of the interviews was conducted based on the five *rich points* that were uncovered in the grounded interpretation of what members needed to be or do as members of this social group.⁵⁵ Specifically, the interviews outlined the key areas: 1) the

⁵³ Transcripts of interview contrastive analysis data is available on request.

⁵⁴ Agar, *Language Shock*, 142-4.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

theoretical/conceptual framework of the actors; 2) the state and local policies supporting implementation of this project; 3) contextualizing the impact of bullying and harassment of the Mixtec students; 4) the affects the *History Harvest* project has on discriminatory behavior of Mixtec students, classroom experiences, and parents; and, 5) the potential sustainability of *History Harvest* project.

Theoretical/conceptual framework for *History Harvest* implementation

Contrastive analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that the superintendent, principal, and teacher all support the development of classroom and community connections as a way of engaging students from diverse backgrounds and supporting development of academic literacies. Dr. Peters, the superintendent, believes that having a student-centered approach lends itself to student interest in the topics covered. The principal, Dr. Garcia, believes that culturally responsive curriculum, as outlined in the *History Harvest* project, lends itself to validating the students' backgrounds and culture. As she explained, "The more connection we can have with students, the better chance those students will be successful." Mr. Rodriguez, the classroom teacher believes this type of pedagogy facilitates a safe learning space for children, thus enhancing the learning opportunities for students.

More specifically, Dr. Peters, the superintendent, discusses the concept of cultural proficiency as it relates to a "customer service" model, that the district should work to improve "access" for those experiencing what he considers the "least amount of achievement," but also making sure to improve access for all students and families. To do this teachers should "elevate the students language and culture as subject matter for learning" and this is why he approved the implementation of the oral history project [*History Harvest* project]. Dr. Garcia, the principal of the school site, states that the district has a vision "to provide environments that are culturally responsive and culturally proficient," but that this effort has been implemented as a strategic approach more in the counseling area, and she does not see the district at this point in time as having specific strategic goals to address it in the classroom. The teacher, Mr. Rodriguez, explains that the identifying of cultures and bringing cultures to light and relating them to other students' cultures help kids understand that we all have similar needs and ways to sustain ourselves. Thus, students have opportunities to see the similarities in each others' lives, not highlight differences, which helps them develop cultural proficiencies.

Through further analysis, the superintendent reveals how the district values using the community as a resource for the classroom, specifically that the history and culture of the Mixtec Indigenous people "demonstrates that what is happening in the community, all of the diversity, is a source of knowledge and wealth of

information for inquiry.” The principal explains that community-based learning is more “authentic” learning, that bringing Mixtec presenters into the classroom generates “not just collaboration between students, but more creative thinking.” Further, the teacher discusses how often times resources in the community go unnoticed or can be considered “common place.” So, utilizing this type of community-linked approach connects people to those resources that are available in the community and helps to link people with each other and encourage an interest in engaging in their communities. He believes that this can facilitate people “working together to improve their communities.”

State and local policies supporting *History Harvest* implementation

Policies and district boards have an impact on what is taken up by this district, but the approach that is utilized depends on the philosophy of the leadership in place at the district level. In this case, even though there are specific state policies such as the *FAIR Education Act (SB48)*, and other district policies in place, the superintendent, Dr. Peters, acknowledges the importance of finding the right balance of “communication and interactions with classroom teachers with principals, parents, and students.” He explains that the district does take a top down approach from the board and superintendent level, but that it is a more *organic* approach where teacher leaders can share positive outcomes of a certain approach, and this encourages other teachers to engage in a particular projects or models for developing community relations. Further, once the organic approach shows promise and is accepted by other teachers, systemic change can be made in the way things are implemented. The superintendent explains that the district has “to respond to some extrinsic requirements from the state and all that but to a great degree we really kind of handle all that [by] staying very much connected to what peoples’ interests are.” Dr. Peters believes in the importance of bringing students’ voices into project development not just for helping to combat “victimization,” but to empower “integrations of learning processes with cultural intersections” and by engaging in academic areas [like the *History Harvest* project] as well.

Dr. Peters states that the local policy, the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples*, was adopted by the Board when he started his position as superintendent. He explains that one way of addressing the bullying issues has been by “elevating elements of Mixteco language and community into something of value enough to study and to pursue [like the *History Harvest* project] which begins “to address, in a broad way, the sources of bullying which really emanates from Mexico” and are “deeply historical in every culture,” and that each culture “in that tribal sense, finds a group that is the least among them.”

The principal, Dr. Garcia, reiterated that the superintendent's leadership was framed by encouraging organic growth of participants in activities. She believes that teachers learn through implementing a project and this learning would be different from the administration or another teacher's perspective.

Mr. Mendez, the Mixtec Associate Director, acknowledged that the program has "brought people with expertise around Indigenous knowledge" to the schools which helps to build pride for Indigenous students. He believes the superintendent's policies were inclusive because he "invite[d] us to be a part of the discussion" and "works to incorporate our ideas on how to best implement activities that will help students." Mr. Mendez further explains, "This really formulated a stronger relationship with the district, thus leading to the renewal of their contract to work together in a collaborative way."

Contextualizing the bullying and harassment of Mixtec students: Superintendent and Principal Perspectives

The bulk of the statements made by the actors in this study relate to issues around bullying and indicate that bullying was focused on Mixtec students. The principal's perspective, however, differs from that of the others interviewed for this study. The superintendent makes visible his belief that there are issues of bullying and harassment of the Mixtec students in the district and that by supporting the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples*, through programs like the *History Harvest* project, this will begin the process of addressing the institutionalized bullying and harassment the Mixtec people have faced in Mexico and is now currently in his district in Oxnard, California.

On the other hand, the principal acknowledges that bullying does take place at her school, but she states, "I can't say it doesn't happen [issues of bullying], but not on a daily or regular basis... [it's] not an issue in my office." She states that if she gets "bullying of a Mixteco student, it isn't necessarily in regards to race;" instead it is about issues of "students not wanting to play with each other." Further, the principal also differentiates episodes of bullying in upper elementary versus the lower elementary. She claims that the "younger students see themselves as 'brown' as the next person, though they may speak another language." Therefore, her perception is that minimal bullying takes place and that race is not a factor when bullying occurs.

Contextualizing the bullying and harassment of Mixtec students: Mixtec Associate Director and the graduate student's perspectives

Mr. Mendez, the Mixtec Associate Director, and Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec graduate student reveal their perspectives on the issues of bullying and

harassment of Indigenous people which contrast with those made by the principal, but align with the superintendent's point-of-view. Mr. Mendez believes that the bullying and discrimination against Indigenous people has been in place for a long time, and that it had taken place in Mexico as well. "I think the bullying and discrimination against Indigenous people was happening all the time, even in Mexico. So we bring this kind of issue with us every place we go. So here in Oxnard is not an exception." The superintendent also agrees with this assessment as stated previously, and this information is also made visible in the historical context of the Mixtec Indigenous people earlier in this paper.

Mr. Mendez, the Mixtec Associate Director, also shared how he witnessed discrimination in the fields as a farmworker and that Mixtecos are often "seen as inferior or ignorant people." He believes that it was the development of a youth program by the Indigenous community organization that provided a vehicle for students to discuss these issues that ultimately encouraged the students to finally speak up and take a stand against the bullying and to challenge this discrimination. This challenge came through the development of a campaign "don't call me little Oaxacan" or in Spanish, "no me llames Oaxaquita" which led to the development of the *Resolution for Respect of Indigenous Peoples* to deal with the harassment with the goal of being implemented at the school district of this study. "There was some resistance at first for them [the Mixtec youth] to admit that discrimination was part of their life. At some point they [the Mixtec youth] resigned saying there was nothing we can do – discrimination will always be a part of our lives... It took them [the Mixtec youth] quite a long time to finally say yes, I think this is an issue and that youth in high school... after school hours they get in fights when other youth call them Oaxaquita." Therefore, his statements make visible that bullying and harassment of Mixtec students is a very common aspect of their lives and has been since an early age, clearly differing from the perspective of the principal.

Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec undergraduate student, states that he felt racism was a huge issue when he was in school in another Oxnard district, also providing a contrasting perspective compared to that of the principal. He states that, "Mixtec Indigenous students were judged by the color of our skin, height, and our language." He remembers hearing his classmates use "derogative words such as 'oaxaquita' to put down the Indigenous heritage." He believes this type of bullying is so "frequent in schools" and if you "look or act Indigenous, you would be harassed and bullied." He discusses the fact that he "never did" consult an administrator or teacher because he "had this feeling they wouldn't understand. I just assumed." He added that, "Many of my teachers didn't know much about Oaxaca." He states, at least this is how he remembers his experience in school.

Additional analysis of these interviews uncovered the principal's decision to have Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec undergraduate student, share with the teachers at

her school about his experiences as an Indigenous student in another school district in Oxnard. As part of the *History Harvest* project, Mr. Ramirez shared with the students about the challenges he experienced being a Mixtec student in Oxnard schools to the elementary students. He also spoke about the importance of maintaining the Mixtec dialect, along with learning Spanish and English. The principal, Dr. Garcia, heard his presentation and asked him to share about his experiences with the teachers. Specifically, she wanted all the teachers on her staff to hear about Mr. Ramirez's "experience of not being validated by the educational system" because he remembered that "his grades and contributions were not recognized by teachers" or "fostered by teachers." Dr. Garcia wanted Mr. Ramirez to share about his experiences with her teachers because "even though teachers don't identify or think they could possibly not validate a student," his sharing might trigger them to think twice before they say something that could be interpreted in a non-supportive way. "Not to put my teachers down... it happens with well meaning teachers and well meaning people, teachers are supposed to be well meaning teachers. [But if] we can remove one teacher from doing that or one action from being done to a child or make a more concerted effort to being more positive or being more culturally responsive, then it has been worth it to bring all his experiences to this staff."

Mr. Ramirez was happy to have the opportunity to share with the teachers his experiences as a Mixtec student in school. He stated that, "I hope the faculty and administrators understood the story behind Indigenous students, such as racism, language barriers, economic difficulties, and migration. I hope this information would [will] contribute to them as educators in a place... where many students are Mixteco descent and their families work in agriculture."

Mr. Mendez's response about bullying focused on the process of developing the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples* and the impact it had on the Mixtec youth. As previously mentioned, Mr. Mendez is Associate Director of a Indigenous community organization, and he participated in the development of a youth group to encourage the student members to share about the experiences of harassment and bullying that was taking place in the district schools of this study. As a result of these discussions, the organization responded with a campaign "don't call me little Oaxacan" or in Spanish, "no me llames Oaxaquita."

The impact of the campaign was considerable. According to Mr. Mendez, "Definitely there were some changes. I don't think it is like 100 percent of the changes [that] we wanted. But I would say that seventy to eighty percent of it [bullying] has improved a lot." He stated that as a result of the campaign, "I think the awareness has been made for teachers because like these people [teachers] are saying to not use it. They [the teachers] must have heard them [the Mixtec youth]." He continues with, "I was telling the teachers and the teachers were not aware of this word [Oaxaquita] and they [the teachers] were saying [to the

students] just don't listen to them, they don't know what they are saying... because the teachers didn't give that level of care or worry because they didn't know what the word meant... [the teachers thought] why are you going to be offended if they call you that?" Therefore, Mr. Mendez believes that because the Mixtec students were encouraged to share about their experiences with bullying and harassment, this led to the campaign, and later the formulation of the Resolution, which further impacted student experiences in schools since teachers now understood the importance of stopping students from the using these derogatory words towards Mixtec students.

Questions and interpretations of the bullying of Mixtec students

The discrepancies of perspectives with regards to harassment and bullying of Mixtec students between those interviewed in this study raises potential questions and interpretations to consider for future research relational to this topic at this school site. Clearly, the superintendent, the Mixtec Associate Director, and the Mixtec undergraduate student have differing interpretations of the bullying and harassment of Mixtec students than that of the principal at the school site of this study.

Dr. Peters, the superintendent, stated earlier in this study that there were "as few as 200-300 Mixtec families in the district" and that it was difficult to really know how many Mixtec students attend district schools since they "don't always self identify" because of the bullying they could potentially face. However, he believes the *History Harvest* program is impactful since it attempts to address this discriminatory behavior. The principal, Dr. Garcia, believes that little if any racially based bullying takes place at her elementary school. One interpretation of the reason why the superintendent's perceptions may differ from this principal is because he is getting feedback on this issue from all of the district schools, not just this elementary school in the study.

It is also important to note that the principal states that she has a small percentage of Mixtec students relational to the Latino or Hispanic students at her school site, and that they don't typically self-identify as Mixteco. Further, as noted earlier, she does not see the relationship between bullying and race at her school. Since the school has such a small population of Mixtec students relational to the Hispanic or Latino population, and they don't self-identify as Mixteco, could this be why she doesn't perceive bullying as an issue of race at her school? Or, are there fewer reports of bullying or harassment of Mixtec students because these students choose not to self-identify as Mixteco to avoid potential harassment? Thus, by not self-identifying as Mixteco, these students perhaps hope to be "identified" as Latino or Hispanic, in an attempt to "fit in" and alleviating potential discrimination. But, if more students chose to self-identify as Mixteco,

would there be more reported cases of bullying related to race at this school site? These are some questions that could be researched further.

Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec undergraduate student, disclosed that “racism towards Indigenous people is a fact that everyone in my family knows” and that “Mixtec Indigenous students were judged by the color of our skin, height, and our language.” Therefore, based on Mr. Ramirez’s experience in an Oxnard school, he believes Mixtec students are less apt to address the bullying and harassment they may receive because they think the teacher or administrator doesn’t understand. Could this possibly be a reflection that other Mixtec students believe at Dr. Garcia’s school? If so, might this be another explanation as to why reports of bullying due to race don’t occur at her elementary school?

Would Mixtec students’ perspectives change about self-identifying as Mixteco if the teachers implemented the *History Harvest* curriculum that supports the history and culture of the Mixtec students? Mr. Ramirez stated that bullying is occurring because there is “no awareness of the importance of one’s culture, language, and history.” If the *History Harvest* curriculum was implemented on a consistent basis at this school site, would the Mixtec students seek out teacher(s) and/or administrator(s) to share about the bullying and harassment they may receive because they might believe that the teacher(s) and/or administrator(s) empathized with the challenges they face in school? Further, would Mixtec students at other school sites in the district be willing to report bullying and harassment to teacher(s) and/or administrator(s) if the *History Harvest* project were implemented at these other sites? These questions offer future research possibilities to understand the specific viewpoints of Mixtec elementary students around issues of bullying and harassment.

Impact of *History Harvest* project

The impact of the *History Harvest* project was made visible through contrasting interviews with the superintendent, principal, teacher, Mixtec Associate Director, and the undergraduate Mixtec student presenter. Each interviewee gave his/her interpretation of the positive impact of the program. Dr. Peters discusses the program as affecting the students because it helps students generate discussion about their experiences through their own inquiry process. He explains that students “should see that there is a valuing going on by the organization as well as the classroom culture and a respect for diversity and personal life experiences and linguistic experiences and cultural experiences.” He believes this “valuing and normalizing” is also becoming “normalized and ingrained” in the schools. He strongly believes that this makes visible a “value for a certain kind of learning and educational process.” Specifically, he states that, “Thinking about writing, about reading, listening, speaking, computing, doing science on things that are relevant

and centered in cultural proficiency issues – that is way to develop these academic chops which are the economic currency of educational system here – it’s about [the] integration of things.”

Dr. Garcia states, “I have no doubt in my mind that it [the *History Harvest* project] had a positive impact on the students.... Any time that we put a positive focus on students or that we focus on students in a non-negative way, it will have a positive impact, no matter how small it is, but in this case it was huge.” She explains the program’s value to students, specifically “that their contributions were so valuable that the teacher took time out to study it in the classroom. That spoke volumes to the students and their parents that the educational system was focused on them, for that brief moment in time.” She further explains, “The confidence it gives our students once we start recognizing their contributions, their culture contributions, their language contributions... is to allow students to have confidence in their language background.” She followed this by emphasizing that the student will realize, “I’m a learner, and someone who matters” and “this sense of confidence will carry that no letter grade can.”

Mr. Rodriguez, the teacher who implemented *History Harvest* program, spoke of the specific impact it had on the Mixteco students in his class and their parents. Specifically, he states Mixtec students, “Judy and James⁵⁶ both opened up and contributed more in class – in other areas math, cooperative groups, and in cooperative groups, they were much more open more participatory, they spoke up more for themselves and against other people who tried to take advantage of them.” He also added that these Mixteco students self-identified he believes as a result of the *History Harvest* project.

Mr. Rodriguez further shared how the Mixtec students spoke to their parents about the program and how the parents commented to him, “They were very happy that their kids were learning about their culture in school and they thought they would never see that.” So, Mr. Rodriguez believes this translated in “the students are now gaining more pride in themselves and their culture, and I think an overall gain of higher self-esteem. So, I think identifying with the culture supported her [Judy] growing awareness of her power.”

According to Mr. Rodriguez, the *History Harvest* program also impacted other parents’ perspectives as well, as it opened up dialogue between the parents and their children and with the teacher, that Mr. Rodriguez felt would not have occurred if the students had not participated in this program. Specifically, Mr. Rodriguez states, “The parent had talked to the kid and had always put down these kids from Oaxaca, and they were as ignorant as anybody else because it was everything that they had heard passed down. And with their child going through this program, their child was talking to them about you know this person is from

⁵⁶ Pseudonyms were used for this study.

Oaxaca, and he is an OK person, and he was really nice to me. And they are not mean; they're not what you told us they are. And so I think it challenged, having that specific culture stud[ied] challenged many ideas that kids had about what they had heard from their own homes and families. So it came very close to where they live." Thus, Mr. Rodriguez makes visible that the *History Harvest* project impacted some of the Mixtec students in his class in not only improving their academic ability, but also empowered them to also speak out against those who were "trying to take advantage of them." This program also impacted Latino parents' negative perceptions of the Mixtec students by encouraging them to see through their child's eyes that these [Mixtec] students were "not mean, they're not what you told us they are." Therefore, Mr. Rodriguez believed that the *History Harvest* program made an impact on his students and parents in many ways. Some students chose to self-identify as Mixteco and also gained more confidence and self-esteem during the process. Also, students facilitated conversations with their parents to encourage them to change their perspective and perception about the Mixtec Indigenous people. Further, Mixtec parents made visible their happiness that their "culture" was being highlighted in the school curriculum, something they never thought would ever occur.

Discourse from the interviews of both Mr. Mendez, the Mixtec Associate Director and Mr. Ramirez, the Mixtec undergraduate student, makes visible the positive impact the *History Harvest* program had on the Mixtec Indigenous community and students. Mr. Mendez states, "We are confident and sure that empowering our community is also recognizing their background, their culture, their history.... So, when I hear about the *History Harvest* project, and we can come into classrooms and present to students and tell them. [I] have [the] opportunity to tell them, you know what... there is a history of your culture and here are some of things you have to feel proud of. That's empowerment... so for me it was very important, this project, and giving us that access – bringing what is in the community what is happening in the community, bringing that advocacy in the classroom – I think that was something that made me very interested in this project." He also adds, "Seeing other students asking some critical questions about the history of this community – and having these other students, other students seeing their classmates, I think that really changed their life, because at some point we really feel isolated. That nobody cares about our culture, that we have to feel embarrassed because that is for poor people, that there is no[one] interested in our history. Once you bring that to the students and you see other students interested of [in] that culture, your culture. I think it is powerful [and] meaningful and changed them..."

Mr. Ramirez also believes in the positive impact of the *History Harvest* program. He states, "I think it [the *History Harvest* project] will provide a space to learn from our history and culture. It will bring pride and knowledge which is

so crucial when Indigenous students confront many challenges in their daily lives.” Clearly, both Mr. Mendez and Mr. Ramirez believe the *History Harvest* program provides an opportunity to bring the Mixtec community into the classroom to share about the Mixtec culture and history, thus empowering both the Mixtec students and the Mixtec community-at-large.

Sustainability of *History Harvest* project

All those who were interviewed shared their thoughts on sustainability of the *History Harvest* project. When asked, “What are your hopes for the History Harvest project relational to your district?” Dr. Peters states that he hopes “more people will take it up.” Dr. Garcia, the principal, states, “I hope that it continues to live in our school. I hope that teachers continue to support it by having it live in their classrooms. We have been stuck in prescriptive education and need to branch out into this type of learning—that is more meaningful and Common Core can support this work.” Further, she thinks it will organically grow and expand going forward, “When we get a few people who understand what that [*History Harvest*] is and the value of it [History Harvest], and understand the procedures, then as it grows and others are interested, then [we can] provide more wide spread opportunities along those lines.”

Mr. Rodriguez, the teacher, felt strongly that the program had an impact, but specifically related it to teachers, and how he hopes that when the support is gone, it will remain sustainable. He states, “It was so beneficial. It’s definitely a powerful program especially for teachers who are struggling with project based units and how to incorporate Common Core lessons into their curriculum. So, anybody who struggles with inquiry based unit should be participating in something like this.”

Mr. Mendez, the Associate Director, made visible the need for the project to be sustainable, but that it would take not only collaboration, but also additional funding to support this program and ensure that it lasts. Mr. Ramirez’s outlook was also positive and he states, “I would like to see this program expand in every school district. Many Indigenous students are taught the history of this country, which often times unknowingly, considers them as outsiders, but it is because students do not have a chance to learn their own histories. This is a great opportunity for students to research and learn about their history and how it fits [in]to the larger American history. The program would not only create young researchers, but it will create a bridge for the students to the society they live in so that they are not outsiders anymore.” Thus, all of the actors interviewed believe that the *History Harvest* project should be sustained; however, funding will need to be secured if it is to remain sustainable.

Concluding Remarks

This study adds to the limited body of empirical research on oral history pedagogy as history education for elementary educators. This analysis of the developing *History Harvest* project, at the intersection of different communities that include a superintendent, principal, teacher, and Mixteco Associate Director, and Mixtec undergraduate student, uncovered an understanding of how one district in Oxnard, California, placed value on this type of culturally relevant pedagogy. Specifically, this program provided an opportunity for students to develop academic literacies while uncovering the invisible histories of the Mixteco community in order to redress the harms of bullying and exclusive behavior and develop more inclusive schools in this district. The analyses of these interviews conducted made visible five key areas or *rich points* for the study. Specifically, 1) the superintendent, principal, and teacher's theoretical/conceptual framework; 2) the state and local policies supporting implementation of this project; 3) contextualizing bullying and harassment of Mixtec students; 4) the impact of the *History Harvest* project on the students, classroom experiences, and parents; and, 5) the potential sustainability of *History Harvest* project.

It was necessary that the superintendent, principal, and teacher support the same theoretical framework of engaging students in culturally relevant pedagogy as way of validating the Mixtec students' backgrounds and culture. Though the principal supported the district's vision to provide this type of culturally responsive environment, she also believed there is a need for a more strategic approach that included all of the teachers. Further, the teacher in this study chose to take up this project because he supported the development of cultural proficiencies, key to this culturally responsive pedagogical approach.

The California *FAIR Education Act (SB48)* along with the local district policies, and the *Resolution of Respect for Indigenous Peoples*, provided important policy frameworks that supported the engagement of administrators and teachers in the *History Harvest* project. Both the superintendent and the Mixtec Associate Director, and the Mixtec undergraduate student are in agreement that there was a long history of bullying and harassment of the Mixtec students. Further, key to the implementation of this Resolution was the superintendent's interest in facilitating open communication and dialogue to discuss how they might collaborate with an outside community organization to alleviate the bullying and harassment of the Mixtec students.

On the other hand, though the principal, Dr. Garcia, acknowledges that some bullying took place, she does not necessarily agree that it was due to race, but instead believes the bullying she has witnessed represents more of the way elementary students engage with each other in different school settings. Dr. Garcia did believe it was necessary, however, to encourage a Mixtec adult

undergraduate student who attended schools in another Oxnard district, to provide a presentation to her teaching staff to share about his experiences of bullying and negative tracking in the hopes that this could possibly make a difference in how the teachers in her school might potentially engage with Mixtec students going forward, supporting an inclusive school climate. Future research could be conducted by me to address this discrepancy of opinions between the principal and the others in this study relational to the bullying of Mixtec students, by conducting interviews with Mixtec students around the topic of bullying and harassment, in order to understand the specific viewpoints they might have around these important issues.

The superintendent, principal, teacher, Mixtec Associate Director, and Mixtec undergraduate student all agreed that the *History Harvest* project provides a positive impact on developing inclusive behavior and the alleviation of bullying and harassment of the Mixtec students. The superintendent strongly values the *History Harvest* project as a type of learning and educational process. The principal also spoke of the value of the program, specifically sharing how her students were impacted in terms of their academic work and pride in their culture. Further, the teacher made visible how parents' perspectives of Mixtec students changed to become more supportive of the Mixtec children and that the parents were happy to see Mixtec history and culture a part of the elementary curriculum. Also, he claimed that after the *History Harvest* presentation, some students who didn't self-identify as Mixteco at the beginning of the class, did as a result of this program. Both the Mixtec Associate Director and Mixtec undergraduate student also agree that this program helped to empower the students through the understanding of Mixtec culture and history.

In the almost two years since this study has taken place, the superintendent continues to support the expansion of the program financially. He does this by encouraging the organic growth of the project in a variety of ways. He supports the development of the program by having a specific "Project" section on the district web site which highlights the program through videos, pictures, and blogs about the project. He has also hired a videographer for the district, who, as part of his job description, videotapes the implementation of the project throughout the school year. This videographer will also create a video of the overall project to share with the community-at-large at the end of school year district planned event. The superintendent also continues to offer opportunities for me to present to principals in the district about the project as well as provide opportunities for teachers to come together in collaborative groups or teams during required district "pull out" time to explore *History Harvest* team teaching approaches and to share different perspectives about program implementation.

As a result of this district support, along with the positive outcomes reported by the teachers who have implemented the project, the *History Harvest* project

has expanded from the initial teacher, Mr. Rodriguez, who piloted the program, to multiple teachers and teacher teams at three different school sites within the district. These teachers are also in collaborative discussions with me to expand the program to formulate a more fair perspective (based on the FAIR Education Act) by including other cultures and underrepresented populations into the curriculum utilizing the framework of oral history pedagogy. Further, I am currently in discussions with administrations in other districts, some with similar local and state policies in place, about implementing the *History Harvest* project in 2016.

Implications of this study speak to the need for further research on what impact this *History Harvest* program potentially has on the Mixtec students' perspectives on bullying and exclusive practices they have faced or are currently facing in the district of this study. This study also holds implications for administrators and educators seeking to engage students in curricula that *mirrors* all the diverse students in their classes, providing multiple perspectives of other cultures, ethnicities, and underrepresented populations. This program has the potential to enhance students' self-concepts of themselves, encourage engagement in the curriculum to meet academic standards, while legitimizing the role of Indigenous parents and community members to become actively involved in the development of the curriculum. To facilitate this type of twenty-first century learning, educators need to embrace different kinds of pedagogies that support culturally relevant schooling facilitated through oral history pedagogy.