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Keeping Kids in School: A Slippery Slope for Miskitu Families Living in the Pearl Lagoon Basin of Nicaragua

Patricia Ann Conway
University of San Francisco, paconway@usfca.edu

The University of San Francisco

KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL: A SLIPPERY SLOPE FOR MISKITU FAMILIES LIVING IN THE PEARL LAGOON BASIN OF NICARAGUA

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Dissertation Abstract

Keeping Kids in School: A Slippery Slope for Miskitu Families Living in the Pearl Lagoon Basin of Nicaragua

In 2014, Miskitu participants in the communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila and several of their children had dropped out of school. Earlier quantitative research revealed a problem of low matriculation in elementary and high schools in all of Nicaragua. This inquiry differed from others in that it was a qualitative study focusing on one group of people: the Miskitu community members living on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. This investigation employed the participatory-action research methodology, allowing participants to tell their own stories about the events leading up to their dematriculation.

The six participants, male and female, are of Miskitu heritage, were at least 16 years of age, were born and continue to live in either Raitipura or Kahkabila, and all but one speaks Miskitu as their first language. Participants revealed reasons for dropping out of school by discussing their school experiences, the elementary school curriculum, and indications of the Miskitu language and culture in and out of school. A variety of themes emerged from these conversations: poverty, teen pregnancy, health services, relationships between parents and teachers, parental concerns regarding school curriculum, school attendance, and indications of early stages of language loss in the communities.

Many themes were commonly shared among the six participants. Additionally, participants often gave more than one reason for withdrawing from school. Therefore, it future work should reflect the understanding that dropping out of school is often not the result of a single factor and that any action attempting to resolve the problem of high

drop-out rates must recognize and address the multiple and often interrelated factors that contribute to dematriculation among Miskitu children attending schools in these communities.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Patricia Ann Conway	November 20, 2015
Candidate	Date

Dissertation Committee

Patricia Mitchell	November 20, 2015
Chairperson	
Brian Gerrard	November 20, 2015
M. Sedique Popal	November 20, 2015
Betty Taylor	November 20, 2015

This Dissertation is Dedicated to The Miskitu Peoples

of

Kahkabila and Raitipura,

Nicaragua

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Dissertation Topic

My interest in indigenous education took hold during the last 3 years of my graduate work at the University of San Francisco. The inquiry I conducted at that time focused on how relevant curriculum and education practices could encourage and enable indigenous children in Oaxaca, Mexico, to remain in school. Later, over numerous conversations with my friend, **Ms. Amalia Dixon,** who is of Miskitu heritage, I became aware that education concerns that had earlier beset families in Oaxaca existed in contemporary indigenous communities in Nicaragua as well. Thus, it was because of Ms. Dixon, an educator in the United States and Nicaragua, that I was introduced to the Miskitu culture, and it was with this foundation that my dissertation journey began. Research into the education practices of two Miskitu communities in the Pearl Lagoon Basin of Nicaragua became not only the topic of my dissertation, but would influence the direction I hope my postgraduate work will follow, as well.

Dissertation Committee Members

I would like to begin by honoring you, **Dr. Patricia Mitchell**, my dissertation chair, the person that I have known, respected, and learned from during the entire span of my education experience at the University of San Francisco. Dr. Mitchell, thank you for introducing servant leadership into my life and for allowing me to witness how servant leadership has influenced your teaching practices. The dissertation journey has been joyful with you, Dr. Mitchell. In the simplest but the most precise terms, you have guided me carefully along, encouraging me to bring forth my deepest research experiences that were revealed to me by participants living in the Pearl Lagoon region of Nicaragua.

Thank you, Dr. Mitchell, for being my teacher, my mentor, and someone I feel honored to call my friend.

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The Miskitu Participants and Guides

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Thank you, **Rory Lynagh Shannon** and **Benny Ma**, for the technological assistance you offered me during this dissertation journey and beyond. Your patience and expertise helped me over the many hurdles that presented themselves in the challenging realm of computers and printers. You were not only problem solvers and teachers of technology extraordinaire; you were truly loyal friends without compare.

My Husband

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The education of indigenous children in the eastern section of Nicaragua has been a contested subject for the Nicaraguan government and for the indigenous community. For many years, schools have attempted to integrate members of indigenous communities into the nation-state through *Creollo* hegemonic culture that denies a place for cultural diversity in the school system (Regalsky, 2010). People in subaltern countries possess knowledge and practices that are comprehensible to their communities (Escobar, 1992), but often their voice is denied by people in power. For example, the indigenous voice is rarely heard in the formation of education policy. Escobar (1992) argued that "Western rationality has to open up to the plurality of forms of knowledge and conceptions of change that exist in the world and recognize that objective, detached scientific knowledge is just one possible form among many" (p. 143).

Nicaragua's insistence on integration and assimilation of its indigenous population has served as the bedrock for problems that have plagued the country's education system for decades. In its effort to assimilate the indigenous people in the *mestizo* culture, the government has denied representation of diverse cultures into its national curriculum. Indigenous groups have resisted this denial of power and participation by not enrolling their children in school, not monitoring school attendance, or by allowing members of the community to become completely discouraged by the school system. As a result, in 2007, there was a nationwide school dropout rate of approximately 40% (Trodden, 2010).

Denial of the indigenous voice in the creation of school curriculum has led many families to distance themselves from the education system. Indigenous groups, being members of the minority culture, have traditionally been denied entry into the school-planning process. Minority groups are excluded from participation because they are not part of the "effective dominant culture" (Apple, 2004, p. 5). A continuing problem in Nicaragua is that indigenous peoples have had a minimal role in the creation of the school curriculum (Arnove, 1995). "Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? [and] Why is it organized and taught in this way?" (Apple, 2004, p. 7). Denial of the indigenous voice, which may have contributed to lack of academic success, is one problem that was researched in this project.

Nicaragua places great importance on its education system (Arnove, 1995). School planning is written into its constitution, and "declares education to be a necessary function of the State … [and] requires the state to plan, direct, and organize education" (Arnove, 1995, p. 41). The problem here is that, although Nicaragua may deem education important, it is an education system that is planned, directed, and organized by a small group representative of the dominant culture. This system of schooling serves to maintain the dominant culture of the state, dubbed "cultural capital" (Apple, 2004, p. 2), which is the symbolic property that schools preserve and distribute to maintain the hegemonic state. Thus, school planning often "presupposes an idea of conscious manipulation of schooling by a very small number of people in power" (Apple, 2004, p. 3). In Nicaragua the small group in charge of school planning is composed of members of the majority *mestizo* community. Further, the hegemonic *mestizo* community plans school systems that are aligned with and supportive of governmental interests (Arnove, 1995).

Another gripping problem for Nicaraguan education today is that the number of children not attending school remains staggeringly high. Of those eligible for school enrollment in Grades 5 through 8, 32,000 were not in attendance in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2002). Nonmatriculation leads to diminished learning, which most often culminates in limited employment opportunities. Even for those students who matriculate, government reports stated that the school-attendance rate is unsatisfactory, with poverty given as one of the major contributing factors (Ministry of Education, 2002). In earlier research, Miskitu parents were asked their opinions about schooling (Dennis, 2004).

Dennis (2004) provided examples of parental dissatisfaction with schooling. During the year that Dennis lived among the people of the Awastara community in Nicaragua, families expressed disenchantment with the school curriculum. One parent was dismayed to hear English music in and around the school and wondered why traditional music and dance were not taught at school. Another parent contributed that the viewpoint that the community did not need to support a school system that devalued the Miskitu language and culture. Dennis quoted one Awastara community member who exclaimed, "We Miskitu people are Indians, and when the Europeans came they stole our wealth for themselves. We also have our own culture …but we are losing it. … To lose our culture is to lose our rights" (p. 174). Dennis asserted that Miskitu remains a "low status language" among the Creole and Spanish speakers of Nicaragua (p. 180). Many Nicaraguans hold an ethnocentric view about Miskitu as a backward language, a view that prevails in Hispanic Nicaragua today (Dennis, 2002).

Although indigenous peoples possess their own viable culture, this culture is underrepresented in the public school curriculum (Regalsky, 2010). Hegemonic state control of education has thus far supported assimilation of indigenous groups into the *mestizo* culture, rather than providing space for diversity. The emphasis on assimilation and its denial of diversity may be one factor that contributes to low school attendance rates and low school completion rates among indigenous children.

Far too many Nicaraguan children, particularly indigenous children, do not complete high school or even elementary school. In addition to reasons briefly explored in this section, additional factors affect the school-attendance rate. Further exploration of this problem was required to determine these factors.

Background and Need

Brief History of the Miskitu Community in Nicaragua

Nicaragua (see Figure 1) may be viewed as a country of contrasts. Compared to other Central American countries, Nicaragua has the greatest land mass, but with a mere 5,788,531 inhabitants, it is the least populated country in Central America (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2014). A contrast also exists between the western and the eastern coastal regions of Nicaragua. The narrow Pacific Coast region is home to about 90% of the total Nicaraguan population. This group consists primarily of people of *mestizo* heritage, with Spanish as the predominant language. The eastern coast of Nicaragua, also known as the Miskito or the Mosquito Coast, the Atlantic Coast, or the Caribbean Coast, is far greater in size than the Pacific Coast, but contains a much smaller population. The inhabitants of the Mosquito Coast are English-speaking Creoles, Spanish-speaking *mestizos*, and indigenous groups, the largest of which is the Miskitu

community (Freeland, n.d.). In the next section, I explain why Nicaragua experienced a unique form of colonialization. Whereas some other Latin American countries were colonized by one country, primarily Spain, Nicaragua was colonized by two European countries, Spain and Great Britain (Walker & Wade, 2011).

Figure 1. Political map of Nicaragua.

Indigenous peoples and ethnically distinct communities of eastern Nicaragua can be best understood in the context of the historical reality of centuries of British and Spanish colonization (Dunbar Ortiz, 1988). Nicaragua, which derived its name from the chief of the area's leading Indian tribe at the time of the Spanish conquest, was colonized simultaneously on the western Pacific Coast by Spain and on the eastern Atlantic Coast

by Britain. The first Spanish settlement in Nicaragua was established in 1522, and the country only gained its independence 300 years later in 1821. Under Spanish rule the indigenous Central and Pacific Coast populations were almost completely annihilated. This destruction of massive numbers of indigenous peoples occurred when the Spanish enslaved many of the original people and shipped them to South America to work in Spanish colonial precious-metal mines. Most of these slaves either died at sea during the voyage or at the mining sites themselves. The indigenous groups on the Atlantic Coast, however, avoided early depopulation, mainly due to Spanish disinterest in colonizing areas that had limited mining potential (Minority Rights, 2008). Early in the 17th century, another group of Europeans began to take interest in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.

British pirates were the first to use coastal estuaries on the Caribbean Coast as hideouts (Minority Rights, 2008). Soon after, English, French, and Dutch pirates and traders made contact with indigenous communities, groups of people who probably subsisted by fishing, hunting, and gardening. This group, who later became known as the Miskitu peoples, began to prosper through their trade with the British (Dennis, 1993). The British eventually turned to extracting the region's natural hardwoods in association with the Miskitu. It was during this early period of British occupation that escaped African slaves from the Caribbean region moved to the Miskito Coast where some of them joined with the indigenous groups. Thus, the combination of indigenous, African, and European groups evolved into a distinct autonomous Miskitu culture that combined elements from all three groups that included language and social structure (Freeland, n.d.).

In 1687, the British created what was called the "British Protectorate"; an immense swath of land incorporating approximately 50% of the eastern section of Nicaragua. The British Protectorate remained in effect until 1860 when Britain surrendered most of its claim to the Atlantic Coast. During this period of nearly 200 years, the British and the Miskitu forged strong relations. The Miskitu gained access to firearms and other imports, which helped them acquire ascendency over other coastal groups. They functioned as intermediaries in European trade dealings with other indigenous groups, conducted long-distance slave raids, and often joined the British in forays on rival Spanish holdings. Eventually, the Miskitu became the largest of the Coast's ethnic minorities. The area remained a prosperous autonomous reserve until 1894 when the territory was annexed by Nicaragua (Minority Rights, 2008). A final aspect of foreign influence in the life of the Miskitu community came about with the arrival of missionaries from Europe.

Education and the Miskitu Community

In 1849, a group of missionaries associated with the Moravian Church, a Protestant sect from Germany, arrived by boat on the Miskito Coast. For more than 150 years, the history of the Miskitu peoples has related intimately with the work of members of this church. "One of their first goals was to learn the Miskitu language and create a writing system for it. By the late 1800s, they had begun translating the Bible, the hymnbook, and the Moravian prayer book" (Dennis, 2004, p. 29). The Moravians also produced the first dictionaries and grammar books in the Miskitu language (Dennis, 2004). Old records indicate that, at least initially, the missionaries felt a certain disdain for the Miskitu language, as their language structure did not match that of European

languages. A journal entry by a missionary dated 1879 called the language "singular … the languages of savages that has been concocted in a professor's study" (Dennis, 2004, p. 29). Other than leading the Miskitu in reading the translated Bible, the Moravians never attempted to teach the Miskitu how to read materials in the Miskitu language. Helms, an ethnographer who lived with the Asang community, wrote in 1971, "There is no formal instruction in reading or writing in Miskitu at the present time, although the children may pick up a rudimentary reading ability from participation in church activities" (p. 176). Schooling in Miskitu communities, as limited as it was, was performed using the Spanish-immersion method (Dennis, 2004; Helms, 1971).

The Samoza government and the Sandinista government have contributed to the formation of the Nicaraguan education system. Nicaragua was under Samoza-family control from 1936 to 1979. This regime provided extensive education at public expense to the urban elite—programs well-suited to the majority *mestizo* population—but failed to provide even basic literacy to the majority of its citizens. A curriculum limited to a reflection of Western values, coupled with delivery of that curriculum taught solely in Spanish, resulted in disastrous literacy rates for the country. By the end of the Samoza regime, half of the Nicaraguan population was illiterate whereas in rural areas, 76% of the population could not read or write (Arnove & Dewees, 1991).

The Samoza government was overthrown by the Sandinistas in 1979. Under Sandinista rule, leaders called on education to play a key role in social change (Arnove & Dewees, 1991). The Sandinista social experiment was never able to be fully tested, largely because the United States organized and financed a counterrevolution and economic embargoes in the country (Arnove, 1995). Nonetheless, it was during the

Sandinista years that leaders made a serious attempt to include indigenous communities. In 1987, the Centro Investigaciones y Documentacion de la Costa Atlantica, an autonomous group, contracted with an Italian development organization to create the Programa Educación Bilingüe Intercultural (PEBI), a new intercultural bilingual program for Miskitu schoolchildren. Work groups composed of Miskitu educators and foreign linguists labored to produce a series of textbooks to be used through the fourth-grade level in designated schools in Miskitu communities. In the 1990s, conservative government groups refused to provide financial support to the program, and international support dwindled as well (Dennis, 2004). Although it is encouraging that Miskitu educators were consulted in the PEBI project, the literature does not indicate that PEBI workers ever sought to collaborate with the Miskitu families.

After the Sandinista party lost the national election in the 1990s, more changes came about in the education system. Due to austerity policies imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, schools were forced to decentralize and privatize (Arnove, 1995). During this period, the government began to require that families take more financial responsibility for the education of their children. Families were charged school tuition, were required to pay fees to rent textbooks, and were required to purchase school uniforms. Some families living in poverty had no choice but to withdraw their children from school. Furthermore, spending for university students was 18 times that of primary school students, even though the World Bank had advised that the highest rate of return came from investments in the primary grades (Arnove, 1995).

Nicaragua is an intriguing country because of its multiple ethnicities. It is composed of *mestizo,* White, Creole, and several indigenous groups of significant number, the largest being the Miskitu community. Nevertheless, although Nicaragua may be multiethnic, this reality is not sufficiently reflected in its national public school curriculum. Nicaragua was under Spanish colonization for 300 years and under English occupation for more than 200 years. Although Spanish and English domination ended in 1821 and 1894 respectively, their influence, particularly Spanish influence, remains firmly entrenched in the Nicaraguan public school curriculum today. There is a need to seek the inclusion of indigenous peoples who existed for thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans. These groups of people suffered great injustice under colonialism and deserve a pathway back to honor and to their right of self-determination.

In this study, I asked a group of people belonging to the largest indigenous group in Nicaragua, the Miskitu, to tell their own stories. I invited them to relate their experiences and impressions of the time they or their children spent in the elementary school system and to explain why they and possibly their children withdrew from school. I asked participants to discuss what types of changes they would like to see in the school system; changes that would encourage school matriculation and school completion through high school and discourage students from dropping out of school.

National Poverty in Nicaragua: From the Somoza Regime to the U.S. Embargo

For most of the 20th century, the great majority of the Nicaraguan people have experienced economic hardships. To better understand the poverty that exists in Nicaragua today, one must examine several conditions and events that have contributed to its impoverishment. The discussion that follows will demonstrate how the Somoza

regime, the Sandinista Revolution, the *Contra* War and the U.S. embargo all contributed to the economic state of Nicaragua today.

The Somoza government was noted for its favoritism of the country's elite minority as well as its ruthless treatment of the poor, and for the longevity of its reign. From 1936 to 1979, the Somozas catered to the country's elite while abusing the poor with an unjust and harsh hand (Vandermeer, 1991). That the Somoza dictatorship did not view the majority of Nicaraguans as worthy of poverty relief is evidenced by what transpired during General Somoza's visit to Costa Rica during the 1950s. Somoza told the president of Puerto Rico that "since Nicaraguan people were nothing more than oxen, they didn't need schools. What oxen need is hard work, not education" (Vandermeer, 1991, p. 40). With this orientation, it is unsurprising that the Somozas intentionally kept the majority of the Nicaraguan people illiterate. During Somoza rule, great sums of money were directed to universities with limited spending on elementary and secondary education. The Somoza regime was also known for its grand thievery when the lands of the country's most destitute citizens were taken and sold to the elite, who then started coffee, sugar, cotton and banana plantations. The elite increased their wealth by producing more and more for export, with less concern for domestic production, causing the poor to suffer even more (Klerlein, 2006).

The Sandinista Revolution took place between 1974 and 1979. The Sandinistas rebelled against unfair income distribution, increasing poverty, and the Somoza regime, which was the main cause of the revolution (Klerlein, 2006). Sandinistas sought to create an egalitarian society, focusing on the redistribution of land (much of which that had been stolen by the Somozas), political power, and offering economic resources to

Nicaragua's majority of impoverished citizens (Foundation for Sustainable Development, n.d.a). The new government, with Ortega at the helm, was responsible for reducing the illiteracy rate from 50% to 23% and for more than tripling college enrollment (Foundation for Sustainable Development, n.d.a). The newly invested literacy programs were halted, however, when the Sandinista government was forced to divert education money to fund the Sandinista National Liberation Front and their battle with the *Contras.* Further, the United States suspended aid to Nicaragua during the final months of the Sandinista Revolution, a step taken by the U.S. government to dismantle positive relations with Nicaragua (Leogrande, 1996) and to demonstrate its displeasure with Sandinista leader Ortega.

The long and painful *Contra* War began in 1979 and ended 11 years later in 1990. The United States had attempted to destabilize other governments, but the effort against the Sandinistas stands out as one of the most trenchant and long-lasting. When the U.S. House of Representatives refused President Reagan's request for military aid to the *Contras*, the Reagan administration created a secret arms deal with Iran and sent the proceeds to the *Contras* (Klerlein, 2006). This covert paramilitary action was well known and documented, and became known as the Iran-*Contra* affair (Leogrande, 1996). By 1986, the CIA had channeled millions of dollars in profits from weapon sales to Iran to fund the *Contra* insurgency (Foundation for Sustainable Development, n.d.a). The U.S. intrusion in Nicaragua's internal war caused Nicaraguans severe suffering in other ways as well.

The United States supported the *Contras*, a coalition of groups united in their desire to defeat the *Frente Sandinista de Liberacion,* the Sandinista National Liberation

Front. The U.S. military also took an active part in the *Contra* War by training forces in Honduras to fight the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and increased military aid to Honduras from $13.9 million to $77.4 million. The U.S.-supported *Contras* inflicted further harm to the Sandinistas by targeting Sandinista programs such as agrarian reform, health programs, and education projects; endeavors instituted in an attempt to help mitigate Nicaragua's extreme poverty (Klerlein, 2006). "The *Contra* forces attacked agriculture cooperatives, schools, health care centers, bridges, power lines, and other infrastructures" (Schroeder, 2005, p. 419). In addition to military support for the *Contras,* the United States imposed stringent economic sanctions against Nicaragua and against the Sandinista government in particular.

In addition to supplying training and arms for the *Contras,* The U.S. government blocked loans to Nicaragua from the World Bank, from the Inter-American Development Bank, and from the Bank of America. This action placed tremendous stress on Nicaragua because Somoza had left the new Sandinista government with $1.6 billion in debt. Also, in 1980 when President Reagan took office, the United States ended food aid of $9.6 million and canceled a $15 million dispersal of aid that had not been delivered during the Carter administration. Although the United States tried to completely alienate Nicaragua, other countries offered assistance in various ways. The Soviet Union gave Nicaragua 20,000 tons of wheat when the United States canceled the food-aid shipment, and Cuba and Libya offered assistance as well (Leogrande, 1996). The U.S. government then attempted further destabilization of the Nicaraguan government by imposing multiple restrictions on trade. In 1983 and prior to the full embargo, the Reagan administration reduced sugar imports from Nicaragua by 90%. Two years later, the United States

imposed a full embargo on Nicaragua, meaning, among other things, that Nicaragua could no longer import parts needed for their agriculture industry, nor export its agriculture products to the United States (Klerlein, 2006). The steps taken in the implementation of the full embargo will be explained in the following section.

In 1980, when President Reagan came to office, the new president looked unfavorably on President Carter's policy of attempting to maintain friendly relations with the Sandinista government and President Ortega. Just 2 days following inauguration, President Reagan reaffirmed the suspension of economic aid to Nicaragua. The policy of hostility toward Nicaragua solidified when the United States prevented the shipment of $9.6 million of food aid and canceled the disbursal of the remainder of President Carter's aid package. The Sandinista government asserted the aid termination was "interventionism, blackmail, and Yankee economic aggression" (Leogrande, 1996, p. 331). Beginning in 1981, the Reagan administration had begun imposing restrictions on trade with the United States.

Nicaragua was forced to pay cash for all imports from the Unites States because they were unable to take short-term loans to facilitate trade. In 1983, to discourage U.S. investment, the administration expelled 21 diplomats and closed all six Nicaraguan embassies outside of Washington, effectively limiting contact between U.S. businessmen and Nicaraguan trade representatives. Democratic Congressman from Iowa Harken claimed that elements in the Reagan administration were preparing to create economic chaos in Nicaragua (Leogrande, 1996) Adding to the outrage against Reagan's policies toward Nicaragua, Nicaragua was on the "hit list" of countries denied loans (Leogrande, 1996, p. 333). With growing opposition to policies toward Nicaragua, but remaining

adamant in the desire to squeeze the Sandinista economy even further, Reagan declared that relations with Nicaragua had reached a state of emergency (Leogrande, 1996).

By 1883, the Reagan administration felt compelled to escalate the economic toll on Nicaragua's economy. The CIA sought to achieve this by creating a special commando force of CIA contract agents to attack vital economic installations. A member of the group—the "unilaterally controlled Latino assets"—later stated "Our mission was to sabotage ports, refineries, boats and bridges, and to try to make it look like the *Contras* did it" (Kornbluh, 1987 p. 47). CIA Director Casey exclaimed the following to Chief of Staff in Latin America Clarridge, "Let's make the bastards sweat" (Woodward, 1987, p. 133). On occasion, the U.S. Navy Seals (air, sea, and land operations) were call upon to carry out especially difficult operations (Leogrande, 1996).

However, by 1984, the U.S. House of Representatives prohibited further funding for the *Contra* War. If the economic chaos in Nicaragua were to continue, President Reagan determined that the only solution would be the imposition of a full embargo. Knowing that Congress would not support an embargo, Reagan invoked the International Emergency and Economic Powers Act, declaring a '"national emergency' to deal with an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" (Leogrande, 1996, p. 339). By declaring a national emergency, Reagan was paving the way for the declaration of an embargo without congressional approval. The next step in the embargo sought by President Reagan was the creation of an executive order.

Executive Order 12513 prohibited trade and certain other transactions involving Nicaragua. The Executive Order was published on May 1, 1985, and executed on May 7,

1985 (Reagan, 1985). Invoking the authority vested in him as President of the United States by the Constitution, including the International Emergency and Economic Powers Act and the National Emergencies Act, President Reagan (1985) stated the following:

> I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, find that the policies and actions of the Government of Nicaragua constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States and hereby declare a national emergency to deal with that threat.
>
> I hereby prohibit all imports into the United States of goods and services of Nicaraguan origin, all exports from the United States of goods to or destined for Nicaragua, except those destined for the organized democratic resistance, and transactions relating thereto.
>
> I hereby prohibit Nicaraguan air carriers from engaging in air transportation to or from points in the United States, and transactions relating thereto.
>
> In addition, I hereby prohibit vessels of Nicaraguan registry from entering into United States ports and transactions relating thereto.

The U.S. embargo of Nicaragua was long, and it was painful.

President Reagan maintained the embargo on Nicaragua through the end of Reagan's presidency. The next U.S. president, President G. H. W. Bush, extended the embargo for 6 months on November 1, 1989, and later lifted it after 5 months in March, 1990 (World Heritage Encyclopedia, 2015). The embargo was lifted when the U.S.-backed conservative Chamorro was elected to the presidency (Foundation for Sustainable Development, n.d.a). The U.S. goal of numerous sanctions and the full embargo had, thus, been achieved with the ousting of the Sandinista government. It is estimated that the 5-year embargo against Nicaragua cost Nicaragua approximately $50 million per year (Klerlein, 2006), an amount of money sufficiently damaging to assure that Nicaragua would be pushed deeper and deeper into economic chaos, a condition from which it has yet to recover. The derailment of Nicaragua's economy had numerous causes, many of which existed as a result of U.S. intervention.

The combination of the impact of U.S. sanctions, the cost of the *Contra* War, the full embargo, and the denial of bank loans proved to be ruinous to Nicaragua's economy; an economy that had never recovered from the insurrection against the Somoza regime. When the Reagan administration "cut off Nicaragua from the outside, its economy could not survive the severance" (Leogrande, 1996, p. 242). Chomsky and the World Court spoke out in defiance of the Reagan administration's policies and the intent to destroy Nicaragua's economy and end Sandinista rule.

In an interview given in 1985, Chomsky broadly criticized U.S. involvement in Nicaraguan affairs and the imposition of the trade embargo (Dieterich, 1985). Chomsky argued that the Reagan administration wanted to increase suffering and internal dissonance in Nicaragua and offered reasons for taking that position. First and foremost, according to Chomsky, the U.S. government became hostile toward Nicaragua when Nicaragua showed signs of wanting to extricate itself from U.S. domination "or from subordination to the American-run global system" (Dieterich, 1985, p. 100). Chomsky stated that the ultimate goal of the United States was to prevent any development in Nicaragua that might be created and controlled by the Sandinista government (Dieterich, 1985).

Chomsky posited that Nicaragua was threatening "to carry out independent and social and economic and national development outside the framework of American domination and control, and that means that they are posing a threat to the whole international system dominated by the United States" (Dieterich, 1985, p. 98). Chomsky also named some of the development that was successfully executed by the Sandinistas and stated that the earliest educational programs instituted by the Sandinista government

hugely increased literacy and heath programs that reduced infant mortality and increased life expectancy. It was the United States that felt threatened by Nicaragua's self-determination.

> They are threatening to carry out independent social and economic and national development outside the framework of American domination and control, and that means that they are posing a threat to the whole international system dominated by the United States. (Chomsky, as cited in Dieterich, 1985, p. 98)

Chomsky contended that Nicaragua's success, achieved independently from U.S. control, signified that Nicaragua was going to be an enemy that had to be destroyed. In other words, Nicaragua did not pose a threat to the national security of the United States, as President Reagan had contended, but did pose a threat to U.S. foreign policy (Dieterich, 1985). The World Court made a judgment against the U.S. government's illegal military interventions in Nicaragua, as did the International Court of Justice, for the U.S. sanctions and trade embargo, as well as its role in the denial of loans to Nicaragua.

In 1986, the World Court, in response to the involvement of the CIA in the *Contra* War, ordered the United States to pay Nicaragua $12 billion in reparations for violating sovereignty and attacking the country. The United States refused to pay any reparations to Nicaragua (Foundation for Sustainable Development, n.d.a). The International Court of Justice determined that the embargo was in violation of international law under article XIX of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation signed in Managua on January 21, 1956. This treaty stated that neither Nicaragua nor the United States should impose trade restrictions or prohibitions of any product of the other party. Additionally, the International Court of Justice stated that by laying mines in Nicaragua's waters to enforce the trade embargo, the United States

violated its obligation under international law to not use force against another state. This court also required that the United States pay preparations to Nicaragua, but, as in the prior case, the United States did not pay any reparations. Additionally, the International Court of Justice required the United States to end the embargo immediately, but instead, the United States continued the embargo for 4 more years (World Heritage Encyclopedia, 2015).

President Reagan made four demands on Nicaragua during the embargo announcement (World Heritage Encyclopedia, 2015). These demands follow.

1. To halt all export of armed resurrection, terrorism, and subversion in neighboring countries
2. To end its military ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union
3. To cease its massive arms build-up
4. To adhere to law and practice, to democratic principles, and observance of full political and human rights

The impoverished state of health care and education, the economy, as well as the lamentable condition of the infrastructure on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, is firmly situated in events that took place during the 20th century. The Somoza regime, the *Contra* War, and the U.S. embargo threw the Nicaraguan economy into a tailspin, a condition from which the country has yet to recover. The Somoza regime's abuse of the poor through a lack of social programs, the denial of sufficient elementary and secondary education, the government's confiscation of the land of the poor, and the debt of $1.6 billion that the Somoza regime left to the Sandinista government, comprised several of these events. By overthrowing the Somoza government, the Sandinistas were able to

address unfair distribution of land, decrease poverty, and mitigate an extremely high illiteracy rate. Nonetheless, although Sandinistas initially made gains in these areas, progress was aborted when the Sandinista government was forced to divert funding to battle the *Contras*. The 11-year *Contra* War cost the lives of tens of thousands of Nicaraguans and gutted the national treasury. However, it was the U.S. intervention into the civil strife of Nicaragua that proved to be the most destructive to Nicaragua's poor, to the infrastructure, to its education and health programs, and above all, to its economy.

U.S. intervention during the *Contra* War took many forms, as the U.S. government worked to destabilize the Sandinistas. The early U.S. incursions included the reduction and later the complete elimination of U.S. aid to Nicaragua, the blocking of bank loans, and the devastating curtailment of sugar imports from Nicaragua. The United States also instituted military intervention with the CIA training *Contra* forces in Honduras. These U.S. backed forces then attacked schools, healthcare facilities, bridges, other infrastructure, and agricultural cooperatives. The most infamous U.S. operation during this time became known as the Iran-Contra Affair, a period when the United States sold arms to Iran and used the profits to support the *Contras.* The action that proved most destructive to the Sandinista government and the Nicaraguan people was the 5-year embargo placed on Nicaragua in 1985 by President Reagan. The embargo, estimated to have cost Nicaragua $5 billion each year, was only lifted in 1990 when newly elected President of Nicaragua Chamorro met the approval of the U.S. president.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to learn why members of two Miskitu communities in Nicaragua had dropped out of school. This goal was achieved by conversing with six

participants from the communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila. The school experiences documented in this study may be of value to those individuals and agencies concerned with education reform for indigenous communities in Nicaragua.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. In which ways do the Miskitu participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand their school experiences and those of their children, and how might these experiences have influenced their decisions to drop out of school?
2. In which ways do participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the use of and the viability of the Miskitu language?
3. In which ways do Miskitu participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the representation of their indigenous culture?
4. In which ways does poverty affect the lives and the academic opportunities of Miskitu participants living in Raitipura and Kahkabila?

Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical rationale for this study was colonial-discourse theory. Political and social institutions in Nicaragua today can best be understood when they are explained as outgrowths of Nicaragua's colonial past. The theoretical rationale for colonialism is particularly applicable for Nicaragua because it is a country that was not once, but twice, colonized. Great Britain colonized half of the eastern section of what is now Nicaragua, whereas Spain was forced to limit its colonization to the western side of the country. The discussion of colonialism begins by recalling the words of Memmi, a man born and raised in Tunisia, a country that had been long-colonized by the French.

Memmi (1991) described the predicament of being born into colonialism, impacting most aspects of life and personality. “Not only my own thoughts, my passions, and my conduct but also the conduct of others towards me was affected” (Memmi, 1991, p. viii). Colonialism was all-enfolding, all-encompassing, and inescapable. Memmi posited that all colonized people have much in common, because all oppressed people are alike in some ways. Rather than examining colonialism as an economic structure, Memmi believed that privilege was at the heart of the colonial relationship. As the colonizer took over the land and the spirit of the people, the colonized began to feel the illegitimacy of their status. Memmi contested colonialism vigorously by expressing that the colonized are twice illegitimated.

> A foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away from the inhabitant, granting him astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them. (Memmi, 1991, p. 9)

Colonialism is thus an injustice served to the colonized, a three-fold injustice, exemplified by a theft of the land, the heart, and the soul of the newly dominated peoples (Memmi, 1991).

Loomba (2005) understood colonialism as thievery and also declared it as being necessary for the expansion of capitalism. “Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s lands and goods” (Loomba, 2005, p. 8). Colonialism existed on earth long before the 15th century and “has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. … [For example,] at its height in the 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire stretched from Armenia to the Atlantic” (Loomba, 2005, p. 8). However, newer European colonialism ushered in different kinds of colonial practices that transformed the globe in ways that other colonialisms had not.

> Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods, and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries. This flow worked in both directions—slaves and indentured labour as well as raw materials were transported to manufacture goods in the metropolis … but the colonies also provided captive markets for European goods. … In whichever direction human beings and materials travelled, the profits always flowed back into the so-called "mother country." (Loomba, 2005, p. 9)

Thus, European colonialism involved a complex system of domination, producing an economic imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry.

During the colonial period, a complex internal hierarchy of people was established. This hierarchy, which began centuries before during the colonial period of Mesoamerica, is evident in the social structure of Nicaraguan society today. Klor De Alva (1995) explained that one's experience of colonial exploitation depended on one's position in the hierarchy:

> The original inhabitants, who logically grouped themselves into separate cultural units (i.e., ethnicities), all but disappeared after contact, wiped out physically by disease and abuse, and later, genetically and socially by miscegenation, and lastly, culturally, by the religious and political practices of the Europeans and their mixed progeny. Even in the regions where native people survived … within two or three generation they were greatly reduced in number and politically and socially marginalized from the new centers of power. (p. 243)

Klor De Alva's quotation is important to this inquiry because it brings forth two elements that are central to this study: racism and cultural suppression. I include a detailed discussion of how racism and cultural suppression contributed to the oppression and marginalization of indigenous peoples in the literature review.

Limitations

There are five limitations to this investigation, each associated with the attributes of qualitative research itself. The first and major limitation is the size of the sample. I

interviewed six Miskitu community members, and because Miskitu residents in Nicaragua number approximately 150,000 to 200,000 people, this constitutes a very small sample size. A small sample size produced a small amount of data, naturally resulting in limited data analysis and incomplete results. Finally, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the study.

The second limitation relates to the location from which the sample was drawn. The sampling was drawn from two communities in the Pearl Lagoon Atlantic coastal region of Nicaragua, The two Miskitu villages or communities, Raitipura and Kahkabila, are located in close proximity to one another, and this proximity may provide another limitation in that, over time, two communities that are located close to one another may have developed certain characteristics that are particular to them alone. As a consequence, even though these communities are Miskitu communities, they may, in fact, be quite different from communities located in other regions of Nicaragua. Raitipura and Kahkabila are situated north of a large coastal city called Bluefields. This access to an urban region where most residents speak either English Creole or Spanish may have affected the customs and experiences of the Miskitu communities studied. Raitipura and Kahkabila are located in even greater proximity to Pearl Lagoon, a town inhabited primarily by English-speaking Creoles, a situation that has probably influenced Miskitu communities as well. It is therefore possible that the school experiences of residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila differ from members of Miskitu communities situated in the northern region of the Atlantic Coast. For example, Miskitu people living along the Rio Coco (the river that separates Honduras and Nicaragua) may have very different lived experiences than other Miskitu groups because their more rural and isolated location has

put them in less contact with other groups, such as the *mestizos* and Creole speakers. Therefore, residents of the semirural communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila are possibly unique and should not be viewed as representative of all Miskitu communities in Nicaragua.

The third limitation to this study is that participants volunteered to be interviewed. It is difficult to ascertain the reason individuals would desire to volunteer for membership in a study. For example, did they or their children have positive or negative experiences in their elementary schools? Without knowing this beforehand, I found myself gathering information that may have been skewed in one direction or another.

The fourth limitation relates to the observation method I used in this study. In addition to the conversations conducted with Miskitu participants, I took field notes and, if agreed by participants, took photographs as well. By employing the observation methodology, the possibility exists of observation bias; the bias the researcher brings to the study (Creswell, 2014). This bias begins with the field notes themselves. The reader should ask the following questions: What did the researcher decide to record, and why? Further, how were these field notes interpreted and for what purpose? Even when a researcher is aware of the problem of bringing bias into the study and makes concerted attempts to control that bias, the results may never been totally bias-free.

The fifth and final limitation relates to my desire to allow all participants to read or hear my report of the conversation and to ask them to check for the veracity of the account. I was able to return to Raitipura and ask the first two participants to listen to the report and make any corrections or changes. For the other four participants, it was necessary to call them from the United States and request approval of the report. It is at

this point that a limitation arose. Even with the presence of the guides, it was difficult to verify if participants understood all that was stated in the report, even if I read slowly and waited for a response after each few sentences. On several occasions I asked the guide to intervene to check for comprehension, an intervention which proved to be helpful. Nonetheless, a difference existed between conversing with participants in person and reading to participants by telephone. In all instances, participants did make additions or changes, but the dialogue when speaking in person to participants appeared to be more authentic and, therefore, possibly more accurate. In the future research, it would be advantageous to remain in the area of data collection for a longer time, writing each report, then returning to have a one-to-one exchange with each participant.

Significance

As stated earlier in this document, Miskitu children living on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua have a very low rate of public school attendance. The reason typically offered to explain why parents fail to enroll their children in school or to monitor their school attendance is because of the high-poverty rate that exists in the Miskitu community. Many Miskitu families face challenges when asked to purchase school uniforms, rent textbooks, or pay school tuition required in the public school system. Although poverty among the indigenous populations undoubtedly does contribute to school-attendance rates, I investigated if other reasons informed why Miskito peoples may have felt unresponsive to the public school system.

The investigation used interviews with Miskitu families living in the Pearl Lagoon region of Nicaragua. This study is significant in that it allows representatives from these two indigenous communities to speak for themselves. Rather than making

assumptions about the experiences of the Miskitu peoples and school, members of Miskitu communities shared their own stories and spoke their own truth. Therefore, this study was not conducted "about" or "for" the Miskitu peoples, but was a study "with and by" the Miskitu peoples. Allowing people to express themselves helps them feel valued and appreciated. Ultimately, when people understand that they are valued, respected, and engaged, it becomes more likely that truths will emerge.

This study is also significant because it was founded on the basic principles established in the United Nation's (2008) *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. I directly addressed several of the 46 articles in this document in this research study. For example, the document states that indigenous peoples have the right to pursue their economic, social, and cultural development (Article 3), and indigenous communities have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation (Article 8). Further, indigenous peoples are assured the right to establish and control their educational systems and have a right to their education in their own language, taught in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (Article 14). Through the conversations with parents and the teenager I learned whether the rights of indigenous people were respected and if the school curriculum reflected these rights. This is significant since Nicaragua ratified the United Nation's *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and is responsible for the implementation of all of its articles. Most importantly, the inquiry was significant because its primary goal was to learn from participants the circumstances and events that contributed to their decision to drop out of school. After the data were reported and analyzed, the resulting knowledge offered understanding of future steps that

may be taken in the school system and in other responsible institutions to ensure the education of future generations will not suffer as it did with the six participants.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Restatement of the Problem

The indigenous peoples of Nicaragua have endured centuries of oppression and indignities due to the colonization of the region by Spain and England. They suffered loss of land, of natural resources, and tremendous loss of life. Indigenous children in Nicaragua, including those living on the Atlantic Coast of the country, have experienced a loss of public school education opportunities as well. The high dropout rate in the elementary grades is a problem for the Miskitu community and for the nation.

Theories and Themes Relevant to the Research Questions: Colonialism and Racism, *Mestizaje*, and Counterenlightenment Theory

Because themes and theories may, at first glance, appear disparate, it may be helpful to group them under the umbrella of what has come to be known as critical theory. The term critical theory was first used widely in the 1960s and embraces many of the theories and themes in this research. Certain theories in this research stand to highlight and critique the injustice or the inadequacy of the status quo. A brief introduction of critical theory will serve as a foundational piece to this research.

Critical theory had its origins in the Frankfurt School, a school committed to the struggle against imperialism, the private appropriation of resources, and the many constraints on personal initiative (Held, 1980). Critical theorists such as Horkheimer and Adorno sought an alternate path for social development through their questioning of positivism and capitalism. Held (1980) stated that the Frankfurt theorists "sought to develop a critical perspective in the discussion of all social practices" (p. 16). Critical

theorists become participants in the continual class conflict because "there is no objective reality which social theorists can passively reflect upon; for at any moment they are part of the societal process" (Herd, 1980, p. 21) as its potential critic. Thus, it is appropriate to list the themes discussed in this inquiry, including additional themes that emerged during conversations with participants. I discuss those themes in Chapter 5.

The literature review begins with a discussion of the meaning and history of colonialism and racism and will serve as a knowledge base to understand how the traces of colonialism and racism affect the lives of indigenous peoples in Nicaragua today. Following the discussion of colonialism and racism is a presentation of the theme called *mestizaje. Mestizaje*, which is to be understood as a cultural construct, aids in explaining the oppression and marginalization of the indigenous peoples in Nicaragua. The theme of cultural capital is also discussed because it connects closely to schools and the formation of school curriculum. I discuss the theme of the counterenlightenment stance of Vico in this inquiry. Vico, a hero to the Frankfurt School and possibly the first critical theorist, is included in the literature review because many of Vico's ideas offer a new way, a more humane way, of understanding education. I present the final theme in the literature review, language loss and language maintenance, at great length in this inquiry because language is critical to the self-identity of all people. A discussion of language will also help determine if the Miskitu language is undergoing initial stages of language loss in Raitipura and Kahkabila.

Colonialism

Colonialism is an apparatus of power and authority (Bhabha, 1994). "The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate

types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 101). Thus, if the colonized are the degenerate race, the colonizers must, in contrast, be understood as the group exhibiting "racial purity" [and] "cultural priority" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 106). In the eyes of the colonizers, the "disabled natives" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 197) would only stand to benefit from their control, leadership, and ultimate subjugation. The following quotation indicates that racism has a long history and was an established precedent prior to colonialization of the Americas (Anderson, 1983): "The racism of colonial empires is then part of an archaic acting out, a dream text of a form of historical retroversion that appeared to confirm on a global, modern stage following the antique conception of power and privilege" (p. 136). In the following section, I discuss power, privilege, and racism.

Colonialism and Racism

Said was born in Jerusalem and was a strong critic of "colonialism and post-cultural stereotypes, political imperialism and dehumanizing ideology" (Said, 1979, p. 27). Said examined an essay published in 1908 by the British Consul Cromer in which Cromer defined the colonized as the "subject races" (1979, p. 36). Said responded to this by stating that, as subject races, Cromer was inferring that the colonized "did not have it in them to know what was good for them" (1979, p. 37). These subject races were of great curiosity to colonizers. Through innumerable voyages, colonizers had "widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnography, comparative anatomy, philology and history." (Said, 1979, p. 40). With colonized people viewed as alien, unusual, and the subject race, an attitude of racism toward the colonized was firmly established in Western thought and society. In alignment, poetry and literature

depicting the colonized as an inferior race became popularized and highly regarded during the 19th century.

Said (1979) presented and examined Kipling's "A Song of the White Men," written in 1898, as one example of the unabashed racism found in 19th-century verse. Kipling, a British author, whose work was often taught to British and U.S. students, was regarded in the West as an eminent poet in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, some of Kipling's work has begun to be examined under a racial lens. Two poems, "A Song of the White Men" and "The White Man's Burden" contain stories of colonialism and extol the virtues of the West. The poems describe the colonized as subjugated, but the subjugation is presented as being for their own good, or their own sake. In these poems, Kipling's purpose was to offer support to the civilizing mission of the West. According to Kipling, it was the duty of the West to "lift up" the other races of the world. In "A Song of the White Men," Kipling lauded White people for their bravery, ability to "clean" the land of the colonies, to wage war for the freedom of Western people (Kipling, 1899). Fanon, another strong critic of colonialism, lived and wrote about the colonized experience; these writings have become classics.

Fanon wrote extensively about racism in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004) and *Black Skins, White Masks* (2008). Fanon was born on Martinique, an island in the Caribbean once colonized by the French and having today the status of an overseas department of France. Later, as a young adult, Fanon fought alongside the Algerians in their struggle for independence from France. So from a person who can be seen as twice-colonized, Fanon stood well-positioned to understand and become a critique of colonialism. It was Fanon's view that racism had a long tradition in the European psyche.

The following quotation was from a speech made in Fort de France, Martinique, in 1945: "European civilization and its agents of the highest caliber are responsible for colonial racism" (Fanon, 2008, p. 70). Fanon further asserted that the major element that stratifies societal groups is race. "Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to" (Fanon, 2004, p. 5). The colonizers portrayed the indigenous people or the "natives" as impervious to ethics, the enemy of values; they were, in other words, absolute evil. Colonizers perceived themselves as superior to this dehumanized race who they often viewed as "the other" (Fanon, 2008). Because the Europeans assigned an inferior status to the colonized race, they felt it their duty and their right to become the rulers and saviors of indigenous peoples, claiming it was their duty to instill in them Western values.

Colonialism and Economic Exploitation

In opposition to the scholars who spoke positively of "modernity "with its technology and market economy, Feagin (2013) pointed to the success of modern societies, founded on the "genocide, land theft, and labor theft that accompanied the global expansion and colonialism of European countries beginning in the late 1400s" (p. 24). Further,

> Strikingly, colonialism, capitalism, modernity, and global exploitation all have a common genealogy. European colonialism and capitalism were in their early stages of development when they generated the cross-Atlantic slavery system. European colonialism took on its exploitive, wealth-generating form in concert with the enslavement of Africans and other indigenous peoples across the growing north and south Atlantic economies. … The rise of Western capitalism is rooted in the global seizing of the land, resources, and labor of people of color by violent means. … In this early period, thus, modern capitalism *was* systemic racism, and systemic racism *was* modern capitalism. (Feagin, 2013, pp. 24, 25)

Indigenous peoples suffered greatly, “so much so that many coerced laborers died from not having enough basic food, clothing, or shelter under this highly exploitative colonialism” (Feagin, 2013, p. 25). Tens of thousands of indigenous peoples living on the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua died shortly after being enslaved by the Spanish and brought to toil in the mines of Ecuador. Thousands perished on ships while being transported to Spanish colonies and mines in South America. As a result of these deaths, the indigenous population of the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua today is small compared to indigenous groups living on the Atlantic Coast. During the colonial period, the Spanish were unable to make inroads into the eastern section of the colony. This was due partly to the difficulty of traversing the terrain, but mostly due to being held back by indigenous groups living in central and eastern Nicaragua (Walker & Wade, 2011).

Colonialization and the Control of Culture

Colonialism and postcolonialism played a major role in the control and manipulation of culture. In 1970, Cabral, a nationalist thinker and political leader from then Portuguese Guinea, gave a speech at Syracuse University; the focus of this delivery was the topic of culture and colonialization (RGB Communiversity, 2012). Some ideas from the speech, titled “National Liberation and Culture,” stand as a foundation for the discussion regarding culture. First, Cabral (1970) stated simply that all people have culture, this in contrast to some people continuing to embrace the concept that only the elite had culture. To dominate a people is to take up arms to destroy or at least to neutralize or paralyze their cultural life. Colonizing countries greatly fear indigenous culture “for with a strong Indigenous cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of

its perpetuation" (Cabral, 1970, para 3). The following excerpt from Cabral's speech identifies "assimilation" as another means of culture control.

> The experience of colonial domination shows that in the effort to perpetuate exploitation, the colonizers not only create a system to repress the cultural life of the colonized people; they also provoke and develop the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by so-called assimilation of indigenous people, or by creating a social gap between the indigenous elites and the popular masses. (para 24)

Some theorists, philosophers, and authors contest the concept of assimilation; the reasoning of representative authors who challenge assimilation follows.

The dominant culture in a society has a tendency to invoke laws that encourage or insist upon assimilation because the dominant culture views itself as the superior culture. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1994) noted the idea that European identity is superior to all others. Nearly 1 century earlier, Conrad (1983) had written a seething indictment of colonialism and assimilation. Conrad witnessed firsthand the horror of the Belgian conquest of the Congo, an experience that greatly influenced the famous book, *Heart of Darkness.* Conrad stated that Europeans have a tradition of cultural authority; the author accused colonization of being a moral vice and a means of cultural bullying by Europeans. French sociologist Bourdieu (1984) recognized the futility and foolishness of assimilation in stating that one culture cannot be viewed as superior to another.

Bourdieu and Apple: Culture and Hegemony as a Form of Social Control

All cultural systems are human constructions, and, as such, are fundamentally arbitrary (Bourdieu, 1984; Mannheim, 2000). Thus, no evidence exists of universal knowledge or universal values. Culture systems of authority stem from the interests of particular groups to legitimize unequal power relations among groups. A society that seeks cultural dominance or assimilation is demanding social control (Bourdieu, 1984).

When one society attempts to identify as the superior culture and insists upon acculturation, it may be understood as mere folly (Bourdieu, 1984) or, as Conrad (1983) stated more bitingly, another instance of a European or Western society caught in the act of bullying.

Early in the 20th century, Gramsci (2011) began to familiarize the public with social control in *Prison Notebooks.* Gramsci used the word "hegemony" to explain domination and expressed that hegemony is a form of control used by dominant cultures. Bourdieu's (1984) massive research projects also concerned hegemony and its distribution of power. Social classes exist because of what Bourdieu called "cultural capital" (1984, p. 12). Bourdieu's research led to the understanding that cultural capital was a powerful resource. Cultural capital is the ability to use language, myth, and art from the dominant culture. Because people possess varying degrees of experience with the dominant culture, cultural capital is not equally distributed among members of a society. Thus, a hierarchy is formed with those at the top (upper class) possessing the most cultural capital and those at the bottom (lower class) possessing the least. This cultural capital is inculcated in higher class homes, thereby enabling the upper class to gain higher education credentials and maintain their position of authority. Further, cultural capital connects to economic capital so the people who have the most familiarity with the dominant culture will be found at the upper rungs of the hierarchal economic ladder (Bourdieu, 1984).

Apple (2004) founded much work on the principles of social, economic, and cultural capital; concepts earlier developed by Bourdieu (1984). Whereas Bourdieu used cultural-capital theory to analyze French culture, which ranged from food tastes to choice

of music, Apple's use of the capital metaphor focused on the effect cultural capital had in schooling practices, school curriculum, and student success. Even though Apple conducted research in or about U.S. schools, the findings are applicable to all schools where cultural capital contributes to curriculum formation and assessment of student work.

Stratification and labeling of students into social classes begins at an early age (Apple, 2004; Bourdieu, 1984) because of educational institutions' reliance on the cultural capital of the dominant group in the creation of school curriculum and testing materials. Children enter school with differing modes of knowledge because of the diverse populations to which they belong, but institutions do not consider this when teaching or assessing students (Apple, 2004). Instead, schools accept only one set of knowledge—that of the dominant group—and it is this knowledge that is considered legitimate and the one that holds value. Additionally, the labeling of students as "slow learner," "discipline problem," and needing "remediation" creates "questionable practices of an educational bureaucracy and a stratified economic system" (Apple, 2004, p. 127).

All students are asked to cope with and try to emulate the middle class culture (Apple, 2004; Bourdieu, 1984).

> cultural capital stored in schools acts as an effective filtering device in the reproduction of a hierarchical society. … [Schools] take the cultural capital, the *habitus,* of the middle class, as natural and employ it as if all children have had equal access to it. (Apple, 2004, p. 31)

Dale, Esland, and MacDonald (1976) addressed this same question when they wrote, "By taking all children as equal, while implicitly favoring those who have already acquired the linguistic and social competencies to handle middle-class culture, schools take as natural what is essentially a social gift" (p. 4). With the understanding that schooling

practices are based on middle class culture, it is certain that teaching practices, the curriculum, and the evaluation system are not neutral. Further, what schools do, who succeeds and who fails, contributes to inequality inside and outside these institutions (Apple, 2004).

Colonization in Spanish America: An Introduction

The year 1492 marked the beginning of the colonial era in the enormous landmass that is now called the Americas. In the centuries that followed, exchanges that took place between the Europeans and the Spanish colonists would forever transform the lives of the people on both continents. The events that transpired were of such magnitude that a new period in history was born. The "discovery" of the "new" world marked the beginning of globalization and modernity; two processes so powerful that they continue in the world design to the present day (Mignolo, 2012). Therefore, to understand the condition of the indigenous peoples of Latin America today, it is exigent on researchers to look back 500 years and explore some events that transformed the lives of so many.

The discussion of modernism is here divided into two parts: early modernism and later modernism. Even though colonization continued throughout each period, the reasons for colonization as well as the effect on the people and the land during each period were distinct from each other. Further, although colonialism had a dire effect on the natural resources of Latin America, the focus of this review will be on how the coloniality of power affected the original human beings living in Spanish America, those who are called the indigenous peoples. The effects of colonization remain today in the nation-states created following the wars for independence. Nonetheless, by the end of the 20th century, more and more people began to contest the injustices that have beset indigenous

communities during the past 500 years. An explanation of imperialism will be the starting point for this section of the discussion because its ideals offer an enhanced understanding of colonialism.

Imperialism and Cultural Imperialism

Any study of colonialism must include a discussion of imperialism because colonialism would not have taken place were it not for Europe's full acceptance of the process of imperialism. Giddens (1989) explained that imperialism was an integral part of Europe's economic expansion. New markets were necessary due to the inability of Europeans to purchase all of what was being produced. Therefore, imperialism became the system of control that secured these markets. This expansion, facilitated by colonialism, assured European control. To accomplish this control in the Americas, it became necessary to secure and subjugate the indigenous populations. Thus, imperialism may be understood as the cause of the exploitation and control of indigenous peoples. Because of European imperialism and colonialism, indigenous peoples have, to this day, "struggled to recover histories, land, languages, and basic human dignity" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 22).

One aspect of imperialism was the influence it had on the culture of colonized people. It was during the 1970s, primarily due to the writings of Foucault (1980), Chomsky (2010), Said (1979, 1994, 1995), and Gramsci (2011), that the term "cultural imperialism" began to be used. For example, Said (1994) posited that, despite the end of the empire, colonial imperialism left a cultural legacy with previously colonized people; a legacy that remains firmly intact. Petras (2000) explained why cultural imperialism was a tactic employed by colonizers: In relation to the Third World, cultural imperialism is the

domination of the cultural life of the popular masses by the ruling class of the West to control and influence the values, behavior, institutions, and identity of oppressed people to conform to interests of the imperial classes. The general message of cultural imperialism is that Western ideas, products, governments, and values are superior to those of the peoples of the Third World, and, because of this, must be adopted (Downing, Mohammadi, & Sreberny, 1995). Because of the professed superiority of Western cultural life, little space was provided for cultural diversity.

Early Colonialism

In addition to 1492 marking the beginning of European expansion into the far western portion of the Atlantic Ocean, the date is also recognized as the beginning of cultural globalization, with the first goal of globalizing being the conversion of the planet to Christianity. Under the impetus of the *Orbis Universalis Christianus,* Spaniards felt compelled and emboldened to undertake their Christianizing mission in the Americas; an act that marked the first modern or global design of the world. The year 1492 was also significant because it marked the final victory of the Kingdom of Castille over the Moors as well as the date that all Jews resisting conversion to Catholicism were expelled from Spain (Mignolo, 2012). As a result, the Spanish were driven and energized in their calling to universalize Christianity in the rest of the world. Christianity, having established itself as intolerant of Judaism and Islam, would soon exhibit the same response to the "idolatry" of the Amerindians, whose extirpation became the major goal of the Catholic Church in the 16th and 17th centuries (MacCormack, 1991). In addition to religious conversion, there were other cultural practices that would prove to be of grave concern to Spanish missionaries.

From the earliest years of colonialization in the Americas, Catholic missionaries and soldiers were under orders from Queen Isabella to bring the Spanish language to the Amerindians. Nebrija, a Spanish Renaissance scholar, had convinced the Queen that *armas y lettras* (arms and letters) went hand in hand (Illich, 1981). Nebrija had written a Latin grammar text in 1485 and, by 1492, had created a language the author called Castilian, developed from the many speech forms encountered daily in the streets of Spain. Nebrija wanted to replace the people's vernacular with a grammarian language. Nebrija was not only the creator of the Castilian language but was the first person to publish a grammar text in any Renaissance language. Fifteen days after Columbus set sail on the first voyage to the Americas, Nebrija presented the queen with the Castilian grammar text. In the introduction Nebrija wrote,

> My Illustrious Queen. Whenever I ponder over the tokens of the past that have been preserved in writing, I am forced to the very same conclusion. Language has always been the consort of empire and forever shall remain its mate. Together they come into being, together they grow and flower, and together they decline. (as cited in Illich, 1981)

Ironically, in the early period of colonization, the Amerindians were confronted with and expected to adopt the new Spanish language; a language that was not well understood by the colonizers themselves.

Another aspect of language that began during early colonization concerned written language. When missionaries arrived in the Americas in the 16th century, it was their practice to determine if the Amerindians possessed a written language. If a written language did exist, it was deemed viable only if it was founded on an alphabetic system. Without this system, the written language was considered barbaric and the people speaking it illiterate. It did not matter if the indigenous peoples had other ways to communicate and record their knowledge. In the absence of the desired writing system,

the Amerindians were not only seen as illiterate, they were labeled as having little knowledge and low intelligence (Mignolo, 2012). The perceived inferiority of indigenous peoples paved the way for grave injustices that would be committed against indigenous communities.

Because of the hierarchal system of knowledge that emerged in the 16th and 17th centuries in the Americas, Quijano (2000) created the term "coloniality of power." Coloniality of power is a phenomenon indicating a conflict of knowledge and structure of power. The coloniality of power expresses a need to classify the planet population, with culture becoming crucial in this classification and reclassification process. Also, the coloniality of power is seen in institutions, such as elementary and high schools, universities, churches, and state governments. In other words, the culture of the colonies would be determined by the colonizer, not the colonized (Quijano, 2000). Western expansion was not only a religious and economic one, but also an expansion of hegemonic forms of knowledge (Rorty, 1982). For 500 years, imperialists defined one local history: Western civilization. "Western civilization had created its own history, had assumed that the history of the planet was its property too and that it was the point of arrival in an ascending history of the human species" (Mignolo, 2012, p. ix). Europe was thus seen as the home of all knowledge, dismissing indigenous knowledge as pagan or simply delegitimized. At least one third of the world was affected by the coloniality of power and, until recently, these colonized regions have been left out of the conversation and planning for their peoples' own future (Mignolo, 2012).

The Encomienda System

From the earliest moment in the colonization process, Spaniards brought with them institutions of oppression. When Columbus laid claim to the "New World," Spaniards were prepared to continue one particular cultural practice that had been in place in feudal Spain. This was a system of forced labor called the *encomienda*, a derivative of the word meaning "to entrust." *Encomienda* had its origins in Western Europe and was widely employed in Spain as a practice that exacted tribute from Muslims and Jews during the reconquest of Muslim Spain (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013). The first *encomiendas* in the Americas were distributed by Columbus to *conquistadores* upon their arrival in the Caribbean Islands. In subsequent migrations to the Spanish colonies, soldiers, settlers, priests, and public servants were offered the highly prized *encomiendas* (Minster, 2014).

In the *encomienda* system, *repartimiendos*, or land grants, were distributed to Spanish immigrants, providing them ownership of cities, towns, and villages that were inhabited by Amerindians. All indigenous peoples living in these region were included as part of the land grant, making this a thinly veiled system of slavery. The *encomendero* (receiver of the grant) could exact tribute from the Amerindians in the form of goods, metals, harvests, animals, or labor. In exchange, the *encomendero* was required to protect the Amerindians and have them instructed in the Christian faith, with conversion being the primary goal (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2013). The *encomiendo* system was deeply entrenched in the culture of Spanish America and many historians consider it to have been one of the most damaging institutions of Spanish colonization, due to its oppressive and exploitative structure (Busbin, n.d.).

When the Spanish crown agreed to the *encomienda* in the colonies, the king and queen stipulated that Amerindians be paid, but it was a system gone awry with abuses evident from the very start. In addition to withholding monetary compensation to Amerindians, the *encomenderos* demonstrated extreme brutality toward native people. Harsh treatment, coupled with periods of near starvation, led to the death of thousands of Amerindians. Over time, many *encomenderos* ceased to work and relied fully on indigenous labor for their own well-being. Eventually, news of the massive loss of Amerindian lives was brought to the attention of the monarchs. One person who spoke out about the injustices toward Amerindians was Bishop de las Casas. De las Casas urged the adoption of a law that would release the native peoples from bondage (Busbin, n.d.).

The "New Laws" and the Debates at Salamanca

De las Casas arrived on the island of Hispaniola in 1502 with an *encomienda* in hand, desirous of making a fortune. In the ensuing years and under the influence of a Dominican priest, de las Casas developed sympathy toward the suffering of the indigenous people, and by 1509 had relinquished the land grant, released the slaves, and returned to Europe where he would soon take religious vows. Thereafter, de las Casas made public denunciation of the Spanish exploitation of indigenous peoples as well as abhorrence of the violent conquest of the New World (Gilder Lehman Institute, n.d.).

King Charles, along with predecessor King Ferdinand, had been sympathetic toward the plight of the Amerindians, and therefore agreed to meet with de las Casas. Upon hearing of the hundreds of thousands of people who had died in the colonies, many of whom had perished because of their unwillingness to convert to Christianity, the king, in 1542, passed what would become known as the "New Laws." The New Laws stated

that Amerindians were to be considered free and the grant holders could no longer demand free labor from them. Rebellions in the colonies erupted when the viceroys attempted to enforce this law. The extent to which the colonists would go to protect the *encomiendas* resulted in the king suspending the New Laws. Eight years later, and again at the urging of de las Casas, King Charles agreed to a debate regarding treatment of the Amerindians (Gilder Lehman Institute, n.d.).

Debates were held in 1550 and 1551 in the city of Valladolid and consisted of two opposing views regarding the land-grant system. De las Casas, a member of the growing humanist movement, argued that Amerindians were free people who deserved the same respect as others. Sepulveda took the opposing view, insisting that indigenous peoples were barbarians and infidels. Sepulveda took a more secular approach with an argument based on the Aristotelian position that indigenous peoples were naturally predisposed to slavery and, therefore, could be subjected to bondage (as cited in Hernandez, n.d.). De las Casas contested Sepulveda's argument and responded by citing the Bible: "All the world is human!" At the end of the debates, de las Casas had convinced the theologians of the injustice of the *encomienda* system, but this victory at the debates had no impact on abusive practices in the colonies (Gilder Lehman Institute, n.d.). Eventually, the *encomiendas* were returned to the monarchs following the king's refusal to grant them in perpetuity

Later Colonialism: The Civilizing Mission

Although the mission of 16th century colonialism in Latin America was the universalization of Christianity, the 17th century ushered in the concept of "civilization." Even though the Christianizing mission continued to exist, it became secondary to that of

the civilizing mission. Civilizing is a broad term but can be best described as a desire of the colonizer to "educate," believing the colonized needed to be educated in the correct language to speak, the correct way to write, and the correct way to dress. Generally speaking, natives needed to learn the correct culture to embrace and, in Spanish America, that was the culture of Spain. By the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century, Spaniards also measured and ranked societies by the manner in which they recorded their history. Since indigenous peoples possessed no alphabetic writing system, they were said to possess no history (Mignolo, 2012). The civilizing mission that began in the 17th century coincided with the early years of the Enlightenment period. Were it not for the Enlightenment, the civilizing process would most likely never have occurred.

Mestizaje

I chose the theme of *mestizaje* for this research because it helped further explain the oppression under which indigenous communities in Nicaragua live today. Knowledge of *mestizaje* heightened understanding of how the hegemonic voice of Nicaragua became and continues to be the voice of the country's public school system. The Spanish language, Western values, and European history represent the cultural capital of the school system; a system of schooling that helps maintain the dominant culture: the *mestizo* culture. This hegemonic culture in Nicaraguan society also serves to deny a place for adequate cultural diversity in the school system. Because cultural capital is not part of Miskitu cultural life, the curriculum becomes limited or completely inaccessible to the Miskitu child. The subject or theme of *mestizaje* described in the following section provides the background necessary to better understand the marginalization of indigenous peoples in Nicaragua.

The Meaning of Mestizaje

Mestizaje is a Spanish word created in Latin America toward the end of the 18th century. Briefly, *mestizaje* can be understood as the outcome of a shift away from strong identification with an indigenous culture and to the myth of cultural homogeneity. In this postrevolutionary period, several newly liberated countries in Central America were searching for new identities. "The triumph of liberal revolutions in Central America, along with the growing impact of U.S. cultural, political, and economic imperialism … created a need for national symbols that would respond to imperial arrogance, essentialized as the Anglo Saxon race" (Gould, 2007, p. 135). Nicaragua, wishing to present a new face to the world and being itself only in the pupa stage of nation building, was no exception to this desire to redefine itself. Nicaragua chose a significant symbol during the postcolonial period and the symbol that has endured into the 21st century is *mestizaje.*

Mestizaje as a Cultural Construction

Mestizaje is a derivative of the Spanish word *mestizo,* long-understood to be the mixing of two races. The *mestizo,* or hybrid, was the progeny of the colonizers and the colonized. *Mestizaje* differs from *mestizo* in that the former is a genetic as well as cultural hybridity. *Mestizaje* or cultural homogeneity is a cultural construction and a word that has always been politically charged (Klor de Alva, 1995). The concept of *mestizaje* was imposed by elites as a standard part of their nation-building (Gould, 2007). The elites were composed primarily of *Ladinos,* a term used to signify anyone who was not indigenous.

Large groups of *mestizos* moved to towns or cities and the Spanish-dominated countryside where they replaced the decimated indigenous labor force. These newly arrived *mestizos* began to associate themselves with the *criolles* (people born in Spanish America but of Spanish ancestry) due to the superior status of their Spanish culture. "These substantially Westernized *mestizos*, in subaltern and elite sectors, made up the bulk of the forces that defeated Spain during the anti-imperialist, 19th century war of independence" (Klor de Alva, 1995, p. 247). The Westernized *mestizos* and the *criolles* created the term *mestizaje*, seeking to assert that in Nicaragua there existed one culture that was a harmonious blend of all indigenous, mulatto, Black, and *Ladino* cultures in Nicaragua. Gould (2007) denied this assertion as a falsehood and called it "the myth of *mestizaje."* According to Gould:

> The myth of the Nicaraguan *mestizaje* is the collective belief that Nicaragua had long been an ethnically homogeneous society, is one of the elite's most enduring hegemonic achievements. … The creation of this nationalistic discourse in Nicaragua depended on the increasing disarticulation of the *Communidades Indigenas*. (p. 134)

Thus, the building of *Ladino* power depended on the delegitimization of indigenous authenticity to achieve the creation of the *mestizaje* myth.

The suppression of the Indigenous voice in Nicaragua was a long process and took many forms. Trouillot (1995) discussed hegemonic power and its ability to suppress: "Effective silencing does not require a conspiracy, not even a political consensus. Its roots are structural … the exercise of power is much more important than the alleged conservative or liberal adherence of the historian involved" (p. 106). In the following section I offer multiple examples to demonstrate how hegemony was at play in the silencing of the original inhabitants of Nicaragua.

Language Loss and Mestizaje

Since the 1880s, the official discourse in Nicaragua touted the victory of *Ladino "*civilization" over indigenous "barbarism" (Gould, 2007, p. 6). Through a variety of activities, the validity of indigenous identity was first weakened and finally denied. The multidimensional process that brought about the effacement of indigenous identity contained physical and symbolic forms of violence (Gould, 2007). Symbolic violence is "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). In the following quotation, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) associated symbolic violence with domination:

> Any symbolic domination presupposes on the part of those who are subjected to it, a form of complicity which is neither a passive submission to an external constraint nor a free adherence to values. … The specificity of symbolic violence resides precisely in the fact that it requires of the person who undergoes it an attitude which defied the ordinary alternatives between freedom and constraint. (p. 168)

During the nation-building process, *Ladinozation* gathered force in Nicaragua and the use of Spanish language and Western dress became the accepted norms. Symbolic violence was in evidence when many *indigenes* were shamed into shedding their native dress and language. Indigenous people often feigned ignorance when asked about vocabulary because they were "ashamed of their language" (Gould, 2007, p. 7). Likewise, adults often forbid children from listening to the conversations of elders, fearing that if they learned the language, they would be treated like *Indios*, a cultural group much maligned and widely considered completely lacking in social values. Thus, little by little, the indigenous peoples began to see themselves as inferior because of their knowledge of their mother tongue. The acceptance of inferiority and the understanding of being a member of the dominated group, illustrates further the principle of symbolic

violence. After a period of time, it became "natural" for the original habitants to speak the language of the Spanish colonizers. A new worldview was created whereby speaking and dressing in the manner of the West became the accepted norm. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) described this process as *doxa*, a phenomenon that emphasizes that part of worldview that is naturalized and thus no longer appears to represent the ideology of a particular group. The authors further articulated *doxa* as

> an uncontested acceptance of the daily lifeworld, not simply to establish that it is not universally valid … but also to discover that … it represents the most radical form of acceptance of the world, the most absolute form of conservatism. (pp. 73–74)

The following discussion illustrates ways oppressed groups in Nicaragua came to accept as "common sense" the new hegemonic worldview.

As previously indicated, in postcolonial Nicaragua, Spanish became the official language. This linguistic transformation rendered misguided all claims to indigenous identity and rights. For example, indigenous children were at a huge disadvantage at school because the language of instruction was primarily Spanish. Because the schools failed to accommodate the language needs of the children, they, along with their indigenous-speaking families, were pushed further into the periphery of Nicaraguan society. With little or no formal education, the young were subjected to a life of limited possibilities. Pagden (1995) explained we all "live in societies that limit and determine the range of choices that are open to us" (p. 131), but for indigenous peoples, this determination was especially cruel. Pagden declared that people were denied a meaningful life with the loss of language and culture: "Nothing that does not come within the range of our own cultural experience-and hence within the range of our own language can have any meaningful existence for us" (1995, p. 142). In addition to invalidation by

shaming of the numerous indigenous languages of Nicaragua, people continued to lose indigenous identity with the shedding of ancient ways of dressing.

Indigenous Identity, Ethnic Dress, and Mestizaje

In addition to language, other cultural markers contribute to identity; manner of dress is one of them. The *indigenes* of Nicaragua had, for centuries, woven their own cloth, often from cotton grown in *communidades,* but by the mid-20th century many indigenous groups had forsaken their ancient dress. The loss of cultural markers becomes more comprehensible with the knowledge that during the 3 prior centuries, many parts of the world had undergone "the greatest Western imperial hegemony in history… [and that] Europe ***did*** command the world [and that] the imperial map ***did*** license the cultural vision" (emphasis in original, Said, 1995, pp. 24–25). I now explain how the effacement of native dress in Nicaragua had its roots in the politics of World War II.

In 1942, at the request of the U.S. government, Nicaragua signed an agreement that limited its production of cotton to 6,000 acres. Prior to 1942, Japan had purchased most of its cotton from Nicaragua. By signing the treaty with the United States, Nicaragua agreed to the imposition of sanctions on the Japanese government. This treaty had severe implications for indigenous people, however, because they also would feel the pinch of limited cotton production. For centuries, women wove all clothing from cotton grown in or near the communities where they resided, but when cotton plants were replaced with other forms of agriculture, indigenous groups had to look elsewhere for their clothing. For the first time, indigenous families were forced to purchase clothing and textiles from stores run by *Ladinos* and *mestizos,* the style of which was Western (Gould, 2007). The outcome was that the people were traumatized in several ways. First,

they were denied access to the cotton required for weaving their own clothing. Second, when forced to purchase clothing in stores, they were placed at an economic disadvantage. Finally, employment opportunities were greatly diminished with the end of cotton production. The winners were the shopkeepers, the *Ladinos*, who now could boast of more customers, greater profits, and a greatly increased market for their goods (Gould, 2007). The indigenous peoples were the losers with their loss of land on which to grow their own cotton and, ultimately, the loss of another ethnic marker, their native dress. It must be noted that native clothing had been undermined in other ways in Nicaragua before and after the treaty of 1942.

Adults and children were ridiculed because of their indigenous dress. Over the years, *Ladinos* ridiculed indigenous clothing just as they mocked all visible signs of indigenous culture. For example, the memory of shame was so powerful that one indigenous man attributed the demise of native dress to the aesthetic quality of the clothes. This young man stated, "My Mama made me old and ugly shirts" (Gould, 2007, p. 206). The loss of this particular ethnic marker and accompanying identity loss emphasizes the loss of self-esteem and self-sufficiency, and increased dependence on *Ladinos.* Repression caused by the treaty of 1942 is remarkable also because it is symbolic of the destruction of the indigenous economy, self-sufficiency, and the imposition of forced consumption.

Loss of Religious Rights and Practices and Mestizaje

With varying degrees of success, the goal in colonial and postcolonial Latin America was the limitation of cultural diversity. As previously indicated, hegemonic European powers desired to control the language people spoke and the clothes they wore.

From the earliest days of colonialism, the West felt that it had the capacity to demand such acquiescence. “Western civilization had created its own history [and] had assumed that the history of the planet was its property too” (Mignolo, 2012, p. ix). The West’s creation of epistemic privilege in narrating its own history and projecting it onto universal history is nothing more than a “myth of universal history” (Mignolo, 2012, p. x). *Ladinos* also made incursions into the religious practices of indigenous peoples.

During the colonial and postcolonial periods, the West had been successful in projecting its Christian belief system on many indigenous groups in Latin America, and problems would arise if` native people desired to place any distinguishing marks on the imposed religions of Christianity. One example of religious control and suppression of indigenous groups occurred in Metagalpa, Nicaragua, between 1948 and 1952. During this period, an organization called *Accion Catolica* initiated their harassing practices toward indigenous Nicaraguan communities for activities they considered profane. *Accion Catolica,* an international group run by the laity, was conceived as an extension of the Catholic hierarchy. Having the approval of the Vatican, its members work to instill a Catholic influence on society (Catholic action, 2013). The Nicaraguan branch of *Accion Catolica,* founded in the early 1940s, considered as its principle aim the purification of religious practices. The group also acted as the arm of the Catholic Church in Central America in its holy war against communism (Gould, 2007).

Accion Catolica in Nicaragua systematically set out to radically reform traditional religious practices in indigenous communities. For example, in Metagalpa, the organization waged a campaign to remove sacred images from communal control. Ostensibly, *Accion Catolica* denied as sacrilegious the festivals held in homes to honor

saintly figures, but the indigenous peoples said the saints were removed for economic motives, asserting that the Catholic Church confiscated the statues to collect alms during religious festivals. The acts of aggression, exemplified by the confiscation of statues, represented physical and symbolic violence against the *Indigenes*, "for the festivals and the elaborate religious structures associated with the saints provided both solidarity within the communities and moments of joy in otherwise painful and precarious lives" (Gould, 2007, p. 210). Even though the *communidades* often continued to venerate the statues clandestinely, the theft of statues stood as a symbol of the theft of dignity and spirit for indigenous peoples. Hegemonic forces worked to weaken and deny any value the communities might contribute to religious practices, leaving no place for indigenous knowledge to enrich or enliven the worldview of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua. The worldview was to remain repressive and narrow, dominated by the Western perspective that refuted the dignity, knowledge, and intelligence of the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua.

Biological and Cultural Inferiority and Mestizaje

Only infrequently is it acknowledged that colonized people should be heard. For centuries the voice of the colonized was denied because the people were considered to be lacking in culture. In 1869, a series of essays by Arnold was published, and in this work titled *Culture and Anarchy,* Arnold stated that culture was a goal to strive for rather than an activity that people actually had. It was through education that a select few could achieve sweetness and light or the culture of perfection (Arnold, 1869). *Culture and Anarchy* was the founding document of English culture, and those lacking this culture of perfection were seen by Arnold as savages and barbarians (Young, 2000). What Arnold

promoted was a version of the racist culture of the 19th century. The elitist, racist culture that extolled the White English culture over that of the "primitives" was an example of eurocentrism, a concept and practice having a long and entrenched history in Latin America.

Racism in Nicaragua was clearly evident in the mid-20 century. Gould (2007) explained the ways in which Barahona described Nicaragua's indigenous people in the book *Realidades de la Vida Nicaraguense* (Realities of Nicaraguan Life), published in 1943. In this book of essays, the native peoples were described variously as imbecilic, half-naked, living on the margins of civilization, ciphers without value, and in need of being incorporated into the civilized nation of Nicaragua and the culture of the *Ladinos*. Barahona called for "indigenous redemption" (Gould, 2007, p. 197) and argued that the sole means by which the indigenous peoples could be redeemed would be through European immigration. Barahona believed that the *indigene's* racial inferiority would be improved and enriched by crossfertilization with the superior European gene. Barahona stated, the Europeans "enlarge and better our demography through the coupling that will be consumed between the autochthonous sexes and those of the vigorous race that will come to us" (as cited in Gould, 2007, p. 197). These words indicate the biological racism that was prevalent in Nicaragua during this time. Further, even though eugenics, a U.S. invention, was losing favor in the West, primarily due to Nazi advocacy of racial hierarchies, the racist mentality clearly remained in vogue in midcentury Nicaragua where certain leaders advocated and yearned for the betterment of the native peoples through biology.

As previously indicated, *mestizaje* was originally established in Nicaragua as a nation-building tactic. The aim of Nicaraguan *mestizaje* was to present itself to the world with a new Western face. *Mestizaje*, a social and political construct by the *Ladino* elites, was created to inform the world that Nicaragua was an ethnically homogenous society. Through shaming, symbolic or physical force, or political decree, the goal of hegemonic forces in Nicaragua was to control or erase all traces of indigenous identity.

I analyzed four areas whereby the indigenous people were discredited in a plan to establish homogeneity. These targeted areas were language, clothing, religious practices, and heredity. In each instance, dominant forces worked to malign and discredit the integrity and identity of indigenous communities in Nicaragua. Nonetheless, in the end, hegemonic forces were unable to subordinate indigenous communities to the extent originally intended. Seven distinct indigenous groups exist in Nicaragua with 546,500 people self-identifying as indigenous (*Indigenous People in Nicaragua*, 2011). Because many indigenous communities are located in areas inaccessible to census takers, the number of *indigenes* in Nicaragua may be considerably higher. Nonetheless, these numbers indicate that even though the *Ladino* population intended to delegitimize and deny authenticity to the *indigenes* of Nicaragua, for the most part, they have been unable to achieve that goal. Although native dress is no longer apparent in native communities, indigenous languages continue to thrive; this is especially true of the Miskitu communities located on the Atlantic Coast. Thus, Gould (2007) created the term "The Myth of *Mestizaje.*"

The Enlightenment

The civilizing mission, a process that eventually consisted of the global spread of European civilization in the name of progress (Ribeiro, 1968) had its roots in the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment philosophy, having occurred in Europe between the years 1685 and 1815, had an immense influence on knowledge production and on the spread of this knowledge around the world. European knowledge or Western knowledge would, in time, become the universal paradigm of knowledge (Quijano, 1992). Knowledge from the West or Occidentalism was a major concern of scholars (Mignolo, 2012). Occidentalism was a "powerful machine" with the Enlightenment being largely responsible for "the setting-up of a planetary epistemological standard" (Mignolo, 2012, p. 59).

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, refers to a revolutionary time in Europe that affected economic, political, and cultural life in Europe (L. T. Smith, 1999).

> The Enlightenment project involved new precepts of rationalism, individualism, and capitalism. There was a general belief that not only could individuals remake themselves but so could societies. The modern industrial state became the point of contrast between the pre-modern and the modern. History in this view began with the emergence of the rational individual and the modern industrialized society. (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 32)

The new rationalism, individualism, and political and cultural life heralded an end to the medieval European world-view and introduced the "modern world," a period that became known as "modernity." Western people believed that the ideals of the Enlightenment would serve to drastically improve human life through rational change (Bristow, 2010). The Age of Reason showed skepticism toward tradition and religion, and strongly denounced superstition and myth. This resulted in growing opposition to religion and

what came to be known as the inquiring mind (Hackett, 1992). The inquisitiveness and research associated with this period resulted in a massive accumulation of knowledge. This European knowledge and the manner in which the knowledge was imposed on many cultures throughout the world have been met with much criticism.

Response to the Enlightenment

European philosophers of the Enlightenment wrote and taught that people could achieve liberation though independent thinking, a refutation of Christian dogma, and a denial of myths. Further, mathematics gained in importance as scientists and philosophers became proponents of empirical methods to describe and interpret data. This was the era of Descartes and the primacy of the thinking self, with reason and rationality forming the bedrock of the Enlightenment. The influence of these principles was not restricted to the European continent. Because of colonization and the globalization associated with it, Enlightenment principles were imposed, if not embraced, in far-reaching corners of the globe. However, certain people and groups did not accept all that The Enlightenment represented. One thinker, Vico, noted as the first major figure of the counterenlightenment (Dodson, 2008) is the subject of the following section.

Giovanni Battista Vico

Vico was born in Naples, Italy, in 1668. An accomplished philosopher, writer, and scholar of rhetoric, it was not until the 19th and 20th centuries that Vico's greatness was recognized in the philosophical world (Costelloe, 2014). During Vico's lifetime, the influence of the Enlightenment was in full-bloom; Vico remarked that Naples was being overrun by Cartesian scientists (Bertland, 2003). Vico's greatest intellectual enemy was Descartes because Vico vehemently disagreed with Descartes's premise that humans

were everywhere, always, and equally rational. Vico's position was that rationality was a historical acquisition, not a constant component of human nature (White, 2008). Vico wrote and lectured about a wide range of themes that included history, school curriculum, religion, and language. Central to Vico's thinking was the role that humankind played in each of these topics. Vico's influence is evident in the work of a wide range of theorists and authors who studied Vico. Among them are Coleridge, Rousseau, Marx, Joyce, and Horkheimer (Bertland, 2003). In the following section, I show why Vico's philosophy was oppositional to that of the rationalists.

The Cartesians and Vico had widely varying visions regarding school curriculum. Vico proposed and also taught a school curriculum comprised of ethics, liberal arts, and the humanities, all subjects Vico believed would serve to help in the development of the imagination. The formation and encouragement of the imagination were crucial to Vico's vision of the well-developed and educated mind. Vico valued the study of ethics because ethics is ever-changing in different time periods and in different cultures; characteristics that did not appeal to rationalists due to the importance they placed on certainty (Bertland, 2003). A curriculum of the rationalists would include the teaching of the physical sciences, as advocated by Descartes and Newton. Vico, in contrast, stood in support of what is known today as the human sciences (Nickles, 2007). In the rationalist paradigm, the goal was to use one's reasoning to find the correct answer, the universal answer. By contrast, Vico did not agree that mathematical universals did not exist because a group of people, but not all people, made the rules of mathematics; thus, universal concepts were highly suspect. In a major work called *The New Science*, Vico stated that the reduction of all things to mathematical knowledge was a form of conceit,

developed from the concept that humans had made themselves the measure of all things (Costelloe, 2014). Even though Vico agreed that science and mathematics had a place in the school curriculum, the true source of knowledge and of truth would be found through the learning of the history of humankind.

The Verum Factum Principle and the Search for Truth

Vico is known for the creation of the *verum-factum* principle; a principle upon which much of the philosophy is based. The *verum-factum* principle states that truth is verifiable through creation or invention (Dodson, 2008). In other words, it was Vico's belief that humans are able to understand that which they themselves have made, not that which they have observed. Because humans created history, it was through the study of history that knowledge and truth could be attained (Nickles, 2007). The study of history could be extended to mean that through the study of one's ancient past, a person could better understand oneself. This position contrasted greatly with Descartes, who viewed the study of history as a useless pursuit.

Natural science was promoted in the rationalist paradigm, and rationalism was promoted as the means by which humans could move forward in the name of progress (White, 2008). Kant had a similar viewpoint, proclaiming that humankind should "Dare to know!" In fact, it was Kant's stance that human's knowledge production would be found in the ability to transcend the circumstances of history (Robbins, 2001). Rather than looking into the historical past, rationalists believed that true knowledge could be attained through the study of nature, and that all models of inquiry should be based on the physical sciences (White, 2008). Vico was highly critical of this position, basing criticism on the *verum factum* principle that one could only understand what one had created.

Because humans had not created nature, humans did not have the ability to understand it. According to Vico, God had created nature; therefore, it was God and God alone who had the ability to understand it.

Vico and the Search for Origins, an Overview

The search for the origin of humankind was one of Vico's most significant research projects, and it was through the study of history that Vico believed this could best be achieved. As previously discussed, Vico disagreed with the Enlightenment premise that there exists a singular or universal knowledge. Vico conducted research by studying cultural artifacts from different societies and from different periods of time. The utter variation of the cultural artifacts led Vico to conclude that the artifacts were created as a response to the changing needs of a community. Vico came to understand that each age has its own problems and its own particular response to those problems. Thus, with varying problems, needs, and capabilities, each age calls forth institutions and values necessary for people to address the world in the manner in which they conceive it (Vico, 1984). Cultural artifacts are, therefore, a response to the changing times and the changing needs of a society. It was through the study of cultural artifacts that Vico also came to understand that artifacts are the products of human consciousness.

This research of artifacts led Vico to further assert that each society has its own particular way of thinking. Vico was the first to understand that people had different schemas of thinking depending on where they lived in the world and in which particular historical era they lived. Thus, Vico was the first to chart a course of history that depended on the way the structure of thought changed over place and time (Bertland, 2003). As a result of this observation, Vico concluded that a society in one era should

never stand in judgment of an earlier society. To me, that Vico understood societies should respect and honor different ways of thinking was a revolutionary concept, particularly since Vico came to this realization nearly 3 centuries ago.

Vico and the Heroic Mind

Vico believed that all human beings are capable of achieving a high level of wisdom. Vico (1993) stated in Oration 1 that "from the earliest youth, men are seized with a certain marvelous and incredible desire for learning" (p. 36). In works and teachings, Vico told students they were born into wisdom. This was an astounding position to take in a Catholic society where children were said to be born into sin, not wisdom. Not only were the young wise, but, with application, Vico believed that all students had the potential to self-create the heroic mind. Vico delivered an oration titled "On the Heroic Mind" to students at the Royal Academy of Naples in 1732, asserting that the purpose of study is not for the gain of riches, high office, or even for the love of learning itself. Instead, Vico told students to use their wisdom to improve the human race. Vico told students to follow their own interests and to choose a course of study that would be of greatest interest to them because the development of self-knowledge would indicate what humans are capable of and what they can excel (Fiore, 1994). This quest for self-information is a humanistic approach to learning and knowledge.

In this same address, Vico told students that learning should continue following graduation, instructing them to push on and on in learning (Fiore, 1994). In so stating, Vico suggested life-long learning, a concept that has proponents and has won favor in the United States. The course of study promoted by Vico may be viewed as constructivist philosophy because, rather than being assigned a prescribed curriculum, following their

introductory education, students should be given freedom to decide on a discipline according to their interests. Vico told students that their innate ability would help them decide which discipline was best by the delight they would feel in learning it (Fiore, 1994). The constructivist position and the respect for the learner, as seen in the oration and in other of Vico's written works, place Vico in the company of Piaget and Dewey, two great humanists and educational theorists that Vico's philosophy predated by centuries.

Humanism in the Philosophy of Vico

Vico's address to university students in Naples evidenced a great confidence not only in students, but in all of humankind. The philosopher viewed the human race as naturally intelligent and full of the feeling of civic duty. This human-centered philosophy, emphasizing the value of human beings individually and collectively, is called humanism. Although the term humanism and human sciences were not created until the 19th century, it was Vico's original claim that there were two sciences, one with methods that apply to nature and the other with methods that apply to humans (R. Smith, 2007).

As has been indicated earlier in this research, Vico's methodology consisted of looking at history as both the source of knowledge and as a method to help understand the origins of humankind. In other words, Vico contended that history was invaluable in its ability to assist in understanding human nature and the cyclical development of human knowledge through the ages. These ideas were considered quite radical, not only during Vico's lifetime, but during the centuries that followed as well. For example, Hume contended that human nature is a constant, meaning that it remains the same in all nations and in all ages. Therefore, according to Hume, history informs us of nothing new. It was

Vico's contrary position that human beings and their knowledge production, found continually in a state of flux, are constantly undergoing an evolutionary process (R. Smith, 2007). I discuss topics in the history of language and the role of language in the following section.

The Role of Language and Self-Identity in the Search for Human Origins

Vico thought the focus of science should be the human world and not the natural world. In *The New Science,* Vico posited that God alone knows the natural world because it was God who created it (Bertland, 2003). Because humans can only have knowledge of that which they have made (*verum factum)* and because humans created history and not nature, it is impossible for humans to understand nature. Thus, to find the truth of human origins, Vico chose to look toward the mythology of the ancients, not only as samples of human's earliest written and language production, but as a source of human's earliest production of truth as well. The following quotation from *The New Science* describes what may be gained from Vico's study of early antiquity. Vico stated:

> In the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never-failing light of a truth beyond all question that the world of our civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications our own human mind. (1984, p. 96)

Several major Vichian themes appear in this short passage. First is that to understand the origins of humankind, it is necessary to search in the era of the "thick darkness" of antiquity because it is there that earliest truth may to be found. Second, Vico posited that the works of antiquity may be trusted because they have been produced by humans, and, because they were made by humans, they must be true. Finally, in this paragraph, Vico wanted to show that humans link to the past because traces of the ancient past are to be found in our own human minds. Vico's search was unlike that of an archeological dig

where the goal was to find remnants of artifacts, such as tools or pieces of art. For Vico, the greatest treasure would not be found in objects, but in humans and, in particular, the languages spoken by them.

Vico strongly believed that history is understood through language. In contrast to Western tradition, language, laws, and other elements of human society are not absolutist, but rather are products of human action and history (Nickles, 2007) and as such, are forever changing. *The New Science* was a search for origins; a search for traces that reached back through the history of language. The history of language also tells the story of the history of human relations, which includes institutions and civil customs by which nations have come into being and have maintained themselves in the world (Robbins, 2001). In the next section I show how Vico understood the connection between self-identity and the formation of communities.

Vico contended that the creation of a positive self-identity and self-understanding would result in the desire for people to band together to create cohesive and supportive communities. According to Vico's philosophy, self-knowledge or learning about one's self-identity is at the center of all liberal arts and liberal learning (Woods, 2011). Vico believed that this self-identity could be achieved when humankind is able to see relations with others through language. According to Vico, humans are ever-changing, but humanity is always connected through the traces that carried from human predecessors. Therefore, in the search for origins, it was Vico's determination that people are connected with one another through history and through language. Although Vico sought connections between societal group members living communally, Cartesian thinkers saw

humans as individualistic and distinct from one another, acting independently. In the next section, I show how Vico used the tool of etymology in the search for language origins.

The Use of Philology and Etymology in Vico's Search for Origins

Vico premised that studying modifications of the human mind would lead to eventually understanding how the first human thinking arose. Vico employed the disciplines of philology and etymology to achieve this goal. Danesi (1993) explained that "philology is the discipline that studies human records … in order to determine their meaning [and is] generally associated with literary scholarship and with comparative and historical linguistics" (p. 63). Etymology is defined as "the science that studies how a word originated, by breaking it down into its basic elements, tracing those elements back to their earliest known forms, and indicating their changes in form and reason" (Burke, 1985, p. 84). Studying word origins and historical records was compatible with Vico's primary goal of demonstrating the great value of ancient wisdom. Language forms and language derivatives also helped reveal the nature of human law and customs. That languages have gone through a seemingly endless process of transformation signals that humans are constantly at work in creating their environment and their society, as well as in their everyday means of communication.

The employment of philology and etymology in Vico's research of mythology and metaphor enabled Vico to create a "path to understanding the genesis of mind, language and culture" (Danesi, 1993, p. 63). Vico wanted to research the origins of cultural norms by way of the original meaning of the words and symbols used to institutionalize them. The search for the origin of a particular culture was based on the premise that the first thoughts of the culture could be "reconstructed from the concrete

meanings of the words, symbols, and myths used to construct them" (p. 64). For Vico, words, symbols, and myths revealed how early humans made sense of the world and how the narrative structure of mythology "betrayed the actual metaphorical structure of their minds" (Danesi, 1993, p. 64). As a result of research in mythology, Vico concluded that human beings are endlessly governed by cyclical stages.

Principal among Vico's theories was that human beings pass through an endless, rhythmic cycle consisting of three stages, each of which exhibits its own means of communication. These eras or states were called the age of gods, heroes, and men (Rosenberg, 1996). The age of the gods was the most primitive, where the language was hieroglyphic and sacred. During this stage, the language was mute, and early humans communicated through simple signs (Fahey, n.d.). Language with words was created during the second stage, or during the age of heroes. It was during this stage that people began to band together and create communities that Vico labeled "nations." At this point in the cycle, people expressed verbal language through comparisons, images, and metaphors. Here, language was symbolic and found its beginnings in poetry (Robbins, 2001). In this stage the mind works in an imagined, poetic, non-Cartesian fashion and constructs its environment and itself. It is in this stage that the imagination has a primordial role (Rosenberg, 1996). Vico posited that humankind is presently in the third stage, the era of men or the Age of Humans, with people speaking the conventional languages known today. The purpose of the following section is to present the ways Vico understood and depicted humankind in greater detail. This discussion also includes some examples of how Vico's work has influenced education in the 21st century.

Vico's New Science of Humankind and its Influence on Educational Practices

In "Poetic Wisdom," the second book of *The New Science,* Vico discussed institutions—a theme important to him—stating that "the highest institutions in the world are those turned to and conversant with God" (Vico, 1984, para 364). The highest institutions here are the churches. But Vico also stated that the *best* institutions were those created by humans. Vico honors the institution of the Catholic Church by relegating it to first place. However, Vico also suggested that the "best" institutions, be they schools, government organizations, or others are human institutions that honor, respect, and recognize "the good," the inherent good, in humanity. Vico's was an original and radical position that stood in opposition to Cartesian enthusiasts who bestowed their honor on natural science and mathematics. In addition, Vico may have irritated the Church and the clerics by not calling the Church the best institution. Whatever the case, this was a dangerous position for Vico to espouse.

In writings and orations, Vico held human beings in high esteem. Vico chose humankind as the subject of science, and in *The New Science,* Vico depicted people as having higher value than natural science. As explained earlier, Vico stated that babies were born intelligent and that the role of education was to nurture and lead the child in the development of this innate intelligence. Di Pietro (1994), in agreeing with the inborn intelligence of the child, stated that "the basis of learning is found in the student and moves outward" (p. 95). Vico believed students, after having received a basic education, should be given the opportunity to choose their own course of study. Vico even encouraged students to follow the curriculum that would make them happy. Therefore, recognizing the intelligence and the capabilities of students, Vico believed students

should be given the right to choose a major or course of study, should be allowed to take control of their education and, should, as a result, experience true happiness in learning.

Evidence of Vichian Philosophy in Modern or Progressive Schools

Progressive teachers and policymakers in the 20th and 21st centuries have, probably unknowingly, adopted many of Vico's ideas regarding education. For example, Freire (2010) is often quoted for a teaching methodology that rejected classroom learning in which children's brains are viewed as receptacles best filled by the words of teachers. No evidence shows that Freire was aware of Vico's work; it is, thus, to the credit of Freire and to Vico in their recognition of a child's innate intelligence and capabilities. In progressive classrooms today, such as in Montessori or Holistic schools, the Vichian influence is evident when the role of the teacher is viewed as a guide and a consultant, with students directing their own learning. Due to the search for the origins of mankind, Vico concluded that from human's earliest moments on Earth, people had been continually evolving and changing. In this same way, students are to be understood and appreciated as always continually changing and in a never-ending process of becoming. With the understanding that children are born with intelligence and that they are continually evolving, progressive schools understand the importance of structuring a curriculum that provides children with abundant opportunities for experiential learning. These experiences help children construct their own learning experiences; experiences progressive educators believe are the most significant and satisfying to the child. These child-centered experiences, which may be called "poetic," are the kinds of activities that encourage the creativity necessary to reshape the world (Guardiani, 1995).

The Role of Language and Imagination in Education

Vico's ideas about early childhood education were prescient. Vico was, perhaps, the first to understand the importance of the development of imagination in the young child. Vico averred imagination was best developed through language instruction and therefore languages should be studied in childhood. "Through instruction in language, children develop their imagination and are led to become clear thinkers in adulthood" (Di Pietro, 1994, p. 87). The sensitivity and importance of language as a means of communication and of transmission of knowledge is a common theme in all of Vico's work. Because of and through language, one can arrive at full knowledge of the human world or human science (Maiullari, 1995). Vico had such high regard for language and culture because they express the historically formed, unique life of people (R. Smith, 2007). Vico called those who developed the greatest imagination "poets" or the "creators" (para 376), and it is the poets who created language.

Remarkably, an abundance of Vichian philosophy is found in "modern" education. As has been shown repeatedly in this research, humankind was Vico's main topic of interest, trying to understand the history of the human species. Through Vico's methodology of historical research, as well as experiences in academia, Vico came to appreciate the beauty and value of human beings. I now present some finding that may be incorporated into teacher-education programs and classroom practices.

The most basic and important premise in a Vichian classroom is that children are born intelligent and, for that reason alone the teacher must honor, respect, and value them. In this regard, because all children are born intelligent and capable of learning, educators should design programs such that all children are capable of succeeding in a

school program. Just as Vico saw the development of humankind throughout the ages, educators should understand and appreciate that children are continually developing. With the understanding that children develop at different rates, programs of instruction must match the developmental stage of the child. Therefore, if a child does not understand a concept, the teacher must reexamine the curriculum and the method of delivery of the curriculum. Children, although continually evolving, evolve at different times and in different ways. Teachers should give children new and varied opportunities to learn the material until students achieve success. The goal is not simply to teach; the goal is for children to learn. When educators truly believe that children are capable, intelligent, and willing to learn, they must steer away from failing a child or labeling a child learning disabled. Education should not include the labeling of children (Apple, 2004). Likewise, grade retentions become a rarity when the teacher is held responsible for the curriculum, the mode of delivery, and the language of delivery of that curriculum.

Language Shift and Language Revitalization

This section is composed of two parts. The first consists of a discussion of language shift and the various factors that are responsible for its creation; the second section pertains to steps educators may take to develop this shift. Depending on the gravity of the shift, I suggest actions that may apply to language maintenance and others that address language revitalization. Linguists, as well as many community members, are fiercely concerned with language shift because of its potential to lead to eventual language loss. Language loss is important because, along with the loss of a language is the disappearance of a culture and the stripping away of cultural identity. The ultimate purpose of this type of language study is to determine if and how a language shift may be

occurring in the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila. One research question was designed to learn participants' understanding of the role of the Miskitu language in their lives and in the lives of their community. As an introduction, the discussion begins with the importance of language diversification.

The Importance of Language Diversification

Of approximately 6,000 languages in the world today, children no longer produce 50% of them. Thus, half of the languages could disappear within the next 100 years unless conservation measures are put into place to preserve them (Krauss, 1995). Why do some people work for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity? According to Crystal (2000), there are five arguments why retaining language diversity is essential. Cultural diversity and biological diversity are conjoined (Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). For example, when forests are decimated, so are the languages of the people who speak the minority language. Further, uniformity can endanger a species by reason of its inflexibility and inadaptability (Crystal, 2000). Mutual exchange becomes lessened when languages and cultures die and human intellectual achievement is diminished. The second point regarding the importance of language and language diversity is its role in personal identity.

Language is a symbol and a marker of personal identity (Crystal, 2000). Identity is shared characteristics of members of a community and these shared characteristics provide the security and status of shared existence. Identity may be expressed with dress, religious beliefs, and rituals, but it is language that is almost always present in identity formation (Crystal, 2000). Speakers indicate aspects of their identity simply by the way they talk (Holmes, 2008). The third argument supporting the importance of

diversification in languages is that languages are repositories of history and should, therefore, be preserved.

Vico may have been the first to extol the importance of language and the connection between language and history. In the 18th century, Vico spoke of the value of language in understanding the history of humankind. Vico stated that language provides a link to the past and a means to access an archive of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs of past generations and even past civilizations. “Every language is a living museum, a monument to every culture it has been vehicle to” (Nettle & Romaine, 2000, p. 14). In discussing the possible death of 2,000 African languages, Batibo (2005) offered an example of medicine. With the demise of languages, centuries of knowledge of powers of natural medicines would be lost (Batibo, 2005). The fourth reason to preserve diversification in language is because language is the sum all human knowledge.

This argument for language preservation concerns language’s role as a vision of not only the past (Argument 3) but also as a vision of the present and the future. In each language is information regarding community knowledge, rules about social relationships, and ideas about the arts, life, death, and language itself (Crystal, 2000). Different languages contain different values and ways of expressing the purpose of life. Each language contains a particular world view, and if there are about 6,000 living languages, then there are 6,000 ways of describing the world. The final reason to support a wide diversification of languages has to do with languages themselves. Each language reveals different sounds, grammar, and vocabulary that teach something different about linguistic organization and structure (Crystal, 2000). The sheer beauty of language can

best be appreciated by providing for the survival of the greatest number of languages in this world.

Contributing Factors to Language Shift

Respect for language diversity alone cannot salvage a language or even provide language maintenance. In the following section, I present factors that contribute to a threat to a language's existence. I begin with a discussion of bilingualism and diglossia, because, even though bilingualism is often considered laudable and an ideal to be reached, it is often a major contributor to language shift.

Bilingualism and Diglossia

The discussion of language shift will begin with a brief description of bilingualism and diglossia. This is important because "Bilingualism is always a necessary precursor of language shift, although, as stable diglossic communities demonstrate, it does not always result in shift" (Holmes, 2008, p. 60). "Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (Grosjean, 2010, p. 4). Unlike other linguists who may stress equal or near fluency in two languages, Grosjean (2010) emphasized regular *use* of two languages rather than fluency in those languages. Also, bilinguals usually find it easier to discuss particular topics in one language than another. A bilingual as "an integrated whole," a "complete linguistic entity" (Cook, 2002, as cited in Baker, 2011, p. 12), and someone who uses two or more languages in different contexts and for different purposes. Importantly, bilingualism often leads to language shift or even language loss. Speakers of threatened languages are mostly bilingual, almost always speaking the majority language as well as their own (Fishman, 2001).

Whereas bilingualism refers to individual speakers, diglossia is a characteristic of groups of people. Individuals may be bilingual, whereby societies or communities may be diglossic. "The term diglossia describes societal or institutionalized bilingualism, where two varieties [two different languages] are required to cover all the community's domains" (Holmes, 2008, p. 30). Diglossia is, therefore, a characteristic of speech communities, whereas bilingualism refers to a trait of an individual. Simply stated, a society or a language community may be diglossic or triglossic, whereas an individual may be bilingual. In some communities, the majority of group members regularly speak more than two languages. Polyglossia describes situations in which more than two distinct codes or languages are used for distinct purposes and in distinct situations (Holmes, 2008).

Language and Language Loss in the Sociological Context

Language is expressed through various contexts, sometimes referenced as domains. Contexts or domains are conceptualized "as all of the interactions that are unambiguously related … to one or another of the major institutions of society: e.g. the family, the work sphere, education, religion, entertainment and the mass media, the political party, the government, etc." (Fishman, 1997, p. 44). Across these various domains, the incidence of minority or majority language may vary considerably (Fishman, 1997). For the purpose of this discussion, I review four factors that contribute to language shift: social factors, economic factors, demographics, and attitudes and values.

Social Factors

Three of the domains included in social factors contributing to language shift are family, community life, and education. If a language shift is to occur, it will most likely happen over three generations and will usually begin with children, the first ones in the family to undergo language shift. This shift manifests when schools employ the majority language as the language of instruction in delivery of the school curriculum. Certain families may believe that employment and educational advantages accrue from speaking a majority language to their children and not the minority language.

> A lack of family language reproduction is a principal and direct cause of language shift. In this scenario, a minority language can die within two to three generations unless bilingual education can produce language speakers who then find every day purposes (e.g. economic, social, religious) for that language. (Baker, 2011, pp. 49–50)

Other families may make the choice to use their heritage language in the home, thereby retarding language shift. Intergenerational transmission of a language is one mechanism, albeit short term, to help a language community survive (Strubell I Trueta, 1998). When parents have lost the ability to speak their heritage language, it is impossible for them to transmit their native language to their children. Two very successful experiments taught very young children heritage languages when their parents no longer spoke the heritage language. Linguistic and cultural revival was first achieved in New Zealand with Maori families and then instituted in Oaxaca, Mexico, through the creation of what is now known as “language nests” (Chomsky, 2010, p. 111). In language nests, preschool children are invited to live with their grandparents or other elders who speak the native language fluently. The young children, preferably before they learn to talk, “gather with the ‘guides’ to spend time and participate together in everyday activities of the

community, hearing from the guides only the language to be revitalized" (Chomsky, 2010, p. 112).

Economic Factors

Among bilingual people, two main factors decide language choice: language use in community loyalty and the perception of language usefulness (Fishman, 2001). The perceived usefulness of a language for social advancement is critical (Colomer, 1996). Baker (2011) spoke of the relation between perceived social value and economic value:

> When a majority language is seen as giving higher social status and more political power, a shift toward the majority language may occur. Where a minority language is seen to co-exist with unemployment, financial poverty, social deprivation and few amenities, the social status of the language may be negatively affected. (p. 55)

Realization is growing that bilingualism is important in increasingly competitive international trade as well. "Given notions such as globalization, common markets, open access to trade, the free market economy, and the importance of international trade to developing nations, then facility with languages is seen as opening doors to economic activity" (Baker, 2011, p. 118). Thus, the linguistic capital of bilinguals offers strong economic advantages.

Bilinguals have marketable language skills and intercultural knowledge. Employees having foreign language skills of are often rewarded by employers, showing that employers find these skills valuable (Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2010). With an increasingly bilingual world and with new international markets growing, competence in languages is increasingly important (Edwards, 2004). Bilinguals will need to adopt a different concept of their identity (Heller, 1999). "The old politics of identity concern maintaining a heritage language and culture, conserving and protecting traditions, and perpetuating a minority cultural identity" (Baker, 2011, p. 420). A new identity for

language minorities is beneficial to work in an expansive global economy (Heller, as cited in Baker, 2011). Heller's new pragmatic identity for language minorities allows them to take advantage of their multiple linguistic and cultural resources to participate in the global economy. The nature of the new world economy is an ability to cross boundaries; it is not multilingualism that is valued in the new economy, but parallel monolingualism (Heller, 2002). Clearly, for this to occur, bilinguals would need to have well-developed linguistic resources. "Minorities are now in a good position to market their linguistic capital" (Heller, 1999, p. 29). To reach that point, minority speakers must move away from the politics of ethnicity and tradition and move toward a politics founded on capital, globalization, and a new international political and economic order (Heller, 1999).

The social and economic goals of community members are important in accounting for the speed of language shift (Holmes, 2008). Young people in the language community are usually the first to experience language shift. Language shift may be led by women or by men, depending on where new jobs lie. Greater job opportunities are most often available in the majority language, and this reason, among others, accounts for the rapid language shift among the young (Fishman, 1997). Thus, the economic viability of languages plays a powerful role in language shift.

Demographics

The fourth factor that contributes to the speed of language shift is demographics. Resistance to language shift lasts longer in rural areas than in cities (Holmes, 2008). Rural communities tend to be isolated from the majority political power and are thus able to meet most of their social needs in the minority language. The size of the community

group is also a critical factor in how fast language shift occurs. “To maintain a language you must have people who can use it on a regular basis” (Holmes, 2008, p. 61). Isolated minority-language speakers will usually find it quite hard to maintain their native language.

Language shift can also be accelerated by intermarriage. This occurs because one language tends to predominate in the home (Holmes, 2008). Intermarriage and language production influence the children of these marriages (Fishman, 2001).

> Whether the offspring of these marriages are bilingual in both parents’ languages, or have only one of the two as their home language, will certainly have a large impact on the future of the subordinate language whenever such families are numerous. (p. 262)

In some patriarchal groups where the father’s support for speaking the minority language in the home predominates, but where intermarriage exists, the children tend to speak the language of the mother, because mothers are the primary caregivers. Pressures to increase language shift take place predominantly in countries where monolingualism is regarded as normal, and bilingualism is considered unusual or even strange (Holmes, 2008).

Language shift is also affected by emigration. Emigration may be necessary to secure employment, higher wages, or a promotion (Baker, 2011). When workers return to the original community, they may return with new languages which, if employed in the community, could hasten language shift. Intermarriage, a topic previously discussed, is another form of immigration, and may accelerate language shift as well. “With the growth of mass communications, information technology, tourism, road, sea, and air links, minority languages seem more at risk” (Baker, 2011, p. 73). Emigration and immigration closely align with globalization. Globalization is a constructive and destructive phenomenon in its effect on language minority maintenance (Fishman, 2001).

Globalization may be understood as unifying and divisive, exhibiting an outcome that is not culturally neutral or impartial. “Globalization of pan-Western culture and pop consumer culture in particular … is the motor of language shift” (Fishman, 2001, p. 6).

Attitudes and Values

Language shift is likely to be slower in communities where the minority language is highly valued and where the language is seen as a symbol of ethnic identity. Language is often viewed as a badge of loyalty and is the preeminent badge that signals belonging to a group. It also becomes important in sustaining language-group cohesion (Baker, 2011). Positive attitudes sustain efforts to use the minority language in a variety of contexts, which helps language communities resist pressure from the majority group to switch to their language. Taking pride in ethnic identity and in native language is an important contributing factor to language maintenance (Holmes, 2008). “Positive attitudinal stake in a language is a dominant factor in its maintenance both at the individual and societal level” (Fishman, 2001, p. 288). If language communities are able to maintain their languages and avoid language shift through pride in their ethnicity and language, why have many minority language speakers experienced diminished ethnic pride?

One reason for diminishing ethnic pride is related to the history of colonialism. European colonizers imposed their cultures and languages on the colonized. European languages were considered the “big languages” (Fishman, 2001, p. 287), the favored and the overwhelming powerful languages. The minority or indigenous peoples were overridden with their little languages and eventually experienced reduced emotional allegiance to their mother tongue.

> Low emotional, intellectual, and functional investment in one's own language is frequently a dominant cause for shifting to another language. A quick examination of the bottom-line language attitude determinants … are [the] socio-historical forces relating to the African colonial heritage and the consequent association of colonial languages with power; … the irresistible quest and pressure for social mobility in the individual, often associated with big languages and European languages; the functional dynamics inherent in languages, demonstrated by the fact that the prestige, respect and the value judgments made concerning a language tend to grow when a language is assigned significant functions and given official recognition; individual and societal pressures to survive, which often impinge on, and dictate attitudes towards particular languages. (Fishman, 2001, p. 287)

Where one group claims political power and imposes its language and institutions, minority groups are likely to feel pressured to adopt the language of the dominant group (Holmes, 2008).

Reversing Language Shift

This section includes methods, most often small, that may be employed to reverse language shift. Even though there will always be those people who scoff at the idea of revitalizing a language, Fishman (1997) contended that

> there is no language for which nothing at all can be done, and, therefore, the crux of any [reversing language shift] is to decide what best can be done for [the threatened language] in a particular context and in a particular time-frame, and then go on from there. (p. 12)

Nationwide language policies are not the most productive. Rather, the goal should be to work on smaller projects that tend to be more successful (Fishman 1997). These may include goals oriented toward smaller units such as families or communities, or to schools rather than businesses, or to kindergarten rather than high school. "A few well-chosen smaller victories earlier on will do much more for the eventual larger-scale and longer-term success of pro-[reversing language shift] efforts than will lack of success *vis-à-vis* more grandiose but impossible goals" (Fishman, 1997, p. 13). In the section that follows, I discuss the role of schooling in reversing language shift.

Schools and Schooling

Schools have long been thought to be the best vehicle for the successful transmission of knowledge. For the most part, Fishman (1997) disagreed with this premise and carefully explained why. Subjects taught in school such as mathematics, history, and science have poor retention rate years after leaving the school system. Also, school subjects are rarely transmitted intergenerationally. Thus, because the goal of reversing language shift is long-term retention and the ability to transmit a language to future generations, school would not be the best place in which to begin teaching a minority language.

> The assumption that "proper schooling" can really help a threatened ethnolinguistic entity to break out of this vicious cycle (the cycle of running harder and harder in order to finally end up, at best, in the same, or nearly in the same place, generation after generation) is quite widespread, particularly among educators and other language-conscious segments of the lay public, and even among many sociolinguists too, although the latter should really know better. This assumption [is] that "the school can do it." (Fishman, 1997, p. 369)

Fishman strongly believed that traditional schooling was incapable of promoting and achieving intergenerational transmission of languages. Thus, Fishman looked to out-of-school activities, another type of educational process, as a solution.

Fishman thought that preschool, out-of-school, and post school domains were the most efficacious for learning languages and that schools had a limited capacity for teaching languages because, "Languages are not 'subjects' *per se* and they cannot be successfully acquired unless they are used for the purpose of meaningful communication" (2001, p. 470). If languages remain "functionally locked away in the schools" (Fishman, 2001, p. 471) they will be denied their true purpose, which is communication. A failure to understand this reality underlies the failure of solely school-based language study. However, teaching languages in schools is not meaningless (Fishman, 1997). Schools

may help students reach certain language-learning goals, but even then, this in-school language learning as "initiatory" and "contributory" (Fishman, 1997, p. 372). "Schools are often important in initiating second language acquisition and some very few atypical students attain a modest fluency in that respect, even without direct societal support" (Fishman, 1997, p. 272). Schools are beneficial in language instruction by stressing the historical, cultural, and moral rationales for learning languages. Nonetheless, language acquisition requires extensive and repetitive preschool, out-of-school, and post school societal reinforcement (Fishman, 1997).

Preschool, Out-of-school, and Post school Language-Learning Opportunities

If initial efforts of language instruction in school are to be cumulative and intergenerationally transferable, they will require extensive out-of-school reinforcements in preschool, out-of-school, and post school societal reinforcement (Fishman, 1997). One preschool program designed to teach very young children their heritage language is worthy of note and described in some detail in the following section. The natural and widely popular program is called *kohanga reos* or "language nests," and has been operational among the Maori people of New Zealand since 1982 (*History of the Māori Language*, 2015).

Language nests were created in New Zealand as an attempt to stem the language shift that had occurred due to British colonization early in the 19th century. By the 1980s, many adults could no longer speak the indigenous Maori language and, as a result, were unable to transfer knowledge of their heritage language to their children. In 1982, four *kohanga reos* were established, and, by 1988, there were about 520 *kohanga reos* with a

total enrollment of approximately 8,000 children (Fishman, 1997). A description of the *kohanga reos* follows.

Kohanga reos, or language nests, are childcare programs for preschool-age children that is not part of the regular school system (Fishman, 1997). Using the immersion method, all daily activities are conducted by fluent Maori speakers. The grandparents of the children play a large role in this childcare program because they, more often than their children, are fluent Maori speakers. In the past, teachers have ranged in age from 16 to 96, the only prerequisite being that they speak Maori and use only the Maori language during the preschool day. All teachers, referenced as *Kaiawhi* (embracers), provide 4 to 8 hours of childcare to children who have no speaking knowledge of Maori. Significantly, the program is taught at a time in children's language development when English-speaking society and culture have not yet strongly impacted their lives. The program is remarkable for several reasons.

> Not only are elders recognized as rich resources of language-in-culture knowledge … not only is an adult–child ratio maintained which is often better … than that required by New Zealand childcare regulations, not only is the problem of language maintenance attacked at its core (i.e. at the intergenerational transmission nexus), but the Maoris themselves have accepted the responsibility of transmitting the language, rather than waiting for the government to do "something" on its behalf, and have hit upon a way of doing so that is linked to a distinct vision of being "Maori-via-Maori." (Fishman, 1997, p. 238)

Out-of-school instructional domains are highly recommended for teenagers and young adults as well.

Language maintenance or reversing-language-shift opportunities should also be offered to post-high school teenagers and young adults. When language becomes threatened, when speakers fall in number, or when their opportunities for daily usage abate, it is advisable to institute language planning. Language planning refers to

"deliberate efforts to influence the behaviors of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes" (Cooper, 1989, p. 45), but language planning is, above all, about encouraging parents to raise their children bilingually (Baker, 2011). The three elements of language planning are (a) status planning, raising the status of a language across as many institutions by spreading the language into more high-status domains; (b) corpus planning, standardizing or modernizing grammar and spelling; and (c) acquisition planning, creating situations to increase the number of speakers and uses for the language (Cooper, 1989).

Language planning should be used to empower local communities, enabling everyday language life to be enacted through a minority language, and all language efforts must include minority-language speakers in all language planning.

> Language planning has to relate to everyday language life as enacted in homes, streets, schools, community, workplaces, and leisure activities. … Such planning also involves targeting key local cultural, leisure, social and community institutions where minority languages speakers will use their language, and form relationships and networks using that language. (Baker, 2011, p. 53).

It is crucial to provide young people opportunities to use their minority language as they are the next generation of parents. Adults of childbearing age must be taught the language so they can transmit that language as a mother tongue to their children, who, in turn, will bring it with them to school as a first language (Fishman, 2001). The fate of the minority language is, in fact, dependent on them (Baker, 2011). The following section contains examples of out-of-school activities for adolescents and young adults and explains their value.

Schools cannot be held responsible for helping to maintain or revive a minority language (Fishman, 2001). Unless it is a heritage school, a minority language is taught in school as a second language and for a limited number of minutes per week. Because

language as a school subject is recognized as having only minimal effectiveness, teenagers and young adults must be offered post- and out-of-school learning opportunities in the threatened language, perhaps in clubs, sports teams, study groups, or hobby groups. Without these types of opportunities, young people may have very limited use of their minority language, especially if it is not the main language spoken in their home. Offering community activities, along with pre-school taught in the minority language is called "linkages" (Fishman, 2001, p. 15). Preschool and community activities conducted in the minority language offer linkages until young people are ready to begin their own families. Without linkages or continuing opportunities to actually use the minority language, young people may forget their native language and become incapable of teaching it to their children. Linkages, offering vital intergenerational transmission of languages, hold the potential for the threatened language to become the first language of a generation. "It is infinitely easier to socialize children into an environmentally utilized language … than into one that remains unutilized outside of easily compartmentalized school experiences" (Fishman, 2001, p. 15). One type of school experience has been successful in reinforcing or even reviving minority languages.

In-School Learning of Minority Languages

Even though preschool and out-of-school activities have proven to be successful in helping promote intergenerational transmission of language, instances of highly effective in-schools programs also teach languages. One example is called heritage-language education. The term *heritage language* is used for indigenous peoples as a language minority, but can also be used to include colonial languages, such as German in Pennsylvania (Baker & Jones, 1998) or the Afro-American vernacular (Baugh, 1999).

Heritage-language education, a term used internationally for this type of education, is known in the United States as maintenance bilingual education or developmental maintenance bilingual education. “The term ‘heritage language’ may also be called ‘native language’, ‘ethnic language’, ‘minority language’, ‘ancestral language’, ‘aboriginal language’ or, in French ‘*langue d’origine’”* (Baker, 2011, p. 235). Basic characteristics of heritage-language programs follow:

Heritage-language programs vary in structure and content, but some traits are common to them all:

1. Most students in heritage-language programs come from minority-language homes
2. Parents are usually given the choice of sending their children to mainstream or to heritage schools or heritage programs.
3. Students’ native language will often be used for half or more of curriculum time.
4. When the minority language is used for 80% to 100% of classroom time, children will be able to transfer ideas, skills, and knowledge into the language.
5. The defense for heritage-language programs is that “a minority language is easily lost, while a majority language is easily gained. Children tend to be surrounded by the majority language. Television … shops … videos often provide or induce bilingual proficiency” (Baker, 2011, pp. 235–236). In the later elementary school years, increasing time may be given to majority-language development.
6. Heritage-language schools are usually elementary schools.

7. Although dual-language bilingual schools strive to achieve a balance of majority and minority students, heritage-language schools have a great majority of language-minority children.

Heritage-language education may be most successful in in-school programs to help maintain minority languages and to help reverse language shift. Heritage-language education or maintenance bilingual education, a name used in the United States, is a viable program and one worthy of consideration in any region that desires to seriously undertake reviving or maintaining indigenous languages or other minority languages.

This section of the literature review was written to help me better understand the ways language shift may occur in language-minority communities. The inquiry began with a discussion of language diversity and developed into an examination of the factors that contribute to language loss. The final section of the inquiry focused on the means by which reversing language shift could take place. This information helped determine if language shift was occurring in Raitipura and Kahkabila, and, if it had, to learn about activities and programs that could be initiated to reverse that shift.

Summary of the Literature Review

The themes and theories presented in the literature review include colonialism and racism, *mestizaje*, counterenlightenment theory and Vico, cultural capital, and language shift and language loss. I chose these themes because I anticipated they would play an important role in the education of indigenous children living on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua today. Ultimately, during the conversations with the Miskitu participants, additional themes came to the fore. In Chapter 5, I discuss these new themes, those uncovered during conversations with the participants, along with the anticipated themes.

The themes of colonialism and racism included the ideas of Fanon (2004, 2008), Said (1979, 1994, 1995), and Conrad's (1933) exposure of the horrors of colonialism in *Heart of Darkness*. The discussion of colonialism also included a segment that showed how colonialism, capitalism, modernity, and global expansion worked symbiotically in the creation of lives of submission for the colonized. I discussed the hierarchal development of culture as well. Subthemes included social control through denial of culture and the civilizing missions, among others.

The theme of *mestizaje* demonstrated in detail why and how the denial of culture was established in Nicaragua. Subthemes included language suppression, the limitations imposed on indigenous peoples in expressing their version of Christianity, and the loss of native dress. *Mestizaje* was a cultural construction, a myth, devised to show the world that the Nicaraguan people lived harmoniously, due to the blending of cultures.

The next theme was that of the counter enlightenment, demonstrated through an examination of the philosophy and work of Vico. Vico placed human beings before science, quite a revolutionary act during the period that saw the rise and glorification of science. Vico showed how human thinking has changed through the ages and how language and learning have gone through developmental stages. Finally, I showed how many of Vico's ideas about the education of children may be found in progressive classrooms today.

I devoted the final section of the literature review to a discussion of language shift and language revitalization including characteristics of bilingualism and diglossia, and how bilingualism and diglossia often lead to language shift and language loss. I also described five major factors that contribute to language loss: bilingualism and diglossia;

social factors consisting of family, community life and education; economic factors; demographic factors; and attitude and values regarding a language. The section ended with suggested steps that educators and communities may take to reverse language shift.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to learn why members of two Miskitu communities in Nicaragua had dropped out of school. This goal was achieved by conversing with six participants from the communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila, Nicaragua. The school experiences documented in this study may be of value to those individuals and agencies concerned with education reform for indigenous communities in Nicaragua.

Research Design

I employed qualitative methodology to conduct semistructured research interviews with six participants. Qualitative research is an approach used "for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Semistructured questions are desirable because this process of research welcomes and honors a focus on individual meaning and the questions that may emerge in the inquiry process. I collected data in participants' setting with data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes. I interpreted the meaning of the data, and, with the approval of the participants, completed a report (Creswell, 2014). The report comprises the themes that emerged about parental perceptions of public school practices affecting Miskitu children in Raitipura and Kahkabila, Nicaragua.

Additionally, this inquiry is philosophically grounded in participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a qualitative method that engenders strong respect for and reliance on the ideas and experiences of participants. The thrust of the PAR methodology

is collaboration. The qualitative PAR researcher does not stand afar and observe "the researched." Rather, a type of partnership or connection forms between the researcher and the participant. " Research, participatory or otherwise, is not just about acquisition, cataloguing, ordering and the publishing of information about groups to help them. It is about jointly producing knowledge with others to produce critical interpretations and readings of the world" (Chatterton, Fuller, & Routledge, 2008, p. 219). Mutual collaboration and mutual respect also challenge established hierarchical systems. PAR is unique in that the researcher strives to work collaboratively with the community and not on or about the community. Placing participants and the researcher on more equal footing allows for the development of mutual understanding and respect among all members. Through this collaboration and respect, truth emerges.

Through PAR, researchers may reexamine rigid power structures, replacing them with a system that does not rely on the binary of the oppressed and the oppressor. The goal of PAR is to challenge power relations by having people work in groups to uncover power structures that would allow them to take control of their own lives. The most transformative encounters come through "border pedagogy" (Giroux, 1992). Giroux explained that this practice rejects fixed ideas of 'us' and 'them' or 'good' or 'bad' schema.

> This suggests a pedagogy in which occurs a critical questioning of the omissions and tensions that exist between the master narratives and hegemonic discourses that make up the official curriculum and the self-representations of subordinated groups as they might appear in "forgotten" or erased histories, texts, memories, experiences, and community narratives. (Giroux, 2005, p.25)

PAR has also been explained as an experiential methodology. "Experiential methodology implies the acquisition of serious and reliable knowledge upon which to construct power, or countervailing power, for the poor, oppressed and exploited groups

and social classes—the grassroots" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 3). The "experiences" here refer to the lived experiences of ordinary people rather than to a singular reliance on knowledge of the elite (Bourdieu, 1984). The Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset (2000) stated that, through experience, one intuitively apprehends its essence; one feels, enjoys, and understands experience as reality. "We say that important things are happening to us" (Ortega y Gasset, 2000, p. 215). This experience, also known as "inner life-experience" or "happening" is called *vivencia* in Spanish (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 11). Thus, in this inquiry, the goal was to interview participants using semistructured questions so that the "inner life-experience" or *vivencia*, would emerge. These types of interviews took place because I believe the "lived experiences" of those who are poor or oppressed are powerful and possess value. Learning takes place "not with the brain alone, but also with the heart" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 11).

Respect for *vivencia* and the knowledge of common people recalls certain elements of Freire's (2010) community-based research processes. Freire believed that the people were capable of their own knowledge production and social transformation. With a focus of interest on *conscientizacao* (conscientization), poor and marginalized groups develop a heightened awareness of the forces affecting their lives and use this awareness to inform their political action.

Participants

To explore the perspectives of indigenous peoples in Nicaragua about their education and that of their children, I enjoined elected members of the Miskitu population in Nicaragua to discuss this issue. In this inquiry, I drew a purposeful sampling from people living in the villages of Raitipura and Kahkabila, two Miskitu communities in

Nicaragua located on the Atlantic Coast in a region called the Pearl Lagoon Basin (see Figure 1). To achieve a purposeful sampling, I sought participants who met the following criteria: First, the member must have self-identified culturally with the Miskitu community and, although being bilingual or even trilingual, most participants must have spoken the Miskitu language as a mother tongue. Second, the member must have been at least 16 years of age. Thirdt, participants must have attended a public elementary school in their own community. Finally, participants must have voluntarily dropped out of either elementary or high school. I interviewed six participants, conversing in English with male and female community members. Each conversation lasted at least 90 minutes.

I traveled to Nicaragua on November 15, 2014, and returned to the United States on December 17, 2014. Upon arriving in Pearl Lagoon on November 16 and with the assistance of Sr. and Sra. Ulrich, the owners Casa Ulrich, the pension where I resided while working in Pearl Lagoon, I made arrangements with the person who would be my guide in Raitipura. I secured the second guide once I had traveled to Kahkabila the first time. In this region of Nicaragua, most Miskitu peoples speak Creole English and Miskitu and a smaller number also speak Spanish. Interviews took place in English, with help from Miskitu translators, when necessary. I hand recorded the content of each conversation and took field notes and photographs, with the permission of the participants.

Research Questions and Questions to Guide the Initial Dialogue

Research Question 1: In which ways do the Miskitu residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila understand their school experiences and those of their children, and

how might these experiences have influenced their decision to drop-out of school?

1. Please share with me the name and location of the elementary school or schools you attended and tell me how many years you attended that school or schools.
2. If you attended elementary school, how would you describe your daily attendance? For example, did you attend school every day and have perfect attendance? If you did not have perfect attendance, approximately how many times per week or month were you absent from school?
3. In which way or ways did your parents show their concern about your school attendance? For example, in which ways did your parents either encourage or discourage you from attending school?
4. Now in regard to your own children and their school experiences, explain the number of children you have or have had who attend or attended a community elementary school. Please describe their school experiences.
5. Did your child or children attend the community preschool? Please tell me about those experiences.
6. How would you describe your child's school attendance? Does your child have perfect attendance? If not, approximately how many days is your child absent from school each month? Does your child enjoy attending school?
7. Please explain the relationship you have with your children's teachers at school.

8. Do you feel welcome in your child's school? Please explain.

Research Question 2: In which ways do Miskitu participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the use of and the viability of the Miskitu language?

1. Please tell me about the language or the languages you spoke growing up in your home.
2. What language or languages do your children speak at home?
3. Is the Miskitu language spoken or taught in school?
4. Please share with me the ways you and your family members use the Miskitu language in your daily life.

Research Question 3: In which ways do the Miskitu peoples from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the representation of their indigenous culture?

1. Do you think the Miskitu culture is being taught in your child's community school? Please explain your answer.
2. Is there anything about the Miskitu culture that you as an adult would you like to learn?
3. In which ways do you see the Miskitu culture represented in your community?

Research Question 4: In which ways does poverty affect the lives and the academic opportunities of Miskitu participants living in Raitipura and Kahkabila?

1. Have you ever been denied any community services because you did not have enough money to pay for them? Please explain.

2. Have you or your family members ever experienced any disruption in your education because of financial difficulties?
3. Have you or your children ever experienced any health conditions that interfered with your education?
4. Before ending our conversation, are there any other experiences that affected your schooling or that of your children that you would be willing to share now? These experiences could also be related to your decision or your child's decision to drop out of school.

Data Collection

I conducted this qualitative investigation from November 17 through December 15, 2014. The methodology employed was PAR with the data collection taking place in Raitipura and Kahkabila, two Miskitu communities situated on the Atlantic Coast in the Pearl Lagoon Basin of Nicaragua. I resided in the town of Pearl Lagoon, which became my base during the entire period of research. With the assistance of two local Miskitu residents who were fluent in Miskitu, I was able to meet participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila. The guides selected participants who met the qualifications of the research. The help of the guides cannot be overstated. Their fluency in Miskitu and in Caribbean Creole English (CCE) languages, as well as their familiarity with the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila contributed to genial knowledge production in both communities.

Validity and Reliability

The criteria of validity and reliability hold unique meanings in qualitative research, in general, and in PAR in particular. Quantitative and qualitative research do not address validity and reliability in the same way.

> Validity does not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research; nor is it a companion of reliability (examining stability) or generalizability (the external validity of applying results to new settings, people, or samples). Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. (Creswell, 2014, p. 201)

Researchers must address *trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility* in checking for accuracy in the findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Researchers may use eight strategies to check for accuracy and apply at least one of them (Creswell, 2014). I used two of Creswell's strategies. The first is the *triangulate* strategy:

> Triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study. (Creswell, 2014, p. 201)

The second strategy was taking *rich, thick, description* by taking detailed field notes of the setting (Creswell, 2014). Researchers take field notes when participants are first invited to be interviewed and again during the interview itself. Field notes included drawings and written observations of the homes, family members, and general organization of the exterior environment of the community. Finally, with the permission of each participant, I took photographs and made video recordings in the villages with inhabitants.

Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) offered further insight in the way that validity and reliability are understood and addressed in PAR. PAR is a process study with *vivencia* or lived experience as its main feature. When participants speak their own truth or their own

lived, world experience, knowledge emerges that must be considered reliable due to its authenticity, dubbed "reliable knowledge" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 3). It is from this reliable knowledge that power is constructed that may serve to confront the oppression of people's poor, vulnerable, or exploited condition (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). PAR is an essential methodology in achieving the empowerment of oppressed groups. "To participate means to break up voluntarily and through experience the asymmetrical relationship of submission and dependence implicit in the subject object binomial" (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991, p. 5). Further, authentic participation is rooted in cultural traditions of common people. These cultural traditions are evidenced in attitudes of a cooperative and communal nature, such as offering mutual aid, care of the sick and the old, the extended family, and communal use of lands. As a result of these cultural traditions steeped in communality, PAR, and its foundation of participation, provides a methodology compatible with the daily living patterns of members of these marginalized groups (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991).

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis differs from that of quantitative research. In quantitative research a linear progression begins with data collection, and then moves to data analysis, with the last step being the writing of the report. Qualitative research, with its continually emerging data, does not follow this linear progression. Data analysis may begin long before all of the data are collected. For example, while the interviews were conducted, I wrote memoranda about what I was observing during meetings (Creswell, 2014). In other words, in qualitative research, data collection and data analysis went on simultaneously. In this investigation, I brought a notebook to each of the six interviews

and recorded observations prior to, during, and following the interview. Photographs, taken with permission of the participant, were regularly examined before and during the data-analysis process. Although photographs are part of data collection, the mere decision of what to photograph was already part of data analysis. This visual data may be interpreted in a variety of ways. The photographs may substantiate the recorded words in the interviews. The visual material may also indicate some discordance between what is said and what is seen. Finally, visual material may be used to expand on the dictated message.

Creswell (2014) offered six steps that may be employed in data analysis, each step offering multiple levels of analysis. The steps are interrelated and not always visited in conversations and the field notes. In the second step, I reread the transcripts and field notes and observed the visual data to try to determine what general ideas participants were expressing. In the third step, I began to code the information. In this two-part process of organization, I began to categorize the data by writing a word in the margin that described that data point. This may be understood as labeling the categories.

In the next part of the coding process, I examined the various categories to determine if similarities emerged. I developed a coding process based on emerging information and predetermined codes (Creswell, 2014). For example, in this study, one predetermined code was to assign the letter R to any statements or categories that might suggest racism in Nicaraguan society. Once I coded the various categories with a particular word or letter, I returned to my notebook and made a key that associated a letter or word with a topic. I then determined the themes that emerged during the conversations. In the final step of data analysis, I interpreted the themes. These

interpretations, along with appropriate literature, are included in Chapter 5 of the dissertation. This final interpretation is of upmost importance because, for the investigator, the entire purpose of data analysis in qualitative research was to answer the question, "What were the lessons learned?" (Creswell, 2014, p. 200)

Background of Researcher

This essay will explain some of the life, education, and work experiences that led to PAR in Nicaragua. I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and am of mixed heritage; my mother was first-generation Croatian and my father was descended from French, German, and Irish people. Because I was the first grandchild of the family, my maternal grandparents requested I spend as much time as possible with them. As a result, my first memories are those associated with living under the guidance of my grandparents who had migrated from Croatia to the United States, seeking work in East Chicago, Indiana. Spending extended periods of time in East Chicago, I learned, at a very young age, not only a second language but a culture very different from that of my parents.

In addition to learning a second language, I learned other aspects of my grandparents' culture. The backyard, which in my parents' home was a green lawn, was a vegetable garden and home to a flock of hens. Inside the home, I learned to appreciate a new type of recorded music: tamburica music from Croatia. What I found most surprising was that the house was continually filled with visitors. Some guests stayed for dinner; others stayed for weeks or months. My grandparents' home was a pension, or a type of half-way house created to help recently arrived friends and family members from Croatia establish a new life in the United States. Once the friends found a job and home, they would leave and others would arrive. Therefore, in addition to learning a new language

and being exposed to new food and music, I was exposed to what it was like to live in a communal environment. The concept of caring about and caring for others was established early in my life as I observed the actions of my grandparents.

This interest in caring for people later translated into university studies where I decided to major in education at Northern Illinois University. My career in teaching has included elementary and middle school education, as well as adult education, teaching English to immigrants. The French and Spanish languages have also played an important role in my work. After studying for 2 years at the Sorbonne in Paris and at the Universite d'Aix Marseille, I returned to the United States where I taught French to middle school students. Later in my career, I became the class teacher for fourth- and fifth-grade students who were new to the United States, in San Mateo, California. The language of instruction was primarily English with support in Spanish. Studying Spanish in college and attending two summer institutes in Mexico City provided sufficient training to meet the emotional, linguistic and learning needs of my newcomer students.

I have always had a strong interest in literature and language. At San Francisco State University, I studied and received a master's degree in World and Comparative Literature with a second major in French language and literature. This concern for and engagement with language eventually played an important role in the research I conducted in Nicaragua. During the inquiry period, I learned that language plays a vital role in the lives of the Miskitu peoples of Raitipura and Kahkabila as well.

At the present time, I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco. I am soon to complete my studies in the education department with a major in Organization and Leadership and a minor in language acquisition and multicultural and

international education. My decision to conduct research in Miskitu communities was influenced by my interest in learning and teaching languages, as well as by the multicultural instruction I received at the University of San Francisco. My experience teaching newcomer children and working with their families also influenced the methodology that would be used in the research in Nicaragua.

Choosing to use the PAR methodology was founded in my contention that participants are often the ones that hold the greatest knowledge. This was a lesson learned throughout my career when I learned that the parents and even the students themselves often possessed information that could guide a teacher in providing the best instruction. I learned to listen carefully to parents because they understood their child best and how their child learned. In this same way, PAR encourages researchers to listen to and learn from participants. Researchers may have the questions, but it is the participants (like the parents) who have the answers. In the same way that I learned to honor parents as intelligent and valuable resources, the Miskitu participants would be valued and treated in the same way. With the understanding that Miskitu participants are intelligent and worthy of respect, they offered valuable ideas about their Miskitu language, schooling practices, and the school curriculum. Finally, in considering and effectively implementing the ideas offered by the participants, I expect that education experiences will improve for the children.

I received my first instruction and training in PAR at the University of San Francisco. During the PAR methodology course, abundant opportunities arose to read about this methodology and to discuss examples of how this type of research was being conducted across the country. Additionally, I used the PAR methodology on two separate

occasions during the course of my doctoral studies. In one course, I interviewed a Latina family consisting of a mother and daughter. I posed questions concerning the daughter's school experience in middle school and high school. The second PAR experience consisted of interviewing a Japanese American couple about their internment camp experiences during World War II. In both cases, participants were quite willing to share their many once-private and painful experiences, their own *vivencias*. In fact, the memories of their experiences of oppression emerged so easily and abundantly, that it appeared to me that they were grateful that someone cared enough to even ask the questions.

In the summer of 2014, I participated in the Critical PAR Institute held in Manhattan at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center. In this week-long summer institute, all participants were able to share their doctoral or postdoctoral projects. CUNY professors explained the PAR projects that had been created and instituted by The Public Science Project from CUNY. Likewise, institute participants had the opportunity to conduct their own PAR projects during the course of the week. Prior to attending the institute, all participants were given over 20 academic articles to read, some of them written by the professors from The Public Science Project. The CUNY PAR experience added to my knowledge and provided me with additional tools and the confidence I would later use to conduct PAR research with Miskitu families in Nicaragua.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study explored selected school experiences of a group of Miskitu indigenous peoples living in two communities in the Pearl Lagoon region of Nicaragua. The intent of the research was to allow participants to discuss certain topics regarding their school experiences and those of their children. These topics were based on the research questions in the study and included the following: reflections and recounting of experiences regarding school attendance, school-completion levels, the representation of Miskitu culture and language at home and in school, and participants' relationship with the school and teachers.

I used the model of PAR methodology in this study, allowing the participants and me to engage in conversations as one-on-one dialogues. Each conversation lasted a minimum of 90 minutes and had two parts. The first and most exhaustive component consisted of queries based on the four research questions. During the second part of the conversation, I offered participants the opportunity to bring forth any additional information or concerns regarding public school education in their community. One attribute of PAR is that it allows for and encourages the emergence of ideas and material that had not been anticipated by the researcher. Providing an opportunity for the emergence of new material usually occurred following the discussions related to the research questions, but, on occasion, new information came forth earlier in the conversations. All material, produced from prepared questions and emerging naturally, became vital in helping me better understand school experiences of Miskitu participants.

The PAR methodology strongly advocates that participants be given the opportunity to review and make necessary revisions to the researcher's reports of the conversations. I was able to return to the Raitipura community in December, 2014, and met with two participants. I presented the research findings to them, requested revisions, additions, and, ultimately, their approval. With the assistance of the guides who arranged telephone contact once I returned to the United States, I was able to read the transcripts to the other four participants, seek any changes or additions, and ultimately receive their approval of the document.

Overview

Six people participated in this study. Four participants lived in Raitipura and were women; the other two, a teenage boy and a 23-year-old woman, were residents of Kahkabila. All participants were born in the Miskitu community where they presently reside, and, except for the teenage participant, both parents of participants were of Miskitu lineage. Reports consisted of school experiences of the adults as well as of children living in the family. Although each narrative was unique unto itself, all shared one element: in each case, participants as well as certain of their children had become school dropouts. The study may be seen, therefore, as an attempt to uncover what individual and family conditions, as well as which acts of society and its institutions, may have contributed to participants' decisions to drop out of school.

To provide fuller understanding of participants' and their children's lives and school experiences, I provide certain background information. For example, included are short narratives describing my experiences while traveling to and arriving in Pearl Lagoon, how I met the guides and translators, how the research teams traveled to the

communities, and how a first-grade teacher in Kahkabila volunteered nearly 2 hours of her time to help me understand schooling practices from an educator's point of view. The inclusion of the narratives was my attempt to illustrate that only through the collaborative work of a long chain of extraordinary Nicaraguan people was I able to conduct research in the Miskitu communities.

I collected the research data in two Miskitu communities—Raitipura and Kahkabila—both of which are located in the Pearl Lagoon Basin of Nicaragua. Through the diligent and intelligent preparatory work of the two guides and translators, I was able to conduct amicable and honest conversations with participants from both communities. These guides and translators, who became part of what I called the "research team" or simply "the team," were members of the Miskitu communities themselves and were fluent Miskitu speakers. Finally, because the guides shared cultural experiences with the participants and because the guides had, prior to the conversations, forged friendships with the participants, trust, a major component in any truthful conversation, was established at the onset of each conversation.

All participants' names were changed to achieve confidentiality. Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 47. Of the six participants, one was male; the five women had children whose ages spanned from 1 to 32 years. I received a warm and welcoming reception from each person interviewed, and several stated they had never before been asked to tell the story of their school experiences. In all cases, participants expressed feelings that ranged from frustration to dissatisfaction and anger toward schooling practices that they or their children had experienced in their schools. Their stories were told openly, willingly, and sometimes painfully. In this study it was always my belief that

problems in educational practices could best be understood and addressed by listening, respecting, and honoring the stories of the people who had experienced them.

Traveling to Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua, and Meeting Ms. Eveth Ingram Peachy, The Guide to Raitipura

Considering that the trip from San Francisco to Pearl Lagoon involved an overnight-night stay in Managua, three airplanes rides, a storm requiring an airport closure that caused El Costenos Airline's diversion to Corn Island, with a delay of one hour that nearly resulted in missing the last boat to Pearl Lagoon, and an hour-long motor boat ride , I found it remarkable that I arrived at my destination in just 24 hours following the departure from SFO on November 15, 2014. By 10:30 AM on November 16, I had stepped out of the *panga* or motor boat, gathered my luggage and was making my way to *Casa Ulrich*, a pension located only a short walking distance from the wharf.

Three months prior to the anticipated trip to Nicaragua, I had made reservations to stay at the *Casa Ulrich* for the 30-day research period that was to take place in the region of Pearl Lagoon. This pension was a vital contact for me because, in addition to providing simple and clean accommodations, the hotel owners had assured me that they would be able to contact a Miskitu guide and translator for me. Knowing my concern about connecting with a Miskitu-speaking guide, Reyna and Fred Ulrich had made arrangements for me to meet that person on the very day of my arrival in the town of Pearl Lagoon. It was with great pleasure that I was introduced to Eveth, a person highly qualified to become part of the research team.

During the initial meeting, Eveth shared that she was a member of the Miskitu community called Awas, a Miskitu village of about 100 people, located adjacent to

Raitipura, one of the two Miskitu communities where research was to be conducted. Eveth assured me that because of Awas' close proximity to Raitipura, she knew and was conversant with most Raitipura residents. She explained that Miskitu was her first language and that she also spoke Spanish, Creole, and Standard English. Eveth had been the chef at *Casa Ulrich* for the past 6 years and was also working as a long-term substitute in the preschool in Awas. Having had experience in education as a teacher, being fluent in Miskitu, and being very familiar with the Raitipura community, convinced me that Eveth possessed qualities very advantageous to the research project. Then I more fully introduced myself to Eveth and explained the research plan itself.

I first shared with Eveth my professional and educational background. This was followed by an explanation of the purpose of the study and how I anticipated engaging in conversations with members of the two Miskitu communities. Once Eveth and I agreed to work with one another, I asked Eveth to arrange appointments with two families in Raitipura, each having experienced education problems that culminated in the decision to drop out of school. I also explained that, should it become necessary, Eveth would provide translations of Miskitu into English and English into Miskitu during the conversations. Finally, Eveth and I, the newly-formed research team, agreed upon November 21, 2014, for the first travel date into the Miskitu community of Raitipura.

The First Trip to Raitipura

On the Caribbean or Miskitu Coast of Nicaragua, the rainy season is at its apex in the fall months. I had never before experienced such torrential rainfall and winds and soon learned the huge role that weather conditions would play in planning future trips into the Miskitu communities during that time of year. When Eveth arrived at *Casa*

Ulrich on the morning of November 21, the date designated for the first trip to Raitipura, she explained that none of the *caponeras,* the three motorized buggy-like vehicles, were in working condition that morning. Each had broken down during the week, and all three owners said they were awaiting parts that were available only in Bluefields. Therefore, of necessity, Eveth and I decided to walk, and thus began the long trek into the community. When I inquired about the distance between Raitipura and Pearl Lagoon, Eveth's response was simply, "Not far." Two hours and 5 miles later, the team arrived in Raitipura. Unquestionably, had Eveth been traveling alone, she probably would have walked that distance in one third of the time, but, between having to run for shelter during each downpour and, alternately, having to seek shade to avoid the burning sun, the trip was slow and arduous. Furthermore, in the region of Pearl Lagoon, the land often becomes swampy due to overflowing rivers and streams during the rainy season, and since this was a particularly heavy season of rainfall, the road to Raitipura was flooded in several places. To reach the destination, it became necessary for Eveth and me to wade through both ankle and knee-deep water to reach Raitipura. Upon entering the community, Eveth explained that the first two participants, Elena and Anjelica, had agreed to the interview only if they were allowed to meet together. This request could easily be accommodated, and we all meet together at the home of Elena.

Anjelica and Elena live across the road from one another and became best friends when they were both very young. Their behavior during the conversations indicated that their friendship was a long-standing and respectful one. They often nodded in agreement with one another and smiled supportively at each other during the conversations. Both

young women were so forthcoming with stories related to their schooling that I felt very grateful and fortunate to have encountered and conversed with such fine people.

Elena, First Participant From Raitipura

On November 21, 2014, the first conversation took place with Elena. Elena stated she was 24 years old and had been born and raised in a Miskitu-speaking household in Raitipura, Nicaragua. She had two children, a 6-year-old girl and a 5-year-old boy. Elena shared that her husband was not presently living in Raitipura because he had been able to find work in Panama. I would later learn that because of the high unemployment rate in the Pearl Lagoon region, Creole and Miskitu residents in the Pearl Lagoon Basin often sought work opportunities in Costa Rica or Panama, on commercial cruise ships, or in the Cayman Islands. I asked Elena to discuss some of her school experiences as a student in Raitipura.

Elena obtained her elementary school education at Ruben Dario Elementary School and that throughout all 6 years of schooling, rarely missed a day of school. Elena said she liked school very much, receiving excellent grades throughout elementary school and her 2 years of attendance in high school. Elena attributed her school success largely to her mother's vigilance. Elena said her mother always promoted education and encouraged her during elementary school and during the first 2 years of secondary school. It was a family goal that Elena would graduate from high school.

Elena explained that because Raitipura had no high school, upon graduating from fifth grade she enrolled in the high school located in Pearl Lagoon, a 5-mile walk from Raitipura. Even though Elena remained a good student in high school, her education was terminated when, at the age of 15, she became pregnant. Elena's mother offered to care

for the baby so her daughter could complete her high school education, but Elena declined, preferring to take on the responsibility of caring for her child. Elena explained that her mother was very disappointed when Elena decided to drop out of school. I asked if there was a school policy regarding pregnancy and school matriculation and Elena explained that girls were permitted to remain in school during the pregnancy as well as following the birth of the child. I then asked Elena if the Miskitu language was used as the language of instruction in school.

Elena explained that at Ruben Dario Elementary School, all the teachers were from the Miskitu community. Miskitu was the sole language spoken during the preschool years, which begins at the age of 3, and in kindergarten. From first grade through fifth grade, Creole English became the primary language of instruction. Nonetheless, although Creole was the official language beginning in first grade, some lessons were taught in Miskitu. Elena added that beginning in first grade, children were given 30 minutes of weekly lessons in the Miskitu and Spanish languages.

I asked Elena to discuss her children's experiences, thus far, in elementary school. Elena stated that her son had been enrolled in kindergarten earlier in the year but she had withdrawn him from school in September because, according to her son's complaints and her own appraisal, he had been continually bullied by one of his classmates. Elena explained that in January 2015 she would enroll her son in the elementary school located in Pearl Lagoon: Beulah Lightburn Elementary School. Elena reported that her daughter's school experiences were very different from those of her son. Her daughter had no social problems in school, loved and excelled in her schoolwork, and had never missed a single

day of school. Therefore, Elena planned to have her daughter remain in Ruben Dario Elementary School.

Elena and I then began a conversation about the presence of Miskitu in the local school. Elena explained that although the teachers spoke Miskitu in preschool and kindergarten in the Ruben Dario Elementary School, Miskitu was not spoken by any of the teachers in the elementary school in Pearl Lagoon. Elena worried how her son would transition to the new school where Creole was spoken exclusively. With classes taught in Creole English (with the exception of weekly Spanish-language instruction), she was concerned her son would be ridiculed by his classmates for his lack of fluency in Creole and also because he would probably be the only Miskitu child in the class. Elena also found it problematic that none of the teachers in Pearl Lagoon were from any of the Miskitu communities in the Pearl Lagoon Basin, nor did they have any knowledge of the Miskitu culture. Elena especially feared that her son's learning might be negatively affected by the complete lack of Miskitu-language instruction in the school. Additionally, Elena felt that by attending the school in Pearl Lagoon, her child would slowly lose his ability to speak the Miskitu language fluently. I asked Elena to explain how the Miskitu culture was being taught in Ruben Dario Elementary School.

Elena expressed disappointment that, thus far, her children had not been taught anything about the history of the Miskitu peoples in school. She said that the history of the Miskitu peoples was something no one ever talked about, either in school or in the community itself. Customs such as ancient dress, music, or dance were unknown to her so she was unable to teach this part of their culture to her children. Elena wondered if any living Miskitu people even possessed such knowledge. She stated that she would like to

see the implementation of Miskitu culture in the classrooms in both Raitipura and Pearl Lagoon. Finally, Elena added that if adult courses about Miskitu culture were to be offered in the region, she would gladly attend those classes.

I then inquired if parents were ever consulted regarding the content and delivery of curriculum taught in the community schools. Elena responded that no one had ever approached her about something like that, but, if they did, she would advocate for the inclusion of Miskitu culture and the Miskitu language in the daily lessons. Elena did not have much confidence that this would come to pass because, according to her understanding, the Miskitu teachers, although competent in the Miskitu language, had no knowledge of other aspects of the Miskitu culture.

I inquired if parents felt welcome in the Ruben Dario Elementary School, and, if they did, how did they understand their role in the school and the classroom. Elena said she did not communicate very much with the teachers but was not concerned about being welcomed by the school because she considered it her right as a parent to be there. Upon hearing this, I expressed appreciation that Elena felt thus empowered. Elena then explained that she learned this attitude from her mother, relating her mother's frequent presence in the classroom throughout the years of her elementary school education.

Finally, I asked Elena to explain what action she took when visiting her children's classrooms. Elena stated that the teacher had never asked her to do anything specific. As a result, when in the classroom, Elena felt that a positive action would be to help the teacher organizes the classroom furniture. She said this was achieved by moving the chairs around so that the room became more orderly. I asked if there was any other topic regarding school that she would like to discuss.

Elena stated that she would like to do more when she visits the classroom. For example, she would like to walk around the classroom and help children with their work, but she had never approached the teacher about that. After pondering this a moment, Elena stated that when school resumed following the 2-month winter recess in December and January, she would speak with the teacher about taking a more active role in the classroom. At the closing of the conversation, I secured Elena's permission to return at a later date to read the report to her of their conversation. I also explained that Elena could correct any errors or omissions at that time.

Anjelica, Second Participant From Raitipura

Anjelica shared that she was 24 years old and, like Elena, was born and raised in Raitipura. Both of Anjelica's parents were Miskitu, and their heritage language was always spoken in the home. Anjelica and her husband had four children aged 3 through 11, and all but the youngest child attended the public school in Raitipura. The conversation began with Anjelica talking about her own school experiences in Ruben Dario Elementary School.

Anjelica wanted me to know that she was not a good student like her friend Elena and regretted she did not have the family support that was present in Elena's life. Anjelica attributed her academic failings in to her mother's death when she was an infant. Anjelica explained that being raised by her grandmother, who never took any interest in her schoolwork, was a strong deterrent to her education. Anjelica recalled asking her grandmother for help with her classes but that her pleas for help were always ignored. The more she fell behind in her schoolwork, the less she desired to attend school. Anjelica admitted having poor school attendance and stated that she was never scolded

by her grandmother because of it. Anjelica said that she missed about 1 day of school each week and became increasingly discouraged when the teachers at school refused or did not have the time to give her the extra help she needed. Having lost all self-confidence in her ability to learn, by the time Anjelica was about to enter fifth grade she decided to drop out of school, a decision that was actually encouraged by her grandmother. The conversation then turned to the attendance and school experiences of Anjelica's children.

Anjelica's shared that her youngest child was 3 years old, and she intended to enroll him in preschool in Ruben Dario Elementary School in Raitipura the following school year. This school welcomes 3-year-old children, but, as will be seen later, Anjelica preferred enrolling her children in school 1 or 2 years later than most other families. When I asked about this enrollment decision, Anjelica was either unwilling or unable to answer the question. When I asked Eveth to pose the question in Miskitu, Anjelica continued to remain silent; it was evidently a subject that she was unable or unwilling to discuss at that time. Anjelica's oldest child was 11 years old, and the second oldest is 10; both were in third grade. When both children were 7 years old, Anjelica enrolled them in the school system for the first time. As a result, neither child attended preschool or kindergarten. Similar to her own experience, Anjelica explained that school was very difficult for both those children. Anjelica's oldest child, a son, repeated first and second grade, and her other daughter repeated first grade. So the son, who was now 11 and the daughter, who was 10, and are both in third grade. Despite her children's struggle in school, Anjelica reported that her children have much better attendance in school than she

had, and, for the most part, they enjoy going to school. Anjelica and I then began a discussion about languages spoken in her home and languages spoken at school.

Anjelica explained that she grew up speaking the Miskitu language in her home and that Miskitu was the mother tongue of her children as well. Even though all family members had learned Creole English, Miskitu remained the primary language spoken in the home. Anjelica informed me that Miskitu was the language of instruction in the preschool and kindergarten at Ruben Dario Elementary School in Raitipura. During the initial meeting, Anjelica said that beginning in first grade, the language of instruction in Ruben Dario was Creole. Later, during the second visit, when I read aloud what I had written about our first conversation, Anjelica corrected me and said that in Ruben Dario School, most of the instruction in first grade was in given in Miskitu and not Creole. I asked Anjelica if she knew which subjects were being taught in school.

Anjelica responded that she, for the most part, did not know what her children were learning in school. She wondered aloud how she would be expected to know what was taught if the children never brought work samples home from school. Anjelica also informed me that she might have had knowledge of subjects taught in school had her children received textbooks from school; she said that without books she had no way of knowing. I inquired if Anjelica had ever spoken to the teacher about the learning program, and she responded that she had not. I asked Anjelica if she would consider speaking with her children's teachers about the subjects taught in school; after considerable hesitation, she said that she would think about that.

I asked Anjelica if a teacher or the school director had ever asked her what, as a parent, she would like to see included in the school learning program; she replied that no

one had ever asked her that. Nonetheless, if she had been asked, Anjelica offered that she would enjoy taking part in such a project. I then inquired if there were some subjects she would like to see added to the school curriculum. Anjelica stated that she would like to see the Miskitu culture taught to the children, especially the history of the Miskitu peoples, because even though she was a descendent of a long line of Miskitu peoples, she knew nothing about the history of her own family and community.

I asked Anjelica if she had ever visited her children's classrooms. She replied that she went to school several times a week, and that she, like Elena, enjoyed helping the teacher maintain a tidy classroom by organizing the classroom chairs. When asked if she would like to participate in the classroom by helping the children with their work, Anjelica remained undecided. Nonetheless, she felt appreciated by the teachers and remained enthusiastic about volunteering in the same way she had in the past.

The First Trip to Kahkabila

On November 23, 2105, Eveth and I met to make plans to travel to the Miskitu community of Kahkabila. From the town of Pearl Lagoon, Kahkabila was accessible only by boat, and, because no commercial boats travel between Pearl Lagoon and Kahkabila, it becomes necessary to hire a driver with a *panga* (motor boat). This was easily accomplished because the *Casa Ulrich* pension and restaurant is a gathering place for local residents, fishermen, and marine tour guides, as well as occasional tourists. Upon request, Dona Ulrich introduced a driver who would be available to travel to Kahkabila, and we established a travel date.

Per the driver's request, Eveth and I met the driver at the Casa Ulrich restaurant at 9 AM on November 26, 2014. It seemed unlikely the trip would take place that day, due

to the strong north winds and the unrelenting, morning downpour, but the driver, Juan, was certain that within an hour or two the weather would clear, and the trip north into the Pearl Lagoon Basin could begin. Two hours later most rain clouds had dissipated, and by 11 AM, the trip in the small motor boat commenced.

Normally, it was a 30-minute motor boat ride to Kahkabila, but on that day the driver was forced to reduce the speed because of the choppy waters. By noon the boat had docked, and Eveth and I walked into the community of Kahkabila. The clouds were heavy overhead, but the rain had yet to return. In Kahkabila, farm animals such as cows, chickens, and pigs roam freely about the community. This scene, with the slowly moving animals and landscape, made extra green due to the heavy rainfall, was exquisite. Eveth informed me that it would be necessary to contact potential participants upon arriving in Kahkabila. Although Eveth had traveled to Kahkabila on previous occasions, she did not know members of the community well enough to make arrangements with participants prior to this visit.

After walking no more than 5 minutes, I noticed that just ahead there appeared to be a small school, and upon approaching it, a woman was seen exiting the building with a young child. The research team greeted the woman and learned that she was a teacher. Since the 2-month vacation was about to begin and because there would be scant opportunity to meet other educators in the present school year, I asked the woman if she would like to engage in a conversation regarding some of her teaching experiences. She agreed and invited the research team into her classroom. Immediately upon entering the classroom, dark clouds began to form over Kahkabila and a 2-hour rain storm with

thunder and lightning served as a companion and a fiery background to the conversation with the teacher.

Josette, a Teacher in Kahkabila

Josette was a first-grade teacher who had worked for 12 years in the community of Kahkabila, a Miskitu village located in a northern region of the Pearl Lagoon Basin. Josette was a Creole woman who was born and raised in Pearl Lagoon. Even though she had no blood or cultural ties with the Miskitu indigenous peoples of Kahkabila, she was quite content living in the community, knowing that when she wished to visit her friends and family in Pearl Lagoon, she had the opportunity to do so on weekends. I asked Josette how she had become a teacher.

Josette explained that her teaching career had begun directly upon graduation from high school and that she was given no teacher training and had no teaching experience prior to being given her first group of first-grade students. Thus, her first year of teaching was, effectively, a year of student teaching. In the Nicaraguan teacher-training system, the initial year of teaching is considered a trial period. During that year, the school principal observes teacher candidates to see if they possess certain basic and vital qualities that would be deemed a prerequisite to attaining a permanent teaching position. This includes a positive attitude and a respectful manner with children and the ability to communicate effectively with young children. Josette explained that during her first year of teaching the school principal observed her numerous times, and at year's end determined that Josette had successfully completed her trial or practice-teaching year, and would, therefore, be invited to begin a teacher-training program.

Josette explained that the teacher training sessions are called “encounters,” with two such encounters provided each year, one in January and the other in July; each is given when schools are closed for winter and summer recess. (School closures are December-January and June.) Thus, over a 3-year period, a total of six “encounters” occur and, upon successful completion of these trainings, a teacher-in-training is awarded a certificate titled “Teacher in Primary Education.” Josette described the small school in Kahkabila where she taught first grade.

Josette taught first grade in the Rafaela Herrera School, a two-room schoolhouse named after a national hero who fought for Nicaragua’s independence from Spain. The school was built in the early 1980s and contained one first-grade and one fourth-grade classroom during the morning session and high school classes during the afternoon session. In addition to this two-room school, other elementary-grade classrooms were dispersed throughout Kahkabila in equally small buildings.

In Josette’s classroom were 14 desks. I remarked on the good fortune of having such a small group of first-grade students. Josette responded that she had, in fact, 22 students, but not all students had a desk. To compensate for the lack of seating, some students carried chairs to class from home; the remaining students, who did not bring chairs from home, had to sit on the floor. I observed and commented that I saw no evidence of textbooks or other teaching materials in the classroom. Josette responded that none of the elementary-grade classrooms had either books or teaching materials of any kind.

I noted the physical condition of the classroom. About one fourth of the ceiling tiles were missing with various wires dangling from the exposed spaces, and about half of

the glass window slats were missing, as well. I saw evidence of a whiteboard, but it was now cracked and patches of the board were missing. Finally, I saw not even the most basic of school supplies such as pencils and paper in evidence. Certainly, to teach and learn in such a classroom would be a challenge for everyone concerned. The final segment of the conversation was directed to the school attendance of Josette's first-grade students.

Josette stated that there were between three and six absences daily in her class of 22 students. About 50% of her students had perfect attendance, which indicated that the absences were drawn from the other 11 students. I asked Josette about her understanding of student absences. She responded that there was no single reason that could explain the absences. Josette contributed that when boys missed school it was often because they were needed to help their fathers that day with fishing, fishing being the main source of income for these Miskitu families. Girls' absences, according to Josette, occurred when the children were needed to care for younger siblings at home when the mothers worked on the family farming plots called "the bush." Finally, the remaining students were absent because they had no interest in school or schoolwork. Josette added that the parents of these children did not encourage them to attend class. I found it curious that when discussing absences, the teacher never once stated that absence might be due to student illnesses. At a future date, I would like to explore health, health care, and Miskitu people's understanding of health in the community.

The long and unplanned conversation with Josette was enjoyable and informative. When there was a break in the storm, she excused herself, and, because of this positive

experience, I was left with the thought that, one day, she might have the fortune to return to Kahkabila and offer to assist Josette with her first-grade students.

Meeting the Guide and Translator from Kahkabila, Mr. Jairo Schwartz

While preparing to leave the classroom, Eveth and I became aware of some movement outdoors, and, in glancing through the window, saw a group of high school-aged students moving chairs into the adjoining classroom. Once everyone was seated and the room became quiet, a man who appeared to be the teacher was seen sitting at the front of the classroom. Because it did not appear that a lesson was about to begin, I decided it might be an appropriate time to introduce myself to the teacher. The teacher explained that this being the last class meeting before the winter holiday, the class was only meeting briefly to allow students to turn in their final examinations. While the group of about 15 students talked quietly among themselves, the teacher introduced himself and shared some of his educational and professional background.

The teacher, Jairo Schwartz, said that he was the algebra teacher for this group of high school students and that this was his first year of teaching. He explained that one could become a high school teacher upon successfully graduating from high school and that most of the high school teachers in Kahkabila had not attended college. The teacher explained that he had completed 2 years of university work in Managua, so his level of education was more the exception than the rule. Because of the low salary offered to teachers, Jairo was undecided if he would remain in education.

Tourists, and particularly U.S. tourists, are rare visitors in Kahkabila; therefore, Jairo was curious as to my presence there. I complied by sharing my educational background and the purpose of my travels to the Miskitu communities in the Pearl

Lagoon Basin. Jairo shared that he was born and raised in Kahkabila, spoke Miskitu as his mother tongue, and that his father was Miskitu and his mother "Spanish." (*Spanish* is a Nicaraguan appellation for anyone not of Creole or indigenous origin, possibly a term used only on the Atlantic Coast.) Even though his mother spoke only Spanish and Creole, he spoke Miskitu as his first language because his Miskitu-speaking paternal grandmother was his primary caregiver, following his parents' separation and his mother's return to Managua. Because no contact had been made with potential research participants that day, I asked Jairo if he would agree to work with me as a guide and translator on a future trip to Kahkabila. Speaking Miskitu and knowing virtually all residents of the community contributed to the teacher being in a strong position to help with this part of the study. After agreeing to assist in the study, the new team decided, on December 3, 2014, as the next date of travel to Kahkabila. On that trip, as the first, it was necessary to hire a driver with a *panga*; Jairo said that he would make an arrangement for that with his cousin.

As was the case on most December mornings in Pearl Lagoon, there were heavy rain falls and squalls on December 3, 2014, so I was doubtful the trip would be made that day. Fortunately, when the skies cleared and the winds calmed in late morning. Mr. Schwartz and his cousin arrived at the hotel and announced that the trip was ready to commence. The weather was welcoming throughout the entire day, and it was only after returning from Kahkabila and docking in Pearl Lagoon early that evening that the heavy rains began anew.

Ryan, First Participant From Kahkabila

On December 3, 2014, at 11:30 AM the research team arrived in Kahkabila, and, immediately upon disembarking from the *panga*, I was introduced to Ryan who had been awaiting the research team at the foot of the small dock. Ryan, a 16-year-old resident of Kahkabila, was very friendly and proudly welcomed the research team into his family's home. The house, constructed just 2 years earlier and one of the newest in the community, was octagonal in shape with wooden walls and a thatched roof. After greeting Ryan's two younger siblings who were playing games in the living room, Ryan invited me to view his sister's high school-graduation photo. Beside that picture was another photo of his sister standing on her college campus. Ryan proudly explained that his sister was a student at Bluefields Indigenous Caribbean University (BICU), located in Bluefields, Nicaragua. The other photo I was invited to view was that of Ryan's mother and father standing serenely and happily in a Kahkabila landscape. Ryan shared that his mother had died suddenly when he was 10 years old, a factor he felt contributed greatly to his decision to drop out of school. I then asked Ryan if he would like to talk about his family and his school experiences.

As this teenage boy traced some of his schooling experiences with me, it was evident that, from an early age, he found little satisfaction in the education he received. When asked how he would describe his overall school experiences, Ryan responded succinctly but profoundly, "School never gave me anything." When pressed to describe what he meant by that statement, Ryan said that he never learned to read in school. I then administered a rapid reading test using materials at hand, and from this cursory examination, it appeared Ryan was reading at approximately at the end-of-first-grade

level. (Another test should be administered later to achieve a more refined and specific reading score.) Ryan asserted that each year he would ask his teachers for books and "they would never give me any." I asked Ryan to talk about the subjects he was taught in school.

Ryan shared that classes in mathematics, history, and reading were taught at Rafaela Herrera Elementary School and that the language of delivery was Creole. In addition, there were 30-minute weekly lessons in Spanish and Miskitu. The negativity Ryan experienced toward school increased and the classwork became harder, but at the same time his reading level remained stagnant. As a result, he fell further and further behind in his learning, but Ryan thought it was the death of his mother that augmented his feelings of helplessness and inadequacy as a student.

In the months following his mother's death, the entire family was catapulted into a state of chaos. The young children in this family were incapable of undertaking all the chores that were once part of their mother's domain. To regain some family stability, the father was forced to work fewer hours on his fishing boat so he could farm for food in the bush, prepare meals, and spend more time with his children. Although the father's actions did serve to restore some order to the home life, the family income was greatly reduced. The poverty became so deep that the family no longer had money to buy shoes for the children. Thus, after only 6 years of schooling, and at the age of 10, Ryan decided that, because he had no shoes and, ultimately because he could no longer bear his feelings of defeat and shame in his classroom, he would leave the school system permanently.

When asked if he regretted dropping out of school, Ryan replied that his only regret was not having the opportunity to learn more of the Miskitu language in school.

Ryan revealed that he had very limited knowledge of Miskitu because it was not his mother tongue. He clarified that his father who was Miskitu and from Kahkabila, married an English-speaking Creole woman from Pearl Lagoon. Ryan stated that in the past 15 to 20 years, an increased number of Miskitu men from Kahkabila married Creole women from villages in the Pearl Lagoon Basin. Then Ryan asserted, "I am half Miskitu, and I want to speak my language." I asked Jairo, a fluent Miskitu speaker, if it were possible for him to give Ryan Miskitu lessons, and he said that it was. Before leaving Nicaragua on December 17, I learned that Ryan and Jairo had already met for two Miskitu lessons.

Another thing Ryan wanted me to know was that in the past 3 years, his family's economic situation had changed dramatically. As the children grew and were capable of participating in home responsibilities, Ryan's father was able to reprise his former role as a full-time fisherman. Ryan began fishing with his father in Pearl Lagoon, which also augmented their family income. Ryan reported his family was in the process of saving money to open a restaurant in their spacious and beautiful home in Kahkabila.

I asked Ryan if there was anything else he would like to add to the conversation. Ryan responded that he liked living in Kahkabila and stated, "It's good for me." He elaborated that all Kahkabila residents had farming opportunities in the bush, a farming area located adjacent to Kahkabila, accessible by foot or boat. One or 2 days each week, Ryan rowed his dory, a dug-out canoe, into the bush where he helped cultivate the family plot. The family consumes all produce: cassava, mango, sugar cane, and a fruit called "apple" that is unrelated to the apple known in the United States. Ryan stated that when he wished to spend extended periods of time working in the bush, he would stay overnight with his grandmother who had a home nearby.

Ryan added that he wanted to share some school experiences of his siblings. He began by restating that his older sister was a successful student at BICU and that upon her graduation, she would be the first in her family to receive a high school diploma. Ryan also wanted me to know that his younger brother and sister were in elementary school in Kahkabila and that each liked school, maintained good grades, and had excellent attendance records. Ryan shared that he had two older brothers who had dropped out of school and who now lived in Pearl Lagoon where they had found employment.

On February 23, 2015, I telephoned Ryan from the United States so he would have the opportunity to verify my report and make any necessary corrections or additions to the report. After I read the report to Ryan, he stated that his sister had left BICU during the preceding month and had returned to Kahkabila. When asked to explain his sister's motivation for dropping out of college, Ryan responded that she preferred to earn money rather than working on a degree program. Ryan explained that his sister had recently received her passport and would travel to Costa Rica in the near future where she hoped to secure work. Ryan also stated that the Miskitu lessons had ended that month because Jairo, who had decided to teach high school algebra a second year, could no longer afford the time to give him private language lessons.

Rosa, Second Participant From Kahkabila

Immediately following the conversation with Ryan, Jairo and I walked to the home of the second participant in Kahkabila, Rosa. From a distance, I could see that Rosa's home consisted of two wooden buildings, one building being the main residence and the other a smaller structure that was the kitchen. Rosa was expecting the research team, and she and her two sons were waiting for us on the front porch. Earlier in the

week, Jairo had made an appointment for her to meet with me. Jairo and Rosa had been classmates in elementary school; he chose her to be a participant because he knew she had dropped out of school.

As were all of the other participants in the study, Rosa's greeting was warm and welcoming. The conversation took place comfortably on the front porch, and Rosa began by introducing herself and her family. Rosa told me she was 23 years old and was a single mother of two boys aged 4 and 6. In their multigenerational home lived Rosa and her two sons, her parents, her 11 siblings, and three nieces who were infants and toddlers. Rosa was born in Kahkabila of Miskitu parents and her first language was Miskitu. The conversation turned to the languages spoken in the household.

Rosa shared that she spoke both Miskitu and Creole in the home. In conversing with her mother and father, Rosa explained that her parents spoke Miskitu to her but she responded in Creole English. With her two children, Rosa said she spoke both Miskitu and Creole. When asked if her sons spoke Miskitu, Rosa responded that they understood Miskitu very well, but that the language they spoke was Creole. Even though Rosa spoke Creole and Miskitu with her parents and her sons, she said that with her siblings she spoke only Miskitu. When asked why she spoke solely Miskitu with them, Rosa explained that her siblings preferred the young children hear only Miskitu in the home so that Miskitu would become their mother tongue. I asked Rosa if she agreed with her siblings' refusal to speak Creole in the home, and she said that she did. Then, after reflecting several moments, Rosa commented that perhaps her children would speak their heritage language if she were careful about speaking to them only in Miskitu as well.

Following this, Rosa shared certain aspects of her personal experience in the public school system.

Rosa's parents enrolled her in school at the age of 4 in Rafaela Herrera Elementary School in Kahkabila, and remained a student there until the end of fifth grade. She explained that although the language of instruction in Rafaela Herrera Elementary School was now Creole, when she attended school, most classes were taught in Spanish. The two exceptions were the Standard English class and the Miskitu class, which were each taught once a week. During the primary grades, Rosa found it difficult to understand her teachers because she had little knowledge of the Spanish language. By fourth and fifth grade she began to understand her teachers, but still does not consider herself fluent in Spanish. Rosa said that she liked school and learning but, with no translations available during class time, it became necessary to frequently stay after school and ask her teachers for extra help. However, because most of the teachers did not speak Miskitu, it was equally arduous for them to provide the kind of help she required. Rosa fell farther and farther behind in her work and, by the time she had completed fifth grade, had already been retained several times. Rosa graduated from elementary school when she was 16 years old. Even though Rosa took pride in her accomplishments, she soon came to realize that her challenges in the education system would persist.

Following her elementary school graduation in 2006, Rosa intended to continue her studies and enroll in high school. By 2010, Kahkabila residents had constructed a high school for their children, but, prior to that year, it was necessary for students to travel to either Bluefields or Pearl Lagoon if they wished to attend high school. With no commercial boats traveling between Kahkabila and these towns, if a child wanted to

attend high school it was necessary to board there with friends or relatives. Very few families, including Rosa's, could afford that, so for economic reasons and at the age of 15, it was necessary for Rosa to drop out of school. Rosa expressed disappointment in her inability to attend high school because it had always been her goal and that of her family that she would receive a high school diploma. Then Rosa began to discuss her concerns regarding her children's education.

Rosa became a mother at the age of 17; her younger son is in preschool and the other is in first grade. Rosa expressed concern regarding the education of her children, stating that she did not want them to drop out of school as she had. When I asked if she knew what her children were learning in school, she said that she did not. Without any books or papers coming home from school, she said it was impossible for her to know which subjects were being taught. Rosa worried that her children were not learning something as basic as the alphabet in school. To compensate for this suspected omission, Rosa explained that she insisted on working with her sons every day upon their arrival home from school. Under her guidance, Rosa explained that her sons were learning how to count and write the letters of the alphabet on a chalkboard at home. I asked Rosa to talk about her relationship with her sons' teachers.

Rosa began by stating that she did not know the teachers very well. She said that she picked up her children every day from school, but she had never actually entered her children's classrooms. When asked to explain this, Rosa replied that she always arrives 15 minutes before school dismissal so she can observe the students' activities through the classroom window. I then asked if she would ever consider entering the classroom, either during the school day or before or after school. The question was addressed only with a

slight smile. The query was rephrased, along with Jairo talking with Rosa in Miskitu to encourage a response. Nevertheless, Rosa remained firm in not wishing to respond to that question.

In the next segment of the conversation, Rosa explained the circumstances that led to Creole English becoming the language of instruction in the local elementary school. Rosa repeated that prior to 2010, the language of instruction in the Rafaela Herrera Elementary School had been Spanish. She explained that even though most residents in Kahkabila were trilingual, speaking Miskitu, English, and Spanish, they are least fluent in Spanish. With the high drop-out rate in the community school at that time, the government thought it ill-advised that classes continue to be taught in Spanish. Therefore, in 2010, a new policy was instituted that made Creole English the language of instruction for all grades of elementary school. Additionally, for 30 minutes each week, students received language instruction in Miskitu and Spanish. As in Raitipura, the children in preschool and kindergarten in Kahkabila would be taught in the Miskitu language. Rosa regretted that the teachers did not speak Creole when she was in school, but she was hopeful that her sons would have greater success in their studies under the new language policy. I asked Rosa to describe the place Miskitu culture played in her life and that of her family.

Rosa stated that the Miskitu language remained a strong part of her culture. She attributed the fact that she could read and write in Miskitu to the 30 minutes of weekly language instruction in Miskitu that she had received throughout elementary school. Even though as a child Rosa spoke only Miskitu in her home, it was at school that she had acquired literacy skills. I asked if she knew anything about the history of the Miskitu

peoples and Rosa replied that she did not. She thought that unfortunate and wondered aloud why she had not learned about that from her teachers or from her family. Then Rosa offered that she has seen Miskitu dances performed over the years in Kahkabila during the Christmas celebrations. Rosa stated that she would have liked to learn those dances, but she did not know how that would be possible.

I asked Jairo if any classes about the Miskitu culture were taught to residents outside the school system. He replied that, as far as he knew, these types of classes had never been offered, but added that the woman who led the dance group would possibly return to Kahkabila in the spring and that he would talk to her about teaching the ancient dances to interested community members. Rosa expressed excitement at the prospect of learning more about her culture. The conversation ended as I expressed the desire to return to Kahkabila and to reconnect with the people I had met there. I told Rosa that she would contact her from the United States by telephone so that she could be informed of the report of their conversation and that she would be given the opportunity to make any necessary changes or additions to the report.

On February 23, 2014, I was able to make contact with Rosa by telephone, made possible through the assistance of the guide and translator, Jairo. Because Rosa did not have a telephone, I called Jairo at a prearranged time, and he passed the phone to Rosa. Jairo remained present during the entire time I read the report, and several times was asked to intercede when I suspected Rosa did not understand a passage in the report. Rosa wished to make several changes to the report. The first addition pertained to the information regarding the language or languages spoken in the home. In the first report, it was my understanding that Rosa's children spoke Miskitu to her. Rosa corrected this and

explained that her sons spoke Creole and only understand Miskitu. Further, Rosa wished to add that her siblings spoke only Miskitu so their children would not lose their heritage language. Rosa also wanted me to add that, in addition to speaking Miskitu, she was able to read and write Miskitu, skills that she had learned in school. These changes were made and included in the above report.

The Second Trip to Raitipura—Revisiting Elena and Anjelica

On December 11, 2014, the guide, Eveth, and I made our second trip to Raitipura. This time, to avoid the long walk in the heat and intermittent rain and thunder, I made plans with a boatman to drive the research team to Raitipura in his *panga*. The trip began early because, in addition to meeting the fifth and sixth participants for an initial conversation, I had planned to revisit Elena and Anjelica, the first two participants from Raitipura, to give them the opportunity to listen to and respond to the content of the report of their conversations. It was a short distance by motor boat between Pearl Lagoon and Raitipura, and within 15 minutes Eveth and I had arrived at our destination.

Remembering how Elena and Anjelica preferred meeting together with Eveth and me, the research team went first to Anjelica's home and asked if she could go to Elena's home to hear the reports of the conversations. Eveth and I then walked to Elena's house and awaited the arrival of Anjelica. When the team and the two women gathered in the house, I explained the purpose of the visit: I would read the report of each conversation that took place on November 21, and ask them to make any necessary corrections. Further, if necessary, they could make additions that related to the original conversation. I assured the women that any changes would be reflected in the final account of the conversation. After making corrections and additions, the research team proceeded to the

home of the fifth and sixth participants, a mother and her adult daughter. Eveth had contacted the family earlier in the week, and, by the time the research team arrived, the participants and several members of their family were awaiting the team on the front porch of their home.

Georgette and Gloria, Raitipura Participants

I met Georgette and Gloria, the third and fourth participants from Raitipura, on December 11, 2014. Georgette was a 32-year-old Miskitu woman who lived with her mother, her five biological children, and an adopted child who she called her grandson. During the course of the conversation, I was able to meet five of the six children who were, along with the grandmother, actively engaged in the conversation. The grandmother, Gloria, was a strong presence in the encounter and made many enlightening contributions to the conversation. Ever-present, also, was the 1-year old boy who happily and almost continually walked from one end of the porch to the other. He was a strong, beautiful child who immediately caught my attention because he was already walking. When told that the child was 1 year old, I expressed wonder that he was already walking so well. Georgette explained that he actually started to walk when he was 8 months old and that this was a normal developmental skill for Miskitu children. Georgette then related that the child was adopted as an infant when his very young teenage mother from another community was unable to care for him. This baby was a joyful child, bouncing about and continually smiling, due to all the attention he received from his family and now from the research team as well. Georgette shared some family background information with me.

The grandmother, Gloria, was born of Miskitu parents, and until she moved to attend high school, had lived her entire life in Raitipura. Gloria attended Ruben Dario Elementary School in Raitipura but was sent to Bluefields for her high school studies. While studying in Bluefields, Gloria met a Creole young man who would become Georgette's father. When Gloria became pregnant, she dropped out of school. Gloria, her husband, and Georgette lived in Bluefields until Georgette was 5 years of age. At that time, Gloria's husband had begun a new family with a different woman, precipitating Gloria's decision to return home to Raitipura. Upon their return to Raitipura, Gloria enrolled Georgette in Ruben Dario Elementary School where she was placed in a first-grade class.

Gloria explained that she had high education expectations for her daughter and often told her that only with an education would she have the possibility of securing a job. Georgette reported liking her classes, and for nearly 5 years never missed a day of school. Then, at the age of 11 and in fifth grade, Georgette became pregnant and dropped out of school. She stated that Ruben Dario Elementary School allowed pregnant girls to remain in school, but that embarrassment prompted her to end her studies. Gloria's reaction to her daughter's pregnancy caused another problem for Georgette. Gloria explained that she was so shamed and disappointed by her daughter's pregnancy that she banned Georgette from her home. As a result, Georgette was forced to live with the father of her child and his family, and it was during this period that she had four more children. Eventually, because the father of her children had a new girlfriend, Georgette returned to her mother's home where she and her five children were welcomed. Georgette then

shared the names and ages of her five biological children and discussed the school experiences of each of them.

Georgette expressed pride that Marlena, her 20-year-old daughter, had recently graduated from high school, the first person in her family to have attained that level of education. Georgette continued by explaining that throughout elementary and high school, Marlena had suffered from migraine headaches. She had been referred to a specialist in Bluefields, but, not having even the money for a boat ride to Bluefields, the cost of which was approximately $10.00 each way, Marlena never received a diagnosis or help from a neurologist. The teachers in school discouraged Marlena from remaining in school, saying that she would go blind if she continued reading while experiencing migraine headaches. Marlena then entered the conversation and explained that she never heeded the advice of the teachers and continued to read and study hard. As a result, Marlena said that she not only graduated from high school but was hoping to become a university student in Managua, a life-long dream that would only become possible with a scholarship. At that time, Marlena's uncle was working to help Marlena procure a scholarship for university work in Managua. Then Georgette talked about the school experiences of her other school-age children, all of whom were male.

Georgette's oldest son, Alberto, was 19 years old. Alberto suffered with back problems from a young age, and, like his older sister, had never received the medical care needed because the family could not afford to send him to Bluefields for either an examination or treatment. Georgette reported that Alberto liked attending classes, but dropped out of school in fifth grade due to the debilitating pain. Alberto was the only one

of the children I did not meet that day, as he was out gathering firewood the family would use as cooking fuel.

The next child described by Georgette was Alfredo, her 15-year-old son and the only child in the family who said he did not like school. Georgette and Gloria became very emotional when discussing Alfredo's struggle with the school system. They explained how Alfredo was expelled from Ruben Dario Elementary School when he was in first grade because of his history of hitting other children. Gloria exclaimed, "Isn't it the job of teachers to try to work with children like this, to teach them proper behavior?" Immediately following the expulsion, Georgette walked to Pearl Lagoon and insisted that her son be allowed to attend school there. Alfredo was accepted into the new school, but often ran away from his classroom, frustrated that he could not understand the Creole language spoken by his teachers and classmates. The school director in Pearl Lagoon then proclaimed that Ruben Dario Elementary School was required to reinstate Alfredo, declaring that the expulsion was illegal. When Georgette attempted to reenroll her son in school, the teacher said that he was too old for first grade. Georgette said that she was extremely angry and frustrated with the school system in general, and with the director in particular, for not forcing the school to readmit her son. This school rejection was such a traumatic experience for Alfredo that he said he would never again attend school. Thus, Alfredo became a school drop-out without having completed even the first grade of elementary school. I asked Alfredo if he would consider attending a continuation school if one were available. His response was an immediate and emphatic "Yes!" Georgette then talked about her two sons Raul and Rigoberto, both of whom attended the Ruben Dario Elementary School.

Raul was 10 years old and was in fourth grade, whereas Rigoberto was 13 and was in third grade. Both children said they liked school, but Rigoberto readily admitted that school was very hard for him and that he could not read very well. This was reflected in Rigoberto being retained in school multiple times. It was during this segment of the conversation that I noticed how Alfredo, Raul, and Rigoberto were all actively engaged in caring for baby Daniel, whether it was talking to, holding, or playing with the child. This was visibly a very poor family, but one where love and caring was found in abundance. The conversation then turned to the role of the Miskitu language in their home, school, and community life.

Georgette explained that Miskitu was her first language and was the first language of her children, but that now everyone in the family spoke both Miskitu and Creole. Even though family members reported being fluent in both languages, Georgette stated that Miskitu remained the primary language in the home. In regard to the language of delivery in elementary school, Georgette expressed frustration that the teachers spoke Creole in school. She elaborated, stating, "Everyone knows Creole, why teach it?" When asked which language she thought the children should be instructed in school she responded by stating that the children should be taught for half the day in their own Miskitu language and for the other half of the day in Standard English. Georgette was aware that children received Miskitu lessons for 30 minutes each week, but said that was insufficient. I asked Georgette to talk about her knowledge of what her children were learning in school.

Georgette related that, over time, she had seen some papers brought home with Miskitu and Spanish work, and she knew that her children were learning mathematics, drawing, and reading. Georgette regretted that none of her children ever had textbooks or

books with which to read and study at home. I asked Georgette if her children were taught about the Miskitu culture in school, and she responded that they were not. Georgette said that she would like her children to learn about the history of the Miskitu peoples, a subject that neither she, her mother, nor her children had any knowledge. When asked if she knew of any other aspects of Miskitu culture, Georgette shared that contemporary musicians now recorded music in the Miskitu language, and that these songs, which were also played on the radio, were popular with Miskitu and non-Miskitu people alike. I asked Georgette if she had ever visited her children's school.

Georgette began by stating that she had always been interested in knowing what was taught in school and that she knew she could best learn that by going to the school on a regular basis. Georgette, who reported visiting her sons' school about once a week, stated that it was her right to enter the classroom and help the children with their work. Gloria then reiterated her belief in the importance of education, something that she spoke of at the onset of the conversation. Gloria enthusiastically stated that if she were a teacher, she would tell the children that through education they could improve themselves, and with that learning they would be better prepared to help their own Miskitu community of Raitipura.

As the conversation came to a close, I explained that I would call the family from the United States, once the report of the conversation was completed. At that time, Georgette and Gloria would have the opportunity to listen to the report and to make any necessary corrections or changes. The family wanted to know if I planned to return to Raitipura, and I responded that it was my intention to return in 1 year and to visit each of the families I had met in Raitipura and Kahkabila.

In February, 2015, I called Eveth to discuss how I could be put in contact with Georgette and Gloria. When informed that Georgette now owned a cell phone, I was able to call her directly. Georgette, after being read the report, stated that she had two corrections to make. The first was that she had dropped out of school in third grade when became pregnant at age 11. Georgette explained that in the 5 years she had attended school, she had been retained twice. In regard to Georgette's daughter, she shared that Marlena would remain in Raitipura because she was unable to receive a scholarship and, as a result, would not be attending the university in Managua, as had been hoped. In August, 2015, Eveth informed me that Marlena had become pregnant and would continue living at home during the pregnancy and after the child was born. The father of the child would not be living with Marlena.

Generative Themes

Generative themes emerged from the coding and data analysis of the dialogue between the participants and me. This section contains a discussion of the four research questions and the generative themes that emerged from them during the conversations with participants.

Research Question 1

In which ways do the Miskitu residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila understand their school experiences and those of their children?

The themes that emerged regarding the school experiences of parents and their children were the following: (a) attitude toward school, learning, and school attendance; (b) parental support of their children and schooling; (c) parental participation in the classroom; and (d) relationship of the participants with teachers.

Attitude Toward School, Learning, and School Attendance

No singular attitude toward school, learning, and school attendance emerged among the six participants. For example, certain participants commented that they always enjoyed school and others expressed fiercely negative memories of their school experiences or those of their children. Likewise, a variety of responses regarded learning and school attendance.

Elena in Raitipura stated that she was a good student, enjoyed school and had perfect attendance throughout elementary school and during the period of her high school enrollment. Likewise, Elena's first-grade daughter was a strong student academically, enjoyed the daily school experience, and had perfect attendance in kindergarten and first grade. Elena's son, in contrast, held bitter feelings toward the school because of the social problems he experienced in kindergarten. Elena stated,

> I always like school, the school in Raitipura and high school in Lagoon [Pearl Lagoon]. My daughter is like me. Her grades good and she is happy every day. Not my son, though. He cry many days at school and come home unhappy and angry so many days.

Elena's son was so unhappy in school that his mother felt it necessary to withdraw him from kindergarten before the end of the school year with the intention of reenrolling him in kindergarten in a different school located in Pearl Lagoon. The boy's school attendance was strikingly different from that of his sister and his mother, because, other than his preschool enrollment, he was not matriculated in kindergarten for the full school year.

Angelica expressed she was never especially interested in school and was absent on an average of 1 day each week. If she felt any motivation to learn early in the

elementary school years, that drive was slowly eroded as she fell farther and farther behind in her schoolwork. Angelica shared the following:

> In first and second grade work very hard for me. I not understand the work. I remember that I was sad in school because I cannot do the work. I stay home from school many times, sometimes I was sick, but most of time I just not want go to school.

School was, overall, an unpleasant experience for Anjelica, and she expressed little remorse at dropping out of school at the end of fourth grade. Anjelica expressed that her children, in contrast, enjoyed the schooling experience and that their attendance was far superior to what hers had been. Anjelica's children were never enrolled in preschool or kindergarten. Instead, Anjelica preferred to keep them at home until they were 7 years old, at which time the school would place them in first grade. Therefore, her children were, from the very start, 1 year older than the other students, and entered the school system without having had the early childhood preschool and kindergarten experiences encountered by their classmates.

Ryan, the first participant from Kahkabila, was forthcoming in his analysis of his years of enrollment in the community elementary school. Ryan's experiences in school might be best exemplified in the statement, "School never gave me anything." Ryan stated,

> School never gave me anything. The teachers never gave me books. Never. Not one book. They never teach me what I want to learn. I want to learn Miskitu, the language of my father. The school no teach me how to read either. School not give me much.

Ryan explained that over the years he fell further and further behind in school, attributing his poor school performance primarily to his inability to read. He stated, "They never taught me how to read." Overall, Ryan understood his school experience as one that was negative and lacking, deficient in resources and in learning progress and opportunities.

Ryan, aware that he was not learning in school, asked his teachers for books so that he could study and learn at home. Once again, when he asked for books his requests were denied. Finally, as Ryan experienced mounting discouragement, he felt a lessening desire to attend classes, and prior to his ultimate school dematriculation he described his attendance as only fair.

Rosa, the second participant in Kahkabila was asked to describe her school experiences and those of her sons. Rosa hesitated before answering this question and eventually replied by stating,

> I really did like school. Attendance was good; maybe I miss 1 or 2 days of school in a month. But I think I not learn enough. School was so hard for me. My sons? Do they like school? I not know that. We do not talk about if they like school or not.

Rosa understood that merely sitting in a classroom on a daily basis did not equate with learning. Even though Rosa was retained several times, she remained persistent and eventually graduated from fifth grade when she was 16 years old. In regard to her son's attitude toward school, Rosa determined that she should and would have a conversation with them about that in the near future.

The Raitipura participant, Georgette, reported the following regarding her school attendance, learning, and attitude toward school:

> I always like school very much. To me, it was always good. And I learn a lot. I was good student, and my mother very proud of me. She never worry about me because I always want go to school. I never miss one day of school. I wanted go to high school, too.

Georgette's children varied greatly in their school attendance record and in the interest they showed toward school and schoolwork. Georgette shared that Marlene, her oldest child, was highly motivated and never would have missed a day of school were it not for her migraine headaches. But even with the occasional absence due to her health,

Marlene successfully completed her elementary and high school studies and intended to enroll in college in either the 2015 or 2016 school year. Georgette further explained that of the four boys in the family, only one that had problems with school attendance:

> Only one of my children not have good attendance. That is Alfredo. Poor Alfredo! They expel Alfredo from school when he in first grade! So, of course, his attendance was poor! Before that … in preschool and kindergarten it was good. Then when he ran away from school in [Pearl] Lagoon, they call him truant. Just because he no speak Creole!

Georgette and her mother, Gloria, expressed anger toward the school and the education system because of what they considered to be extremely unjust treatment of Alfredo when he was a first-grade student. They both recognized that Alfredo was different from other students, but held and maintained the expectation that schools should be prepared to understand and work with all children. When discussing what had happened to Alfredo, the mother and grandmother spoke with angry, indignant, and raised voices, indicating their lingering and significant resentment of the school system, even though 9 years had passed since Alfredo's expulsion from school.

Parental Support of Their Children and Schooling

The next generative theme that emerged in relation to school experiences was that of parental involvement in the schooling of their children. As in other generative themes, no singular response emerged among the participants. Elena's statement indicated that she was very supportive her children's schooling needs. When her son complained of being bullied by classmates, Elena indicated she had visited the school numerous times to discuss the bullying problem with the teacher:

> It not good see my son come home from school crying every day. He not like that at home. I talk to teacher, but always the same. Crying and crying. I see my son get angry now too. I know that school not good for my son. I take him out. Now I worry about school in [Pearl] Lagoon. Maybe they fight with my son because his is Miskitu.

Elena stated that she took these courageous steps in support of her son because she thought it was her right to do so. She said she didn't fear visiting the school and talking to the teacher because, remembering her mother's words, "A parent has right to be at school." Elena also recounted how she had always received support from her mother with her schoolwork. When the problem was not resolved at the community school in Raitipura, she made the decision to withdraw her son from school with the intention of enrolling him in a school in Pearl Lagoon in the 2015 school year. Elena also recalled her mother's actions when explaining that she regularly spent time at school. "I go school often to help my children because that what my mother did."

Anjelica explained that when her mother died at a young age, she was raised by her grandmother. According to Anjelica, her grandmother did not support her because she had little interest in school. She would never ask Anjelica about school or her classwork, and, because her grandmother had little education herself, she was never able to help with the schoolwork. Anjelica felt she navigated the entire education system on her own. "No one at home ever help me; no one could help me." As Anjelica moved through the primary grades in Ruben Dario Elementary School, she felt dejected because no one at home advocated for her. Not only was she not supported, Anjelica felt that she was actually discouraged by her grandmother's inattentiveness to her academic needs. Recalling her early school days, Anjelica commented, "My grandmother not like school. She never asked about school or care about school."

During the conversation with Ryan there was no indication that he had received encouragement or help with his schoolwork during the years of his school attendance.

> School hard for me, but I never ask mother and father for help. Father go fishing all day and mother busy with children, cooking, and take care of house. School

> also hard for two older brothers. I saw my brothers did not like school and that school hard for them, too.

With his father working long hours every day in small commercial fishing or working in the bush, Ryan explained that his father was unavailable to help him. Ryan also stated that taking care of a household with six children was very demanding for his mother. Finally, because Ryan's two older brothers had struggled in school and dropped out of school before him, Ryan lacked older sibling role models who may have guided, inspired, and supported him academically. This was one reason that contributed to Ryan's decision to drop out of elementary school.

Rosa, being the oldest child in the family, did not have the benefit of looking to older siblings for support and guidance as she moved through the school system. Similar to Ryan, Rosa's parent's prime concern was providing for the welfare of their large family, leaving little opportunity to voice concern over Rosa's academic needs or providing any help with schoolwork. Rosa was, therefore, left to act independently while attempting to move through the school system. Because of her own experience, Rosa expressed that she wanted to provide her children with the help that was never provided to her from her family:

> My mother and father have 12 children. They always busy and could not help me with my work. I not want to be like that with my boys. I have only two kids so I have time for them. That why I ask every day what they learn in school. I remember what they teach me in first grade. When my kids not learning the numbers and the alphabet, I know it is my job to teach them. Reading is important. How can they read if they not know the alphabet? I not want my sons to drop out of school like me.

The above statement indicated that Rosa was a motivated parent and one who felt the need to undertake the role of teacher and supportive parent in the home. Rosa may have experienced a feeling of distrust in the school because she was not convinced that her

sons were receiving the basic education she felt necessary for school success. Rosa's decision to be the vigilant mother and teacher may be viewed as radically different from her parents.

Gloria, the mother of Georgette, the fourth participant in Raitipura, said she had high academic expectations for her daughter and always told her that having an education was the only way to secure a job. Nonetheless, when her daughter, Georgette, became pregnant, the school support for her daughter seemed to vanish. Because girls and young women in community schools were allowed to continue with their schooling during and following pregnancy, Gloria could have offered to care for her baby, but instead banished her daughter from the home. It was only years later when Georgette was cast out of her boyfriend's home that Gloria reconciled with her daughter. From that point on, Gloria supported Georgette and became a powerful advocate for her grandchildren, as well.

Several people supported and advocated for Georgette's children. First was Gloria, who maintained several times during the conversation that she held high expectations for her grandchildren, believing that a solid education would ensure good future employment. The second advocate in this family was the uncle who was working to secure a college scholarship for Marlena, Georgette's eldest child. Above everyone, it was Georgette who continually fought for the educational rights of her children. When her two eldest children were unable to receive the medical attention required for their health conditions, Georgette approached the elders in the Raitipura community to ask for assistance:

> I no have money to send my kids to Bluefields to see doctors. I go visit the council of elders and ask for money for the *panga* [boat ride]; I tell them I poor and need money, and them say, "No money." But I know there [is] money. No one want to help me or my kids.

Even though Georgette was unsuccessful in her attempt to obtain financial aid, her actions taught the other family members the importance of advocating for one's children. Georgette was also seen as an advocate for her children when she, following the expulsion of her son, spoke with the school authorities and demanded they accept her son in the school in Pearl Lagoon:

> The teachers in the Raitipura school say my son not like the other children, but I say the teachers not like my son! I go to school director in [Pearl] Lagoon and ask him let Alfredo go to first grade there. He say alright.

Even though Georgette had always acted energetically in defense of and in support of her children, her efforts, for the most part, did not garner the hoped-for results. Nonetheless, throughout the entire conversation, Georgette never once gave the impression of feeling defeated by continually being rebuffed. To the contrary, Georgette remained strong in her convictions, recognizing and demanding her rights, and always prepared to take on the next battle.

Parental Participation in the Classroom

Three of the six participants expressed they worked in the classroom. One participant, Rosa, stated that she had never once entered the classroom even though she accompanied her children to and from school every day. Another participant, the teenage boy, had no children, so this theme was not applicable to him.

I asked each participant if and how they helped in the classroom. Elena expressed great enthusiasm when responding to this question. She said that it was very important that parents help in school and that her daughter was always happy when she saw her in the classroom. Elena explained that she volunteered every day, but the teacher never actually told her what to do. Because she wanted to be helpful to the students and to the teacher, she decided that one important gesture would be to organize the classroom by

putting the chairs in order. When I asked why she decided to take this action, Elena replied that she was doing exactly what her mother had done in her classroom years ago. I inquired if she would consider helping the teacher and the students in any other way. Elena's reply was as follows:

> Well, I do not know. I never thought of that. Maybe I help the kids with work. I understand everything they do. Let me think. When school starts again in February maybe I do that. Yes, that is what I will do. Help the kids.

Anjelica listened attentively while Elena expressed her interest in helping children with their work at school. Nonetheless, she was unable to make the same commitment at this particular time and even appeared to be stunned by such an idea. Quite possibly, no other parents in her children's classroom volunteered in such a way. Anjelica offered the following:

> My friend Elena and I like to help in classroom. We go in class and put chairs in rows. I think teacher like that. My grandmother never come to school. So this is special time, a happy time for me and my kids.

Of all the participants, Georgette was the only one who worked in the classroom helping children with their work. According to Georgette, it was the natural thing to do:

> I go school almost every day and help kids with the work. My mother did that, and I do it too. How else would I know what they do there, what they are learning? I was good student, so I can help them. I understand what they do.

It was noteworthy that even though Georgette held very bitter sentiments toward the school system, she understood the importance of education itself and was willing to volunteer many hours to help the children succeed.

Relationships of Participants With Teachers

During each of the conversations, participants shared information that indicated the type of relationship that existed between the parents, their children, and the teachers.

The first participant who shared some of her experiences or perceptions about teachers was Elena.

Elena's attitude about speaking with teachers reflected her self-confidence. She expressed that she never feared talking with a teachers or visiting a classroom because that was her right as a parent:

> My mother always talk to teachers, and I do, too. I go to school to talk to teacher about my son. I want her to know that some of the boys calling him names and being mean to him. Teacher not care or not know what to do. The problem not change. That is why I take my son out of school.

Elena worried about the teachers her son would have in the new school, too. None of the teachers in the elementary school in Pearl Lagoon were from the Miskitu community; therefore, none of them spoke Miskitu or understood the Miskitu culture. Also, Elena wondered what would happen to her son on the playground. Would the students taunt him because he spoke so little Creole? Would the teachers monitor the children's behavior on the playground?

According to Anjelica, she had far less communication with the teachers than Elena.

> When I was in school, I need so much help. I ask teachers for help, but they no help me. No one at home help so who can I ask? Teachers? I ask them to help me, but maybe they too busy. I do not know. I feel sad and no want go to school.

Anjelica never mentioned any conversations she may have had with teachers about her children. Anjelica maintained that she did not know what her children were learning in school, and when I suggested talking to the teacher, Anjelica responded that she had not considered that. Similarly, when I suggested that Anjelica approach the teachers and ask what kind of volunteer help might be needed in the classroom, Anjelica did not reply. Even after Eveth provided a translation, Anjelica remained silent.

Like Anjelica, Rosa from Kahkabila had academic problems throughout her elementary school experience, but, unlike Anjelica, she did receive some help from her teachers. She recalled asking for assistance, explaining to the teachers that she did not understand Spanish and would need help with translations. Also, when Rosa explained how she worked with her sons every day after school, I understood that Rosa was taking on the role of a very dedicated teacher. A similarity between Rosa and Anjelica was that both these mothers expressed they did not know specifically what their children were learning in school. Furthermore, neither woman could conceive of directing any inquiries concerning the content of the curriculum to the teachers. The parent with the greatest hesitation regarding communication with the teacher was Rosa, evidenced when she stated,

> I go to school all days. I want to see what going on in class, see what the children do. I not go inside. I stand outside by the windows and look inside to watch my sons. … As they get ready to leave school. I no talk to the teachers.

As a result of some of the comments made by the parents, the following questions may be posed. What would it be like if the teachers and families learned to communicate with one another and to trust one another? What activities might take place to achieve this end?

Ryan's relationship with his teachers might best be described as one of resentment and wanting. Even though a variety of factors contributed to his academic challenges, Ryan strongly believed that his needs as an elementary school student had not been met. Even though it is said that teachers in schools throughout the Pearl Lagoon regions do not receive books for their students, Ryan did not believe or accept that. He recalled asking his teachers for books, hoping to study the books at home to improve his comprehension of the subject matter. Due to never receiving books, Ryan stated scornfully, "They would

never give me any." On the day of the interview, Ryan was reading at the early primary level. Ryan stated, "I want to read, and they never teach me. Now I am 16 years old. Still cannot read. [Will] I read some day? I want to, but I do not know."

Georgette and some of her family members shared numerous examples describing their relationships with teachers. The conversation with this family revealed they did not place great trust in the actions or advice of teachers. Marlena offered an example of this distrust when she stated,

> I was always good student, and I liked school. But then I got the bad headaches. Then was hard to concentrate. Teachers told me to stop going to school. They say I go blind if I keep reading. I did not believe them. I stayed in school.

Marlena disregarded the teachers' advice, and in so doing, succeeded in graduating from elementary and high school and was hopeful to begin college in the future. Later, Georgette expressed her own distrust of educators as well. She explained that her son's first-grade teacher had him expelled from school because of what she called his "bad behavior." After another unsuccessful experience in a different school in Pearl Lagoon, her son, still in first grade, was permitted to return to his original school only to be banned once again by his original teacher, this time told he was too old for first grade. Thus, at the age of 7, Georgette's son was forced to drop out of school. Gloria and Georgette described the school as unfair and the system as unjust. Gloria called the teachers incompetent in their unwillingness to work with students having problems with behavior. She exclaimed, "They are teachers; they should know about things like that." Finally, in regard to her initiating conversations with teachers or volunteering in the classroom, Georgette said that she did not fear talking with teachers and did not need to ask a permission to work in the classroom. She stated, "I am mother. That is my right."

Elena, Georgette, and Gloria were the three participants who understood that they should be guaranteed certain rights in the school system.

Research Question 2

In which ways may the Miskitu language be undergoing a language shift in the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila?

The Miskitu language has, by far, the most speakers of all the indigenous languages spoken in Nicaragua. Yet, in the Pearl Lagoon region of Nicaragua, more and more Miskitu speakers in Raitipura and Kahkabila are becoming bilingual and oftentimes trilingual, with Creole English learned as the second language and, if trilingual, Spanish as the third language. There are several Miskitu communities in the Pearl Lagoon Basin and each has been strongly influenced by the English-speaking Creole population also residing in the basin. The recent influx of Spanish-speaking *mestizos* from western Nicaragua has also affected the linguistic composition of the Mosquito Coast.

The purpose of this research question was to learn in which ways the Miskitu language may be undergoing a language shift in the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila due to the influence of Creole English and Spanish. During the conversations with the six participants, several themes emerged that may serve to broaden understanding of where, why, and how a language shift in these communities may be occurring. The themes that emerged to assist in this endeavor follow: (a) evidence of the use of the Miskitu language in the home, (b) evidence of the use of the Miskitu language in school, and (c) evidence of the use of the Miskitu language in the community.

Evidence of the Use of the Miskitu Language in the Home

Three participants, Elena, Anjelica, and Rosa, attributed their proficiency in speaking Miskitu to both of their parents being fluent Miskitu speakers and that Miskitu was the only language spoken in their homes. Elena and Anjelica stated that they spoke mostly Miskitu to their children, and that only occasionally did they communicate with their children in Creole. According to Elena and Anjelica, their children spoke Miskitu as a first language and their first exposure to Creole was with their playmates. Elena expressed that her children's knowledge of Creole expanded, once they advanced through the grades in Ruben Dario Elementary School.

Although Elena and Anjelica explained that they spoke primarily Miskitu in the home, Rosa stated she spoke both Creole and Miskitu with some family members and only Miskitu with others. Rosa noted that her language choice was determined by her language partner:

> I speak Creole and Miskitu in the house. Mother and father talk Miskitu to me; I answer in Creole. Also, I talk Creole and Miskitu to my sons. Most of time they speak Creole, but they understand Miskitu. But when I talk to brothers and sisters and their kids I talk only Miskitu.

Rosa shared that it was at the request of her siblings that she spoke only Miskitu to them and to their young children. Rosa's brothers and sisters were adamant in the conviction that a heritage language could only learned and maintained if children were exposed to it exclusively from birth. When I asked Rosa if she would like her sons to speak Miskitu, she affirmed that she would. Following that statement, Rosa, after a prolonged silence, acknowledged that if she truly wanted her children to speak Miskitu, she needed to speak Miskitu to them. Rosa stated, "I try to do what my brothers and sisters do. I going to

speak Miskitu to my sons." Nonetheless, at this point, it is evident that some language loss has occurred with Rosa's two children.

Ryan, the youngest of the five participants, was the only one that did not speak Miskitu. He pointed out that the only person in his family who spoke Miskitu fluently was his father, who was born and raised in Kahkabila of two Miskitu parents. Ryan clarified why Creole was his mother tongue and that of his siblings:

> There are some Miskitu men in Kahkabila who marry women who not Miskitu. They get wives from Creole villages on the Lagoon [Pearl Lagoon Basin]. My father do that too. My mother was Creole and speak Creole to us. So I speak Creole, only Creole.

Ryan stressed just how much he wanted to learn Miskitu. He regretted not being able to learn Miskitu in his home. This was another complaint that Ryan had about the school system. He felt it was the obligation of a school located in a Miskitu community to teach or reinforce the Miskitu language, but that was never his experience. Ryan stated that teaching Miskitu for 30 minutes each week was insufficient. In a search for the completion of his identity Ryan stated, "I am half Miskitu, and I want to speak my language." Gloria shared that she was born into a Miskitu speaking home and stated:

> My mother and father were Miskitu. We always speak Miskitu in our house. When I go to Bluefields many people speak Spanish and Creole so I learn the languages too. My boyfriend and I spoke Creole together in Bluefields, but always I speak Miskitu to my daughter.

Like Ryan, Georgette was of both Miskitu and Creole heritage, but Georgette's mother was Miskitu and her father Creole, the reverse of Ryan's parents. Georgette's parents separated when she was a young girl, and mother and daughter returned to Raitipura. Had Georgette's mother and father remained together in Bluefields, where the primary languages are English Creole and Spanish, the Miskitu language may have

played a lesser role in Georgette's life. Gloria, Georgette's mother, explained the circumstances that brought her to Bluefields and the reason she left:

> My parents send me to Bluefields for high school. School expensive, but parents want me to have good future. I was in Bluefields when I meet Georgette's father and get pregnant. When man starts new family I return with Georgette to Raitipura. When we go home [to Raitipura], we speak only Miskitu.

Georgette then shared that she always spoke Miskitu in the home with her mother, and that was a practice she continued with her own children when they were younger. Georgette recounted, "Many people in Raitipura speak Creole and Miskitu. I speak Creole, and my kids do too. But in house I tell them to speak Miskitu, but, really, we speak both Miskitu and Creole in house now."

Evidence of the Use of the Miskitu Language in School

Elena was the first participant to explain that Miskitu was the language of care and instruction in the years of preschool and kindergarten in Ruben Dario Elementary School in Raitipura:

> I send my children to preschool when they 3 years old. Teachers speak Miskitu and are from the Raitipura community. Kids in preschool for 2 years, and then go kindergarten. In kindergarten teacher speaks Miskitu too. In first grade they start speak Creole to students.

According to Elena, Creole was the official language of instruction from first through fifth grades. However, Elena stated that some classes were taught in Miskitu. Elena felt confident that so many teachers in the school were fluent in Miskitu because they could always help the children who are still learning Creole as a second language. It was also explained that from first grade through fifth grade, Miskitu and Spanish were taught weekly for 30 minutes each. Elena noted that she would miss the support of the Miskitu language in Ruben Dario School when she transfers her son to the school in Pearl Lagoon. In that school, all the teachers are Creole and speak English Creole and Spanish.

Anjelica expressed that her children were fluent in Miskitu, and she was pleased they were able to have Miskitu teachers in kindergarten. She feared, though, that the transition to a first-grade classroom, where the teacher spoke only Creole, would be a deterrent in her children's learning. Ultimately, the first-grade teacher must have arrived at the same conclusion, because, according to Anjelica, most first-grade lessons are now taught in Miskitu.

Of the five participants, Ryan was the only one whose mother tongue was Creole English and who did not speak Miskitu. Even though classes from first through sixth grade in Rafaela Herrera were taught only in Creole English and by Creole teachers who did not speak Miskitu, Ryan reproached the education that was offered to him. He stated the following:

> I am half Miskitu and I want to speak my language. Why I not learn Miskitu in school? School had one class of Miskitu each week. Not enough. School not give me anything. I cannot read, and I not speak Miskitu.

This, in fact, was another complaint that Ryan had about the school system. He felt it was the obligation of the public school that was located in the Miskitu community to teach or reinforce the Miskitu language, but that was never his experience. Ryan stated that teaching Miskitu for only 30 minutes each week was insufficient. The near absence of the use of the Miskitu language in Grades 1 through 5 was frustrating for Ryan. He was living in the midst of a large Miskitu community and expected that attendance in his community school would help him develop his Miskitu identity. Of all of Ryan's disappointments in his schooling, that he had not learned to speak Miskitu was his greatest dissatisfaction.

When Rosa was a student in elementary school in Kahkabila, neither Miskitu nor Creole was the language of instruction. Rosa explained that when she was enrolled in

preschool at the age of 4, she knew how to speak Miskitu fluently and was beginning to speak Creole English. The grave problem she faced was that, beginning in first grade, all the teachers spoke Spanish, a language of which she had no knowledge:

> I was so happy to start school. But in first and second grade I no learn much. The teachers speak Spanish and I no understand any Spanish. None of the teachers were Miskitu. I stay after school and ask for help, buy how can they help me? Teachers very nice but no help. In fourth and fifth grades Spanish getting better, but by that time I already fail three times.

Rosa explained that after 2010, Creole English replaced Spanish as the language of instruction in school. She lamented that the change had not been instituted earlier. Although Rosa's Spanish skills did improve over time, she admitted, "Even today I not speak Spanish very well." Because classes were now taught in Spanish and because Rosa's two sons spoke Creole English fluently, she felt they had a much better opportunity than she had to achieve a good education.

According to Georgette, she, her mother, and her children were fluent in Creole English and Miskitu. Georgette expressed frustration that Creole was the language spoken in school:

> Why they speaking Creole in school? Everyone knows it; why teach it? I want my kids speak [Standard] English. Yes. [Standard] English and Miskitu. One half of day, they should teach Miskitu. The other half Standard English. Now it is 30 minutes Miskitu in a week. That not enough.

In speaking of her preference for Miskitu and Standard English being used equally as languages of instruction, Georgette spoke passionately and with conviction. It was worthwhile to note that in stating her opinions about language use in school, Georgette never once mentioned the use of the Spanish language as a viable option.

Evidence of the Use of the Miskitu Language in the Community

Elena, Anjelica, and Georgette confirmed they spoke Miskitu in the home. They also expressed that their children learned Creole English from their playmates and that they had brought Creole English into the home. Rosa explained that she selectively spoke Miskitu in the house, speaking and responding in the Miskitu language only when conversing with her siblings, nieces, and nephews. Ryan, as was explained earlier, was a monolingual Creole English speaker. In the section that follows is a discussion of what languages are spoken outside the home and outside of school.

From what was learned with one guide and several participants, language choice usually depended on three elements: location, activity, and age group, with the last two categories often linked. Elena and Anjelica said that they spoke Miskitu and Creole when they visited Ruben Dario School. Because the teachers in the kindergarten are from the Miskitu community and are fluent Miskitu speakers, Elena and Anjelica spoke uniquely Miskitu with them. When addressing teachers in the elementary grades, they spoke either Miskitu or Creole, depending on the language preference of the teacher. When they met these teachers outside the school environment, Elena and Anjelica said they continued to use the same language they employed at school. When Elena and Anjelica walked to Pearl Lagoon to shop, they said they automatically spoke Creole English with merchants.

Rosa commented that when she left her house she usually spoke Creole, but with one exception:

> When I go outside and I meet someone, I know what language to speak. If I see a older person, someone like my parents' age, I always speak Miskitu. With people about my age, I speak Creole often. More and more people a little younger like speak Creole now.

In the above statement, it is clear that Rosa depended on the element of "age group"

to help her decide which language to use.

The guide and translator, Jairo, contributed to the discussion of language choice outside the home, stating,

> Every month there is meeting in Kahkabila. The elders of the community have meeting to talk about business. Like how much money collected from selling rosewood to buyers. At meeting, elders speak only Miskitu. So if you want understand you need speak Miskitu. I go to all meetings.

In addition to the community meetings, Jairo provided another example of how age and place determine language choice. He stated,

> 16, 17-year-old people and people a little older, like 20 to 30 years old, like to play baseball in Kahkabila on Saturday or Sunday. There are girls' teams and boys' and men's teams and women's teams. Our Miskitu people like baseball. … We have fun. … Everybody always speak Creole at the baseball games.

Jairo also offered that Creole was spoken at these sports events because it is the language of choice for young people in Kahkabila during these types of gatherings.

Research Question 3

In which ways do the Miskitu people of Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the representation of their culture?

While discussing with the participants how they saw their Miskitu culture represented in society, two generative themes emerged: (a) representation of Miskitu culture in schools, and (b) representation of Miskitu culture in the home and the community.

Representation of Miskitu Culture in School

Language is one part of culture, and all participants except Ryan shared that the Miskitu language was spoken in classrooms that serve children from the ages of 3 through 5. In Raitipura, Elena and Anjelica stated that Miskitu and Creole were spoken in first grade. In contrast, in Kahkabila, the language of instruction in first grade was Creole,

a fact verified when I met Josette, the first-grade teacher in Herrera Elementary School. The sole language of instruction in first grade was necessarily Creole because Josette was Creole and did not speak Miskitu.

Elena stated she would like her children to learn more about the culture of the Miskitu people in school. For example, Elena thought that the children should learn about the history and language of her people. She knew that the Miskitu language was taught for 30 minutes each week, but she felt that was not enough time. Yet, Elena expressed doubt that culture would ever be taught in school:

> Nobody talk about history of our people in school. We know we are Miskitu but nothing more than that. Who can teach us more? I do not think the Miskitu teachers know history either. So how we going learn our culture? Maybe we never can. Maybe this never happen.

With no teachers of Miskitu heritage in Beulah Lightburn Elementary School in Pearl Lagoon, the school her son will attend in 2015, Elena lamented, "It be worse for my son in Pearl Lagoon. There no hope that teachers will care about our culture there."

Anjelica told me that her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were all Miskitu peoples. Anjelica regretted that even though her heritage was purely Miskitu, she knew little about her ancestors:

> My family tell me my relatives all from Raitipura. But who came before grandparents? Nobody ever tell me anything about that in school. Can Miskitu teachers teach Miskitu history? How can I learn that? How can I teach my kids?

I asked Elena and Anjelica if they had an interest in learning about Miskitu culture as adults. Elena and Anjelica had never imagined that adults could attend school, but they both enthusiastically welcomed the possibility of having adult-education classes in the community of Raitipura where they could begin to learn about their culture.

Rosa's comments relating to the teaching of Miskitu culture in the local school supported what was said by Elena and Anjelica. In thinking about the lack of Miskitu culture lessons for her and her sons, Rosa was saddened. Rosa explained, "I am proud to be Miskitu and to live in Kahkabila with my Miskitu community. But something wrong. Why I not learn about our people in school. My two boys still not learning that."

Georgette stated that she did not know anything about the history of the Miskitu people. Like the other participants this is something that she greatly regretted. Georgette explained:

> I look at all papers teachers send home with my kids. There is never anything about Miskitu history, Miskitu life, Miskitu way to dress. No, nothing. I often help in classroom. Teachers year after year teach other things, history of other people and places but never about our Miskitu people.

Representation of Miskitu Culture in the Home and the Community

In the following section, I present participants' discussion of how they understand culture and how the Miskitu culture is or should be represented in the community. I asked Elena if the Miskitu culture was represented in her community:

> Yes, I think there are Miskitu dances, but I not see any. And ancient dress. What was that like? And music? Someone say there is Miskitu music. … I not know what that sounds like. I like to learn all about that. If there are classes for adults, I want go.

Elena also stated that she wanted to learn about this Miskitu culture not only for her own benefit and enjoyment but also so that she could teach her son and daughter about their culture.

Ryan did not mention traditional music, dance, and dress when asked about the existence of Miskitu culture in the community. Instead, he addressed activities in contemporary, daily life that he considered indicative of Miskitu culture. Ryan described why he loved living in Kahkabila:

> [Kahkabila] is good for me. I fish almost every day. I fish with Dad, and we fish like my grandfather fished. We have nets. Yes, I like go to bush and farm, maybe one time a week. I take the dory. Sometimes I stay in bush with my grandmother. She has house there. When I come back from bush I have mangoes, sugar cane, cassava and sometimes "apples."

Ryan knew he descended from a long line of fisherman and that fishing was a tradition not only for him but for the Miskitu peoples as well. Ryan felt very connected to his family. Even though it was Ryan I was interviewing, he wanted me to know about his family. During the interview, his younger siblings not only remained in the room while I was interviewing Ryan, but they played at a very close distance to where Ryan and I were sitting. Additionally, Ryan wanted me to know about his connection to other family members by pointing out the photographs on the walls and by describing each one in detail. Finally, Ryan wanted me to know that he had two older brothers who lived and worked in Pearl Lagoon, each one contributing to the family savings account, the funds of which would be used to open a restaurant one day in Kahkabila. Family recognition, loyalty, and cohesion, with each member working to support the other, may be understood as a cultural trait found in Ryan's family and may well be indicative of other families in Kahkabila.

Rosa shared her ideas regarding Miskitu culture in the community. Rosa was the first participant to state that in Kahkabila, she had actually witnessed ancient Miskitu dancing:

> Christmas is important to our Miskitu people. All families go outside to celebrate. Some people sing and some people dance. There is Miskitu woman from another village who knows the old dances. She and her friends dance in circle to music. This is dance I want to learn. I wonder if that is possible.

I asked Jairo if the Miskitu dancer only visited Kahkabila during the Christmas holidays. He responded that she returned to the community each spring and stayed for 2 or 3

weeks. I then inquired if the dancer would ever consider teaching Kahkabila residents how to perform the ancient and ritualistic dances. Jairo stated that when she returned he would ask about that. When Rosa heard this, she immediately cried out, "I want be one of the students!"

Rosa provided an example of the communal aspect of Miskitu culture in Kahkabila. She explained the residents were dissatisfied that there was no high school in their community. Although Miskitu teenagers in Raitipura were able to walk to the high school located in Pearl Lagoon, young people in Kahkabila did not have that same opportunity. The only possible way to receive a high school education when Rosa was a student was to either travel by boat to Pearl Lagoon or to move to Bluefields and enroll in a high school there. Finally, the elders of Kahkabila decided that this situation needed to change so that more Miskitu children could receive a high school education. Rosa explained:

> The Miskitu elders meet to talk about the problem. No one in government want to build high school. Elders say, "We will build the school." We have money from selling rosewood. In 2009 our Miskitu people start to build high school in Kahkabila. School finish in 2010.

The true communal spirit of the Miskitu peoples may well be illustrated in the story of the construction of the high school in Kahkabila.

Georgette explained the communalism of childcare in Miskitu families as a cultural trait of the Miskitu peoples. She stated that in Miskitu families "everyone helps take care of babies." I observed that when Georgette's adopted baby was racing back and forth on the front porch during the conversation, someone was always there to pick him up, talk to him, and offer condolences each time he fell down. At other times, he was scooped up by a family member and taken to the front yard to play for a few minutes.

With all the attention provided by the mother, grandmother, and the five other children, the baby never cried or fussed during my 2-hour conversation with the family. Georgette explained:

> I love baby like he is my own. My kids love him too. He is baby for everyone. The baby always happy. It is like that in Raitipura. That is how Miskitu people live. We help each another. We take care of one another.

According to Georgette, the example of collectively taking care of children is a part of the Miskitu culture. Georgette also stated here that the joint care of the baby brought happiness to the baby and to all of the family members.

Research Question 4

In which ways does poverty affect the academic lives and opportunities of Miskitu families living in Raitipura and Kahkabila?

Throughout the conversations with the six participants, it became evident that poverty played a significant role in the lives of Miskitu families in Raitipura and Kahkabila. Five themes that emerged during the interviews are listed as follows: (a) the relationship among pregnancy, poverty, and education; (b) the relationship between health care, poverty, and education; (c) family poverty and its effect on academic opportunity; (d) loss of a parent or single-parent households, poverty, and academic opportunity; and (e) national poverty and its effect on schools, resources, and academic opportunity

Relationship Among Pregnancy, Poverty, and Education

Elena explained that she was an excellent student while enrolled in elementary school and during the freshman year of high school. She attributed much of her success to the unfailing encouragement of her mother. However, Elena's successful school

experiences and the high academic expectations of her mother would come to an end when Elena became pregnant following her freshman year in high school:

> When my mother knew I was pregnant she got disappointed. Not mad at me but so sad about it. She want take care of baby so I finish high school. Mother want me to graduate and get job. But I say no; I want be with my baby.

Thus, the possibility of gaining employment by earning a high school diploma was thwarted once Elena became pregnant and made the decision to withdraw from high school. Since her withdrawal from high school, Elena had never been employed outside the home. Elena was grateful that her husband regularly sent money from Panama where he had been able to secure work.

In Raitipura, Gloria and her daughter Georgette left school because of pregnancy. Gloria withdrew from school while a high school student in Bluefields, and Georgette dropped out when she was in elementary school. Even though Gloria's parents had the financial resources to send her to school in Bluefields, once Gloria became pregnant, she withdrew from school. When the relationship with the father of her child ended, Gloria and her daughter returned to Raitipura. Gloria never resumed her high school studies, and, similar to Elena, never succeeded in finding a job outside the home.

Gloria stated that when she returned to Raitipura, her one hope for the future was her daughter Georgette. Just as her parents had encouraged and supported education, Gloria did the same with Georgette. The pregnancy of her daughter at such a young age devastated and angered Gloria. Like Elena's mother, Gloria's mother had tried to show her the connection between a good education and employment opportunities, but because of pregnancy both girls dropped out of school. Georgette recounted what happened when she became pregnant:

> I like school and always try do good work. But then I got pregnant and not want go to school anymore. I want stay home with my mother and have my mother help me, but she say no. You cannot live here anymore. She told me live with father of the baby. I was 12, and I was afraid.

During the period that Georgette lived with her boyfriend's parents she had four more children. When her boyfriend began a family with another woman, Georgette returned home to her mother, and they, along with Georgette's children, have lived together since then.

Relationship Between Health Care, Poverty, and Education

Georgette and her daughter, Marlena, poignantly expressed the link between health care, poverty, and education. Marlena told me that from a young age she had suffered because of migraine headaches. When Marlena approached her teachers about the headaches, the only solution they offered was that Marlena should drop out of school. The teachers reasoned that if Marlena continued to read she would go blind. Georgette, in her unwillingness to accept such a prognosis, brought Marlena to the clinic in Pearl Lagoon in search of a medical consultation. Marlena then explained what she was told:

> Doctors tell me I need see a special doctor, a doctor for the brain, a neurologist. But there is no neurologist in [Pearl] Lagoon. Bluefields is big city and has neurologist. My mother had very little money. No money to pay for the boat to Bluefields. So I never went to hospital in Bluefields with my mother. I stay in school with migraine headaches; I did not leave, but was very, very hard for me.

Marlena was adamant in refusing to withdraw from school because of her health condition, and, because of this fortitude, she did complete high school. Marlena's brother, Alberto, suffered a different outcome as a result of his health condition.

Georgette explained that her son had complained of debilitating back pain ever since he was a young boy:

> My boy is good, but he left school when he in fifth grade. Too much pain. Very hard walk to school and hard to sit at desk all day. Doctor say Alberto need go to

> hospital in Bluefields, but no money for that. I not have money for boat to Bluefields.

During the time of the interview, Alberto was 19 years old, disabled, and unemployed. Georgette was grateful that Alberto could help with certain chores in the home, but she wished her oldest son was able to earn money to help support the family. The poverty that this family experienced denied Marlena and Alberto the healthcare services due them. Marlena, however, persevered, continued her schooling, and was hoping to begin college studies. Alberto, in contrast, because of his more grave disability, was denied a high school education because the family could not afford access to health services.

Family Poverty and its Effect on Academic Opportunity

Several participants shared stories indicating that their academic opportunities were thwarted because they and their family members were living in poverty. The denial of academic opportunities led to diminished economic opportunities in each case. Ryan detailed how his family fell into deep poverty and how this poverty affected his life and that of all family members. When Ryan's mother died suddenly and at a young age, his father became the sole caregiver for his seven young children. Unable to work the same hours in the fishing industry as in earlier times, the family income was drastically reduced. Ryan explained this family predicament as follows:

> I remember when mother died we very poor. Never any money. Everything we eat comes from the bush. Dad worked there to feed family. No time to fish anymore. There was no money for anything … even shoes. When I had no shoes, I was so ashamed. I told my father that I no go to school anymore because I had no shoes. He said OK.

Although school had always been a challenge for Ryan, it was not until those years of extreme poverty that Ryan decided to withdraw from the school system. According to

Ryan, his two older brothers had dropped out of school because of family poverty during this time as well.

Rosa recounted that, although she always liked school, the economic situation of her large family prevented her from enrolling in high school. Rosa had always struggled academically through her years of elementary school education and was retained in several grades, mostly because of her inability to understand the Spanish-speaking teachers, but she persisted and finally graduated from elementary school when she was 16 years old. Rosa explained that she perservered during elementary school because it was always her intention to attend high school. Ultimately, this opportunity was out of her reach. Rosa shared what transpired upon her graduation from elementary school:

> I always try hard in school. It was hard for me, but I like to learn. I graduated and was so happy. I told my mother and father I want go to high school in [Pearl] Lagoon, but they say there is no money for that. That was the end. There was no high school for me.

Even though Rosa never had the opportunity to attend high school because her family lacked the necessary financial resources, she never gave up on education itself. For this reason, she carefully taught and guided her sons after school by teaching and reinforcing their literacy and number skills on a daily basis.

Loss of a Parent or a Single-Parent Household, Poverty, and Academic Opportunity

Five of the six participants in this study had either lost one parent through death or separation or was always a single parent. The stories of how the combination of parental loss or single parenthood affected the education of these participants were expressed by Anjelica, Ryan, Rosa, Georgette, and her mother, Gloria. Anjelica was the first to define what the loss of her mother meant to her as a young student:

> My mother die when I was baby. Then my grandmother take care of me. When I in school, first grade, second grade … I had trouble. I did not understand work.

> Ask grandmother for help. She not help me. Maybe she not know how to help me. When work got too hard I want to stay home … not go to school. Grandmother not care. She say, "OK. Stay home." I wish I had mother like Elena.

Anjelica stated that her grandmother could not help with schoolwork and did not care if she was truant from school. She also lamented that she did not have a mother who might have supported her and helped with her learning.

Ryan expressed that even though he had serious academic problems early in his elementary school education, the situation rapidly deteriorated with the death of his mother:

> When mother living, everything was good in the house. Not lot of money, but there was food to eat. Then mother die and everything change fast. No one to take care of little brothers and sisters. So dad could not fish much anymore. He need to help in the house. I cannot think about school or the work when mother die. I then decide no more school for me.

Ryan also stated that his older sister continued with her studies but that his two older brothers withdrew from the school system at approximately that same time he did.

According to Rosa, she was always a single mother. With two young sons to raise and being unemployed, it was imperative that she continue to live in the same home with her parents, her 11 siblings, and her nieces and nephews. Rosa explained that all adults living in the home contributed in certain ways to sustain the basic food needs of the family. Nonetheless, in regard to the education of her children, Rosa believed it was greatly her responsibility, and she would never rely on the school to take full responsibility in the education of her children:

> I do not know what my sons learn in school. No one has ever told me, and I never ask. I know what I learn in school when I was student. My sons should learn same thing. I have no money for books or paper or pencils. … But I have one board with piece of chalk. It is not much, but I know I help them. I need to help. My boys must have success in school.

With the bare minimum of resources, Rosa worked with determination to do whatever she could to help her sons learn at home whatever she thought they were lacking at school. The daily counting and alphabet lessons signified to Rosa that her sons would not have an inferior education.

National Poverty and its Effects on Schools, Resources, and Education

In this section, the term "school resources" will include classroom materials, school buildings and furniture, curriculum materials, and teachers. The theme of how poverty affects school resources emerged when I asked participants about communication with the school, courses taught in school, and the curriculum taught in school.

Elena had chosen to transfer her son to the Beulah Lightburn Elementary School in Pearl Lagoon beginning in the 2015 school year, but she was concerned that her son would not receive the support services necessary for him to transition from classes where the primary language spoken in preschool and kindergarten was Miskitu to classes in Pearl Lagoon where the only language spoken was Creole:

> We speak only Miskitu in our home. My son no speak many words in Creole. I know teachers in Lagoon only speak Creole. I wish someone who knows Miskitu could give him some help in class or after school. But I do not think they have teachers like that.

Elena had the foresight to understand that her son would need extra help when he began school in Pearl Lagoon, but she also understood the unlikelihood that such a resource would be available to her Miskitu-speaking son. Jairo, the guide and teacher from Kahkabila, had explained to me that the school system offered minimal pay to teachers with a monthly salary of approximately $120.00 and that no resources existed for special teachers who might assist a child such as Elena's son.

When I asked Anjelica what subjects were taught to her children, she responded that she did not know. She attributed this to seeing no papers sent home and that the students never had textbooks. Also, when I asked if she had ever spoken with the teachers about the curriculum, she expressed that she had no communication with the teachers:

> I do not know what my kids are learning in school. There are no papers that come home and no books. I did not talk with the teachers about this, and they no talk to me about it either. It is always like this.

Apparently Anjelica was not aware that the teachers were given minimal school supplies.

According to the first-grade teacher, Josette, and according to what I observed in visiting two classrooms in Kahkabila, classrooms had no books or school supplies. Teachers had no desks, cabinets, or tables of any kind. The only furniture consisted of the limited and inadequate number of student desks. The teacher wrote all lessons on the board. Josette had explained that reading lessons were written on the board and that children never had the opportunity to actually practice reading from a book. Josette and Jairo stated that there were no computers in any of the elementary school classrooms in Kahkabila. Jairo further explained that in the high school in Kahkabila, all the students must share a single computer.

As explained earlier, Ryan resented the school and his teachers because they never gave him books. Ryan wanted me to know that because he never received books, teachers were to blame for his inability to read. Each of the six participants expressed that books were never distributed to the students, but none of them seemed to understand that the inadequacy of school funding was a source of the problem. Teachers never gave Ryan and the other students anything because they had nothing to give.

Rosa was another participant who did not seem to comprehend the dearth of resources that existed in the elementary school. She said that she did not understand the

content of the curriculum because she never received papers or textbooks from the school explaining it. When I suggested that having a conversation with the teacher might provide some information regarding the subjects taught in school, Rosa's responded, "I do not know the teachers very well." For Rosa, the teachers were unapproachable. I contemplated the kind of communication that existed between the families and the school. Did the resources exist that might be used to train teachers and parents about how to better communicate with one another to form good and trusting relationships? Certainly, this might be considered when a mother like Rosa stated the following:

> I really not know the teachers. We say hi to each other. No more than that. … I not go in classroom in the morning or after school when I pick up sons. I look through the window. I no want go inside.

The conversation with Georgette revealed several examples of how school resources were affected by poverty. I described earlier how Marlena was misdiagnosed by her teachers and told to stop reading because reading while experiencing migraines would cause her to go blind. This dangerous and erroneous information passed on to Marlena by her teachers may have been averted, had there been a nurse in the school or in a community clinic who could have offered sound medical advice. Similarly, Alberto, Gloria's son, who dropped out of school because of his physical disability, would have benefitted from a nurse or healthcare professional available to him at the community school in Raitipura.

Alberto withdrew from the education system in elementary school, but even if he had wanted to attend high school he would have been physically unable to do so. It was a 5-mile walk between Raitipura and Pearl Lagoon where the high school was located, with no public transportation between the two towns, aside from the three *caponeras* which were, more often than not, inoperable. Nonetheless, even when the buggies were repaired

and available, poor families such as Alberto's would not have been able to afford the fare. Students in Raitipura walk to the high school in Pearl Lagoon, a feat that would have been impossible for Alberto. The school system serving physically disabled children did not possess the resources to provide transportation for students like Alberto. Further research would help to determine if any programs for special-education students existed in Raitipura and Kahkabila.

Gloria and Georgette felt strongly that Alfredo, the son who was permanently expelled from school in first grade, was treated wrongly in the school system. Georgette explained her battle with the school system:

> My son Alfredo not bad boy. He need help with behavior. Teachers do not know how to help kids like mine. Why not? How can school tell boy in first grade that he cannot go to school?

Gloria and Georgette criticized the teachers for not knowing how to work with students like Alfredo. Sometimes a teacher does not have the understanding and the skills necessary to help a child like Alfredo. In this situation Alfredo, his teacher, and Gloria and Georgette may have benefitted greatly from the assistance and guidance of a school counselor or social worker. A school such as Ruben Dario Elementary School, that is substantially underfunded, would not be able to hire these types of resource specialists.

Summary of Major Findings

In Chapter 4, I described conversations and documented six Miskitu participants who lived in Raitipura and Kahkabila, Nicaragua, each of whom had been selected to participate in the study because they had voluntarily left the school system. Of the six participants, five were women. Even though each person recounted his or her own particular story, based on the research questions, one descriptor was common among all participants: each of them had withdrawn from the school system at an early age, two of

them in high school and four in elementary school. The purpose of the study was to determine which factors contributed to this early disengagement of these Miskitu community members from the national education system.

Participants shared the academic, linguistic, cultural, and economic challenges they experienced as they matriculated through the schools in their communities. Chapter 4 included the generative themes that emerged, based on the four major research questions. To answer Research Question 1, the school experiences of the participants and their children included attitudes about learning, school and school attendance; parental support of children and their schooling; parental participation in the classroom; and the relationship of participants to teachers. Research Question 2, the possible language shift in the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila, encompassed how the Miskitu language was used in the home, the school, and in the wider Miskitu community. To answer Research Question 3, participants discussed how they understood the representation of their culture in relation to the home, the school, and the community. Finally, Research Question 4, poverty and its affect on academic opportunities, included factors of pregnancy and poverty; poverty and health care; family poverty; parental loss, single-parent households, and poverty; and national poverty and its affect on schools and school resources.

I was grateful to have met and communicated with the six participants from the communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila. All conversations were instructive and offered insight into the challenges experienced by these participants while they or their children were enrolled in the community schools and why each of them dropped out of school. That each person was willing to share their personal and sometimes painful school

experiences with me was due, in large part, to the important roles played by the Miskitu guides in Raitipura and Kahkabila. Because of their familiarity with these Miskitu communities and their residents, the guides, Eveth and Jairo, were able to meet with participants, arrange times for the interviews, guide me through the communities, and remain with me and the participants for the duration of conversations. The guides also arranged second meetings, either in person or by telephone from the United States, so participants could hear, correct, and eventually approve the report of their conversation with me. Overall, the presence of the Miskitu guides contributed to an atmosphere of trust that would not have been possible were I conducting the inquiry alone. I was extremely grateful for the kind, intelligent, and reassuring qualities of Eveth and Jairo.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This chapter comprises three sections in which I discuss the research results. In the first section, I present a discussion and analysis of the major findings and conclusions from the findings. Recommendations for further research and recommendations for professional practices are located in the second section. The chapter ends with the conclusion, recommendations, and reflections of the researcher.

Discussion and Conclusion

Four major research questions guided this study. In this section, each research question will be discussed and followed by a conclusion.

Discussion and Conclusion for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: In which ways do the Miskitu residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila understand their school experiences and those of their children, and how might these experiences have influenced their decision to drop out of school?

Through the dialogues, participants reflected on their elementary school experiences and those of their children in the public schools, located in Raitipura and Kahkabila, Nicaragua. Four areas were significant as community members related their school experiences: (a) school attendance, (b) attitude toward school and relationship with teachers, (c) parental involvement with their children's learning, and (d) parental participation in the classroom.

School Attendance

School attendance is sometimes used as a baseline factor in determining school success. In this section, the school attendance of the participants will be explored to determine if it may have contributed to their decision to drop out of school. I also examine the school attendance of some participants' children. An important finding in this study was that some participants reported having very good attendance during their school years. These same students reported that they liked school. Students who stated they did not like school were often the ones who had poor school attendance. Further, participants who said they liked school and had good school attendance also reported having good or excellent grades in school. Because of the correlation between good school attendance, liking school, and good grades, the following section will focus on the role of school attendance and school success and the role that school attendance may play in school dropout rates.

Research results showed examples of poor school attendance, revealed in the conversations. One adult said she was absent once or twice a week; another participant could not specify the number of absences per week but stated that school was often so difficult for her that she preferred to stay home. Several adult participants reported excessive school absences of their elementary school-age children. The youngest children reported to have chronic absences were in kindergarten and first grade. The first-grade student had already dropped out of school and the kindergarten-age student had been withdrawn from school by his parent, with the mother stating her intention to reenroll him in kindergarten in the Creole community of Pearl Lagoon. The oldest elementary school-age child suffered a physical disability resulting in chronic absences which,

ultimately, contributed to the student's decision to drop out of school. Studies have shown the importance of tracking attendance patterns beginning in kindergarten.

A 2008 study conducted by Rodale Community Scholars at Arizona State University tracked students from kindergarten through high school and found that drop-out patterns linked with poor attendance beginning in kindergarten (Greatschools, n.d.). In other words, the drop out process is not an instantaneous event; it has a history that often begins as early as kindergarten (Hickman & Heinrich, 2011). Because the drop-out process is a gradual one, attendance patterns should be tracked and interventions made long before a student enters high school. Chronic absences, (missing 10% of the school year or approximately 18 days), correlated with academic difficulties. The ill effects of early and chronic absences extended into the elementary school grades (Hickman & Heinrich, 2011). Chronic absence aligned with lower academic performance in first grade, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. For low-income children, the connection extended through fifth grade (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). Researchers determined school absences occur for a variety of reasons.

Several categories help to explain school absences: discretion, aversion and barriers (Balfanz & Chang, 2013). The latter two categories—aversion and barriers—are applicable to this study. The first point of the aversion category is that school absences occur when students struggle academically. The aversion category in this study explained the attendance of two adult participants and several children. The adults and children in this group were absent primarily because they were struggling with their schoolwork and did not like going to school. A second part of the aversion category pertains to student bullying. Not only was Elena's son bullied in kindergarten, but he was so terrorized from

the bullying that he refused to go to school. That negative experience accelerated to the point that his mother withdrew him from kindergarten. Thus, bullying was seen as the reason Elena's son had poor attendance and also the reason he dropped out of school. Gloria's son was first bullied when he was expelled in first grade for bad behavior and bullied again when he was refused readmittance because he was considered "too old" for first grade at 7 years old. In that case, it was the teacher or the school that committed the bullying, not another child.

In the barriers category, one factor linked to absences is health and health care. Two of Georgette's children had limited access to health care. Her son was denied health care, which led to excessive absences because it was physically difficult for him to walk to school. Eventually, those school absences resulted in his dropping out of school. Another barrier leading to school absences is family responsibilities. The teenage participant in Kahkabila reported that he, his siblings, and his father were burdened with family responsibilities upon the death of his mother. As a result, family responsibilities were one of the causes of Ryan and his two older brothers dropping out of school. They dropped out of school to help their father care for the needs of the family.

Attitude Toward School and Relationship With Teachers

When participants discussed their school experiences, their attitude about school and their relationship with teachers were common themes. It is sometimes heard in academic circles that children fail because they or their parents do not care enough about school. In these research findings, however, it was the participants' perceptions that the teachers did not care enough about them. The study showed that four of the six participants expressed they did not have strong or positive relationships with teachers,

and these same participants often did not exhibit a positive attitude toward their studies or have successful academic experiences. This pertained to teachers in both Raitipura and that of Kahkabila.

All participants discussed the type of verbal engagement they had with the teachers. This point was discussed from their vantage point as parents and well as their recollections of being students themselves. As students, two participants expressed they had either limited or negative verbal engagement with their teachers. A third participant stated she and her teachers tried to communicate with one another but with little success in the primary grades since the participant did not speak Spanish. Five of the six participants were parents, and each expressed frustration in their relationship with teachers. Two of these parents stated that only on rare occasion did they speak with the teachers. One from this group stated she had never entered her sons' classrooms, preferring to wait outside until the school day ended. The other four participants stated they did try to speak with teachers but verbal engagements only ended in frustration. These participants expressed that they did not think that the teachers truly cared about their students and their school challenges. Two participants expressed that they did not think the teachers possessed the skills necessary to work in a positive way with their children. Because caring or not caring about students was a common theme in the conversations, it would be advantageous to discuss the characteristics of *caring.*

Noddings (1984) discussed the importance of how teachers and students orient toward one another. A teacher's attitudinal predisposition is essential to *caring* and it is the responsibility of the teacher to initiate the cultivation of a connection between the teacher and the student. In other words, a teacher's attitudinal predisposition is a requisite

for *caring* because it conveys acceptance and confirmation to the *cared-for* student, and when the *cared-for* individual responds by demonstrating a willingness to reveal her/his essential self, the reciprocal relation is complete. Schools, however, most often assign a different meaning to the work *caring* (Noddings, 1984).

Although the school and the teacher would say that they do *care*, Noddings (1984) would respond that schools are structured around a definition of *caring* whose essence lies in attention to *things* and *ideas*, such as goal-setting, standards, and high achievement. Participants in the study stated they would have preferred teachers who *understood* and *cared* for them and their children as people and individuals, and not as things, such as goals or standards. Teachers tend to be concerned with form and impersonal content and only secondarily with their students' "subjective reality" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 22). A more humane vision of schooling in Raitipura and Kahkabila may have included greater friendliness between teachers and the participants and between teachers and participants' children. According to participants, some teachers may not have established reciprocal relationships with their students and families, which would have accounted for the aloofness and distance that existed between the teacher and families. The need for a more humane approach to education recalls the work of Vico (1993), describing the desire to distance oneself from the objectivism of rationalism, working to move schooling in a humanistic and caring direction where the goal was not to *measure* but to seek *understanding*.

Parental Involvement with Their Children's Learning and Parental Participation in the Classroom

All adult participants expressed concern about their children's learning, and half stated they volunteered in the classroom. Each community member revealed that the actions they undertook were intended to help their child's achievement in school, and two parents shared they hoped their involvement with school would shield their child from the struggles they had experienced in their own student years. Three participants from Raitipura said that they had become involved in school, wishing to model themselves after their mothers who had also been active volunteers in school.

Schools and teachers have long promoted the importance and the need for parental involvement, and parents have been taught to believe in its value. The chasm that often develops to create unhealthy dissonance between teachers and parents is greatly influenced by teacher beliefs (Swick, 2004). Schools, teachers, and parents believe that parental involvement is critical to improving educational outcomes for all children, but parental involvement does not generally suit that purpose (Robinson & Harris, 2014). Strikingly, teachers invoke family support as even more important than curriculum and instruction (Bol & Berry, 2005). When poor parents do not participate in school activities, many teachers depict these families as not valuing academic achievement or not making education a priority. In fact, a lack of parental involvement was the primary reason teachers gave for students performing below federal and state standards (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). President Bush's No Child Left Behind and President Obama's Race to the Top promoted parental engagement as one remedy for persistent and racial achievement gaps. Parental involvement has become dogma because the U.S.

government incentivizes it with hundreds of millions of dollars in programs to engage parents (Robinson & Harris, 2014). However, the credibility of importance and even the necessity of parental involvement have been challenged.

Researchers showed that the benefits of parental participation are often minimal and are sometimes even detrimental to a child's grades and test scores (Robinson & Harris, 2014). A longitudinal study of U.S. families that covered 3 decades from the 1980s to 2000s, included diverse groups and found that most forms of parental involvement yielded no benefit to children's test scores or grades, regardless of racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic standing, racial or ethnic background, or a child's grade level. For example, consistent homework help almost never improved a child's test scores or grades. When White, Black, Latino, and Asian parents of Cambodia and Vietnam descent regularly helped with homework, the children showed no improvement in grades or test scores, and, in some instances, grades and achievement actually got worse. One group of children who did benefit from parental help was children of Chinese, Korean, and Indian ethnicity, but although their grades did improve, their test scores did not. Another area in which families are encouraged to help their children at home is reading. Reading to young children seems to benefit reading achievement for White and Latino children but is associated with lower test scores for Black students (Robinson & Harris, 2014). These examples serve to show that universal policies should be avoided.

Certain families are stigmatized if they do not conform to the helping-parent paradigm (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). This traditional paradigm is couched in a compensating model for perceived weaknesses and inadequacies in those who are poor

and experiencing discrimination. Those who were not socialized in traditional learning practices by their parents are then considered “at-risk” and often experience discrimination by not abiding by what a child must know upon entering schools (Gee, 1996). These parents and their children, often poor or of immigrant families, are then regarded as having a deficit. Findings show that many teachers depict poor families as not valuing academic achievement or making education a priority (Bol & Berry, 2005). One example of this perceived deficit is the family’s limited involvement. The deficit model encourages principals and teachers to hold classes for parents to teach them how to become more involved with their children’s education. However, parental help with student work often does not achieve the desired or expected results (Robinson & Harris, 2014). However, parents can take certain actions to improve education outcomes for their children.

From children’s early age, parents may communicate the value of education. This includes discussing the importance of completing high school and attending college. Also, a focus on a daily basis should be less on asking about what grade a child received on a particular test but rather on how a child might have solved a mathematics problem, for example (Robinson & Harris, 2014). In the classroom and the home, education should be understood as a positive, happy experience. If parents are to be involved in the schooling of their children, they should understand that their most important role is to ensure that their child in having, above all, a joyful experience at school. Parents may do well to heed the words of Fromm (1960): “Few parents have the courage and independence to care more for their children’s happiness than their success” (p. x).

To summarize and apply the above information to this research, participants should not be so concerned about volunteering in the classroom. Volunteering in the classroom, attending school events, and even helping children with their homework does not, in most instances, actually help students improve their grades or test scores. In contrast, teachers in Raitipura and Kahkabila should indicate with parents what actions they could undertake to enhance the learning of their children. For example, parents could be told to ask the children not only what they learned in school, but how they responded to the teacher's question. Asking about a thought process rather than a grade received on a test may encourage children and show them the value of learning and school. Also, parents could be advised that speaking to their children about the importance of completing high school and preparing for college have proven to be effective in assuring successful school experiences. As far as volunteerism is concerned, parents should always be welcomed into the school and the classroom, but parents and teachers must understand that parental involvement most often does not improve academic outcomes for the students. Finally, parents and principals must refrain from labeling parents as "uncaring" for not helping with homework or for failing to participate in school activities. The old paradigm of parental involvement must be readdressed and critiqued, not only in the schools but also in teacher-preparation programs that may still be promoting its unfounded importance and value.

Discussion and Conclusion for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: In which ways do participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the use of and the viability of the Miskitu language?

During conversations, participants reflected on their heritage language and discussed how and where it is employed in Kahkabila and Raitipura today. Participants identified the extent to which the Miskitu language was spoken in their homes, in the local school, and in their Miskitu community. Themes that emerged during these conversations were (a) the use of the Miskitu language in the home, (b) language shift and schooling, and (c) evidence of the use of the Miskitu language in the community.

The purpose of this research question was to determine if, according to the personal experiences and accounts of the six participants, the Miskitu language had become threatened by language practices in their homes, the schools, and in the communities at large. Each theme will be discussed through the lens of the various factors that are recognized as contributing to language shift. This topic begins with a discussion of bilingualism and its effect on language shift in the home.

Bilingualism and its Effect on the Miskitu Language

As an introduction to this theme, I restate that all of the interviews in Raitipura and Kahkabila were conducted entirely in English. Because I speak Standard English and all of the participants speak Creole English, all speakers were able to fully comprehend and communicate with one another. All participants except the teenage boy in Kahkabila spoke Miskitu as their native tongue, and each of them learned Creole as a second language. Additionally, many Miskitu peoples in this region may also speak Spanish. Because most residents of the Kahkabila and Raitipura are bilingual or trilingual, it is useful and appropriate to define bilingualism and to explain how knowing two languages may affect a heritage language.

Bilingualism refers to a state when a person is able to speak more than one language. Grosjean (2010) stated that "Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (p. 4). Unlike other linguists who may define bilingualism as requiring equal or near fluency in two languages, Grosjean placed emphasis on regular *use* of the two languages rather than on fluency in those languages. Although bilingualism offers social and economic benefits to the speaker, it is important to recognize that bilingualism is a contributing factor in language shift of the minority language. Speakers of threatened languages are mostly bilingual, almost always speaking the majority language as well as their own (Fishman, 2001). Likewise, "bilingualism is always a necessary precursor of language shift" (Holmes, 2008, p. 60), and it is not unusual, if language shift is to occur, that it will most likely happen over 3 generations and will usually begin with children. All of the Miskitu participants in the study, except one, were bilingual, and two were trilingual. Disturbingly, the only monolingual participant was not a speaker of Miskitu. Additionally, according to the accounts of the parents, all the offspring of participants in the study were bilingual, with two of the children exhibiting greater fluency in Creole than in Miskitu.

Diglossia and Language Shift

Diglossia is a characteristic of a society or speech community, whereas bilingualism refers to a trait of an individual. "The term diglossia describes societal or institutionalized bilingualism, where two [different languages] are required to cover all of the community's domains" (Holmes, 2008, p. 30). A speech community may be diglossic or even triglossic, whereas an individual may be bilingual or trilingual. In some communities, a majority of members speak more than two languages; the term for this is

polyglossia. Polyglossia describes situations where more than two distinct codes or languages are used for distinct purposes and situations (Holmes, 2008). Raitipura and Kahkabila are diglossic speech communities because most of their members speak Miskitu and CCE. Large segments of the Kahkabila and Raitipura communities are also triglossic, speaking Spanish as their third language.

The five bilingual participants in this study spoke Miskitu as a mother tongue and CCE as a second language. Two participants also spoke Spanish, a language learned in school. (Whereas CCE is the language of instruction in elementary school, most classes in high school are taught in Spanish.) In addition to the six participants, I met a number of other community members, and each of them, in addition to knowing Miskitu, also spoke CCE. CCE is also known as Mosquito Coast Creole (MCC), and in this inquiry, I use the terms interchangeably. I now briefly describe the Creole language spoken on the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua.

People in the Caribbean region speak different English Creole languages. The Creole English particular to the Caribbean region of Nicaragua and Honduras is MCC. MCC had its origins in 1640 when boats carrying African slaves were shipwrecked on the Atlantic Coast, bringing English to the land, the language they had learned from their colonizers. Later in the 1700s, when the English brought more slaves to the region that is now Nicaragua, MCC developed further. MCC became firmly established when additional laborers from Jamaica came to the Caribbean coast in the mid 1800s. MCC is similar to other Creoles, but its vocabulary has been influenced by Spanish and by the Chibcha language, the foundation of the Miskitu language. MCC is spoken on the Miskitu Coast of Nicaragua where its focus is Bluefields, the Corn Islands, and Pearl

Lagoon, as well as in other villages and Miskitu communities located in the Pearl Lagoon Basin (Decker & Keener, 1998).

The influence of MCC has been strong in Raitipura and Kahkabila. In the homes of all six participants, residents spoke MCC with varying degrees of frequency, and in the teenager's home, the family spoke exclusively MCC. Mother and daughter participants from Raitipura told me that Creole and Miskitu were spoken equally in the home. The other two participants in Raitipura informed me that their young children spoke Miskitu exclusively at home but that the children were learning Creole from their playmates and were starting to bring Creole into the home. The second participant from Kahkabila expressed that people in the home spoke Miskitu and Creole and that the language choice depended on the language partner's preference. At the request of her siblings, this participant spoke Miskitu exclusively in the home to assure that her nieces and nephews would learn Miskitu, but she spoke primarily Creole to her own children. The five Miskitu-speaking participants expressed pride in their ability to speak their native language. However, they did not seem to understand that the increased frequency of Creole spoken in their Miskitu communities could put their native language in a precarious position with the resulting possibility of language loss.

Immigration and Emigration and Language Shift in the Miskitu Home

Language shift may also be affected by emigration. Emigration is often necessary to secure employment, higher wages, or a promotion (Baker, 2011). In this situation, where workers return to their original community, they may return with new languages which, if employed in the community, could hasten language shift. One participant in Raitipura explained that her husband had found employment in Panama and had been

working there for several months. If the husband had sustained contact with Spanish-speaking Panamanians, there is a strong likelihood that he would begin to use that language in certain domains, including his own household, upon his return to Raitipura. Any use of the majority language would have an effect on the minority language. Another participant from Raitipura indicated she had been sent to Bluefields for her high school studies. Because the language of instruction in the high schools in the region is Spanish, I assume the participant either learned Spanish or strengthened her Spanish skills while a student there. Additionally, because the man she met in Bluefields was Creole, presumably while living in Bluefields she spoke Creole and Spanish and, to a lesser extent, Miskitu. Likewise, the sister of the teenage participant had spent several years attending college in Bluefields where classes are taught in Spanish. When she returned to Kahkabila, her Spanish skills likely would have become stronger. Further research would reveal if the young woman had begun to occasionally communicate in Spanish in her home and her community.

Language shift can be accelerated by intermarriage. In this study, one example arose of intermarriage and immigration. The teenage boy shared that because his Miskitu father had married a monolingual Creole-speaking woman from another village, and because his mother was the principle caregiver, he never learned to speak Miskitu. One language tends to predominate in the home (Holmes, 2008), and in this case, the predominant language was Creole. As to intermarriage and language production of the children of these marriages,

> Whether the offspring of these marriages are bilingual in both parents' languages or have only one of the two as their home language will certainly have a large impact on the future of the subordinate language whenever such families are numerous. (Fishman, 2001, p. 262)

This young participant expressed a desire to learn Miskitu, but during the research period, no programs or activities existed for him to learn Miskitu. The fact that the participant did not speak Miskitu and had no viable prospects for learning the language would most certainly have an effect on the language production of his future offspring as well.

Language Shift and Schooling

Participants in the study informed me that in both Raitipura and Kahkabila preschool opportunities are available, but not required, for all children beginning at the age of 3. This childcare and schooling is free, and staff members conduct all activities in the Miskitu language. Staff are of Miskitu heritage and speak Miskitu fluently. Most participants had enrolled their children in preschool. A preschool that is taught in a minority language is what Fishman (1997) would term an "out-of-school" learning opportunity and one of the best methods to nurture and preserve a language. Fishman (1997) understood that some people will scoff at the idea of revitalizing a language, but revitalization activities can always take place:

> There is no language for which nothing at all can be done, and, therefore, the crux of any [reversing language shift] is to decide what best can be done for the [threatened language] in a particular context and in a particular time frame and then go from there. (p. 12)

For Fishman (1997), what could best be done for threatened languages would be to offer out-of-school and postschool learning opportunities for young children, adolescents, and young adults. Young people must have opportunities to use their minority languages because they are the next generation of parents. In this regard, the schooling practices in Raitipura and Kahkabila of conducting all preschool activities in Miskitu, much like the "language nests" in New Zealand (Fishman, 1997) help maintain the Miskitu language for very young children. It was equally encouraging that in Raitipura and Kahkabila,

kindergarten classes were also taught exclusively in Miskitu. However, for the remainder of elementary school experience, the use of the Miskitu language is greatly diminished as it is taught for only 30 minutes each week.

In Kahkabila, beginning in first grade, the curriculum is taught entirely in CCE. In Raitipura, the transition into CCE is more gradual with support in first grade still provided in Miskitu, but by the beginning of second grade, classes are taught almost exclusively in CCE. From second grade through high school, teachers provide children 30 minutes of weekly instruction in the Miskitu language. Many consider this near elimination of the native Miskitu language lamentable because "through instruction in language, children develop their imagination and are led to become clear thinkers in adulthood" (Di Pietro, 1994, p. 87). Thus, 30 minutes of instructional time devoted to teaching the Miskitu language is inadequate, and may be one reason Fishman (2001) argued that schools cannot be held responsible for helping to maintain or to revive a minority language. Unless it is a heritage school, a minority language is taught in school as a second language and for a limited number of minutes per week; a process Fishman (2001) considered only minimally effective in teaching any language. For Fishman (2001), time would be better spent offering post- and out-of-school activities for children. These community activities, all conducted in the minority language, could take the form of clubs, sports teams, study groups, or hobby groups. "It is infinitely easier to socialize children into an environmentally utilized language … than into one that remains unutilized outside of easily compartmentalized school experiences" (Fishman, 2001, p. 15). During the period of research, no clubs, study groups, or sports activities in either

Kahkabila or Raitipura had been created to encourage residents, especially young people, to speak exclusively the Miskitu language.

Attitudes and Values That Contribute to Language Shift in the Community

As a result of conversations with several participants and with one of the guides, it became evident that when speaking to community members outside the home, the participants practice language choice. They reported that when speaking to older community members, they will always address them first in Miskitu, and if the speaker responds in Miskitu, the conversation will continue in Miskitu. If the speakers respond in Creole, the conversation will continue in Creole. The Kahkabila guide explained that one place exists where Miskitu is spoken exclusively. When elders convene each month to discuss community business, all community members are invited to attend, and proceedings of these meetings are conducted in Miskitu. In contrast, in gatherings that include primarily teenagers and young adults, the language choice is primarily Creole. For example, when adolescents and young adults gather to participate in the extremely popular sport of baseball, all communication between young people is always in MCC. Thus, different attitudes about speaking the Miskitu language are evident among the younger and older generations. If this continues without any intervention, it will likely affect the fate of the Miskitu language in the future.

Language shift is most often slower in communities where the majority language is highly valued and where the language is seen as a symbol of ethnic identity (Baker, 2011). Language is often viewed as a badge of loyalty and is the preeminent badge that signals belonging to a group. Taking pride in ethnic identity and in the native language is also a contributing factor to language maintenance (Holmes, 2008). “Positive attitudinal

stake in a language is a dominant factor in its maintenance both at the individual and at the societal level" (Fishman, 2001, p. 288). Thus, in relation to ethnic identity, it appeared that the older generation tends to use their native language compared to some adolescents and young people in Kahkabila. Miskitu is the language of choice among older residents, but CCE was the preferred language among adolescents and young people socializing and interacting with one another. Seemingly, young people do not rely on language loyalty to Miskitu to define who they are.

The research brought forth one important exception to the young people's preference of CCE over Miskitu. One participant spoke of a house rule where no one was allowed to speak Creole in front of her sibling's children. These are powerful actions in language preservation, and actions that should be shared with other young members of these two Miskitu communities. The children and young adults may be bilingual, and they may enjoy speaking Creole and Miskitu, but, in so doing, they do risk putting their mother tongue in a dangerous position. Unless languages have the opportunity to be used in multiple contexts and on a regular basis, they will eventually fall in stature as well as in efficacy.

Economic Factors Contributing to Language Shift in the Community

The social and economic goals of community members are important in accounting for the speed of language shift (Holmes, 2008). Language shift may be led by women or by men, depending upon where new jobs lie. Greater job opportunities are most often available in the majority language, and this reason among others, accounts for the rapid language shift among the young (Fishman, 1997). Among bilinguals, two

factors decide language choice: language use community loyalty and the perception of economic usefulness (Fishman, 2001).

How a bilingual perceives the usefulness of a language is critical in language choice. Baker (2011) spoke of the relation between perceived social value and economic value:

> When a majority language is seen as giving higher social status and more political power, a shift toward the majority language may occur. Where a minority language is seen to co-exist with unemployment, financial poverty, social deprivation and few amenities, the social status of the language may be negatively affected. (p. 55)

Five of the six participants were bilingual, and each of them, because of their desire to speak Miskitu with their children, demonstrated their loyalty to the community. However, in regard to economic usefulness, participants understood that for educational or economic purposes, they may be forced to turn to either Spanish or CCE.

Several participants along with one guide expressed that either they or other family members were involved in commercial fishing, the main economic mainstay for Miskitu peoples living in coastal communities. For the most part, these were family operations using either the motorized boat called a *panga* or a dory, a dug-out canoe guided with a small sail or with a long, wooden paddle, the length of which is capable of reaching down into sand banks, helping to direct and propel the boat. The day's catch is brought to one of several receiving areas located in Pearl Lagoon. Local merchants awaiting the arrival of the fishing boats speak Creole. Spanish-speaking merchants come by truck from Managua to purchase fish. In either case, Miskitu fishermen must be able to speak either or both of these languages to complete the transaction. This example demonstrates how bilinguals have marketable language skills in an increasingly bilingual world with forever-growing trade markets. Bilingualism is also necessary for those

seeking work outside Kahkabila or Raitipura. Even though bilingualism helps the Miskitu peoples economically, it does impinge upon the viability of Miskitu, their heritage language.

Earlier in this paper, I offered an example of the husband in Raitipura who had found employment in Panama. Additionally, the two older brothers of the teenage participant had left Kahkabila several years earlier to work in Pearl Lagoon where the first language is CCE. Thus, in regard to economic usefulness, Miskitu residents learned that it was either Creole or Spanish and not their native tongue that best served their economic interests. In the next section, I discuss demographics and its role in language shift.

Demographics and its Effect on Language Shift

Demographics play an important role in contributing to language shift. Resistance to language shift lasts longer in rural areas than in cities (Holmes, 2008). This is because rural communities tend to be isolated from the majority political power, and community members are, thus, able to meet most of their social needs in the minority language. The size of the community group is also a critical factor in how fast language shift occurs. "To maintain a language you must have people who can use it on a regular basis" (Holmes, 2008, p. 61).

Raitipura and Kahkabila are rural communities, but Kahkabila is particularly so. No roads lead into Kahkabila; it is a community bordered on one side by water and on the other side by forests and gardening areas called the bush. Kahkabila's location, being accessible only by foot or by boat, has contributed to the isolation and the preservation of this Miskitu community. No commercial *pangas* operate between Kahkabila and larger

towns such as Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields. Limited transportation also curtails commercialism and tourism. The only way for a nonresident to reach Kahkabila from Pearl Lagoon is to rent passage on a private *panga*, a trip that tends to be costly. Thus, the remoteness and relative inaccessibility of Kahkabila contributes, with the exception of language, to it being minimally contaminated by outside influences.

Despite frequent emigration for economic purposes, very little immigration ensues into Kahkabila. In the isolated community of Kahkabila, residents can meet most of their social needs in the Miskitu language. An exception to this and a concern discussed earlier is that the language of choice among adolescents and young adults when speaking together is CCE. Because these are the future parents of the next generation, this poses a serious problem for preservation of the Miskitu language. Thus, even given its extreme geographical isolation, Kahkabila, has been unable to block the penetration of CCE into its community.

Discussion and Conclusion for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: In which ways do Miskitu participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila understand the representation of their indigenous culture?

During conversations regarding participants' understanding of the Miskitu culture and how and where it was represented, the following generative themes emerged: (a) representation of Miskitu culture in schools and (b) representation of Miskitu culture in the home and in the community. The discussion begins with how participants perceived representation of the Miskitu culture in the local schools.

Representation of Miskitu Culture in Schools

When I asked participants if the Miskitu culture was being taught in their children's school, the response was a universal no. Adult participants said they knew there must be a Miskitu culture, but they saw no evidence of their culture being taught in school. One parent expressed that because she had been told that she was Miskitu and that her ancestors also identified as Miskitu, she was convinced that a Miskitu culture must exist. She wondered why she and her children were being denied knowledge of this heritage. Another participant expressed that she often volunteered in her child's classroom but had never witnessed any lessons about Miskitu culture. Additionally, if the children did bring home work that pertained to history or cultural studies, it was always the history and culture of other people, never of their own Miskitu culture.

Vico, the Italian theorist and educator, would have advocated strongly for the teaching of Miskitu culture in the schools when he stated that through the study of one's ancient past, people could better understand themselves. Vico believed that the true source of knowledge and truth would be found in learning the history of all of humankind (Nickles, 2007), rather than being restricted to Western knowledge, as was evident in the school curriculum in Raitipura and Kahkabila. All participants also remarked that the Miskitu language was taught in school but for only 30 minutes each week, an amount of time they felt to be largely inadequate. Ample literature exists explaining why schools have often denied indigenous communities information regarding their own culture; reference to some of that literature is found in the following section.

Esteva (2010) stated that schooling has been the principal instrument of the state for the extermination of indigenous peoples (Esteva, 2010). "The educational system has

had as one of its central purposes to dispossess Indian peoples of their own culture, of their way of seeing and experiencing the world, of their cosmovision, in order to 'Westernize' them" (Esteva, 2010, p. 116). Esteva (2010) called the dispossession and obliteration of indigenous culture "culturecide" (p. 115). Thus, the motivation behind the disallowance of indigenous culture was, in fact, an effort to achieve suppression of the indigenous peoples themselves. The Westernization of indigenous peoples through a denial of culture was also a means of social control (Esteva, 2010). Early in the 20th century, Gramsci (2011) began to familiarize the public about social control in his *Prison Notebooks.* Gramsci used the word *hegemony* to explain domination and explained that hegemony is a form of social control used by the dominant culture. Social control by domination of culture had its roots in Europe, and this practice was expanded and spread around the world during the years of colonization and postcolonization (Gramsci, 2011).

Even though participants desired to have their culture taught in school, they also expressed doubt that this could ever occur. Participants stated that teachers, whether Creole, *Ladino,* or Miskitu, could not be depended on to instruct others about a culture that they most likely knew nothing about themselves. Respondents were correct in this observation because indigenous culture had not been part of the school curriculum. The dismissal of the customs and the history of indigenous peoples was, once again, a result of colonialism. The hierarchal system of knowledge, emerging in the 16th and 17th centuries resulted in the creation of a system whereby Western culture was perceived as superior to that of the indigenous peoples (Mignolo, 2012). This hierarchal system of knowledge, "the coloniality of power," is a living legacy of colonialism that persists today and can be seen in many institutions such as elementary and high schools,

universities, churches and governments (Quijano, 2000). Thus, indigenous culture, located at the bottom rung of the hierarchal ladder, is either allotted little space or is eliminated completely from the curriculum because it is perceived as inferior or insignificant or possibly dangerous, if indigenous rebellion is feared; another important reason why indigenous culture is little known to teachers and other school leaders.

Toward the end of the 19th century, when Central America was in the process of nation-building and in search of a new identity agreeable to the West, the construct of *mestizaje* was born. Desirous of being viewed as a "civilized" country where all inhabitants lived together in harmony, the Nicaraguan government presented itself as a land where all cultures, *criolles, mestizos,* and indigenous cultures blended together creating one harmonious whole. This attempt at the homogenization of all cultures, or *mestizaje*, is a concept that was, at best, a myth (Gould, 2007). Even though many elements of indigenous culture in Nicaragua were never obliterated from community life, the mere referencing of *mestizaje* resulted in indigenous culture being written out of the textbooks (Gould, 2007). Therefore, it is understandable, if not acceptable, that an individual, such as a teacher in Raitipura and Kahkabila, having moved through various learning and religious institutions notable in their absence of education regarding diversification of culture, would exit these institutions with scant knowledge of the very large number of indigenous peoples who have inhabited Nicaragua for centuries. Language is, of course, part of culture, and in the following section I explain how the Nicaraguan *Ladinos* (nonindigenous and Spanish-speaking people) attempted to suppress indigenous languages.

One method used to inhibit indigenous peoples from speaking their language was through the practice of shaming. For example, *Ladinos* successfully caused indigenous people to feel ashamed of their language and their dress (Gould, 2007). Parents, well aware of the inferior status of their native language in the eyes of society, often forbade their children to listen to the conversations of elders, fearing that if they learned the language, they would be treated like *Indios,* a cultural group much maligned and one thought to be completely lacking in social value. In time, indigenous peoples began to see themselves and to accept themselves as inferior, and it became "natural" for the original inhabitants to speak the language of the colonizers; on the western part of Nicaragua, that language of the colonizers was Spanish; on the southern part of the Caribbean coastal region, the language was English, in addition to the indigenous languages.

Unlike many indigenous peoples living on the Pacific Coast or in the interior of Nicaragua, the great majority of the indigenous peoples on the Caribbean or Mosquito Coast have maintained their native language. The Miskitu peoples living in the Pearl Lagoon Basin speak Miskitu as their first language and CCE as their second language. Some indigenous peoples in the region speak Spanish for business or for secondary and university education. Throughout Nicaragua, high school and college curriculum is most often delivered in the Spanish language.

The next section is about how some indigenous groups were forced to relinquish their native attire. This topic is poignant for this research project because several participants inquired about native dress, wondering what it looked like and questioning why it no longer remained part of the Miskitu culture. They wondered why learning about it was not part of the school curriculum.

Among all cultures, dress is a cultural marker. Vico (1993) considered the study of cultural artifacts essential to not only understanding the traditions of ancient cultural groups but to understand their mode of thinking as well. In Kahkabila and Raitipura today, the dress of children and adults is completely Western, with a favored style among teenagers and young adults being sports clothing, often emblazoned with logos from U.S. baseball or basketball teams. This style stands in great contrast to the style of clothing worn by indigenous peoples just 75 years ago. For generations, indigenous peoples had woven their cloth, often from cotton grown in their own communities. The effacement of native dress in Nicaragua is recent and had its roots in the politics of World War ll. Prior to 1942, Japan had purchased most of its cotton from Nicaragua. However, in signing a treaty with the United States during the war, Nicaragua agreed to the imposition of sanctions on the Japanese government, denying them the purchase of cotton. The government forced indigenous farmers to halt cotton production and replace it with other crops. Thus, indigenous peoples suffered from the loss of a desired cash crop as well as materials with which to make their clothing. The *Ladinos* further benefited when the indigenous group had no choice but to shop in their stores for cloth and ready-made clothing. Thus, not only were the indigenous peoples forced to cease production of cotton used for their native dress, they were, of necessity, also coerced into shopping in *Ladino* stores for clothing designed in the Western style (Gould, 2007). The final segment regarding culture in the schools concerns the teaching of history.

One participant stated she knew the children were learning European history in school, and she wondered why the history of the Miskitu peoples was not included in the school program. By asking this question, the participant was aware not only that her

culture was being slighted, but also that she felt her culture deserved a place in the curriculum. The following information would help the participant understand why this omission of indigenous culture in Nicaragua's elementary school curriculum has occurred.

Bourdieu (1984) stated that there is no such thing as universal knowledge. Therefore, if there is no universal knowledge, why have the Miskitu children been limited to learning European history as if this was the only true or valid history, and why has indigenous history been suppressed? Regalsky (2010) responded to this question by explaining that the hegemonic *mestizo* voice of Nicaragua became and continues to be the voice of the country's public school system. School systems are closely linked to the colonial past of the country. Memmi (1965) was early to posit that privilege is at the heart of colonialism, and, therefore, it is history of privileged groups, the *Ladinos*, that the children learn in school. The content or lack of content in the curriculum further corroborates the position that colonialism is all-enfolding, all-encompassing, and inescapable (Memmi, 1965). Regalsky (2010) explained that even in the 21st century, the Spanish language, Western values, and European history represent the cultural capital of the school system; a system of schooling that helps maintain the dominant culture. Before Regalsky, Bourdieu (1984) and Apple (2004) also discussed cultural capital and how those children not in possession of the cultural capital required by the school were at a great disadvantage in schooling; a disadvantage that would follow them into adulthood as they sought employment in later years. Research in the Miskitu communities pointed up numerous examples of children struggling in school and repeating at least a year of elementary school. This can be attributed, at least partly, to Miskitu children not

possessing the cultural capital necessary to succeed in the national curriculum founded on *Ladino* culture. In the final section of this topic, I asked participants if they had spoken to school authorities about their concerns.

During conversations with participants, several expressed they had begun to speak with teachers about topics including bullying and class assignments. However, each stated they had yet to approach the principal and the teachers regarding the lack of Miskitu culture being taught in the schools. Nonetheless, their mere willingness to address the subject of curriculum with me was commendable and hopeful in itself, and indicated that these Miskitu participants felt emboldened to no longer view themselves as insignificant or inferior, or as "disabled natives" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 197). Also, when the teenage boy spoke so courageously about the education he thought he deserved in school, instruction in the Miskitu language, he spoke of pride as an individual and pride as a member of the Miskitu community. This type of concern regarding representation of Miskitu culture in the curriculum may indicate that, among the younger generations of Miskitu people in Kahkabila and Raitipura, feelings of cultural priority are beginning to eclipse those of cultural inferiority.

Representation of Miskitu Culture in the Home and in the Community

Language is part of culture, but because language was discussed in Research Question 2, only brief mention will be made of it here. The most striking evidence of Miskitu culture in the home was that five of the six participants stated they spoke Miskitu in the home. However, the actual frequency of Miskitu spoken in the home varied widely from family to family. Two families stated that Miskitu was the primary language spoken at home, but that they also spoke some CCE. Two other participants estimated they speak

approximately equal amounts of Creole and Miskitu, whereas the fifth participant shared that she spoke Creole with some family members and Miskitu with others. Although the Miskitu language remained highly valued among all participants, in addressing Research Question 2, I discussed how the language appeared to be showing signs of language shift. I discuss family farming, another part of Miskitu cultural life, in the following section.

Nicaragua's economy is primarily agricultural, but particular to the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila is that it is all subsistence farming, and the farming practices themselves are often performed communally. During conversations, one participant explained that Miskitu community members traveled by dories, or dug-out canoes, to the farming region called the bush, an area situated on the outskirts of each community. The bush is situated along once fertile but increasingly depleted natural levees and narrow floodplains of the numerous waterways that exist in the region (Jameson, Trott, Marshall, & Childress, 2000). Jairo, the Kahkabila guide, explained that much of the farming in the bush is performed communally. The labor is communal because the Miskitu peoples do not believe that individual people can own the land. Farm work is generally accomplished by groups that travel into the bush either by boat or on foot. The group decides together who will work what particular part of the land, and when food is harvested it is brought back to the village where all workers and their families receive their share. Fishing plays an enormous role in the lives of the Miskitu community, an activity that is performed individually and communally.

Fishing has a preeminent place in the lives of residents of Kahkabila and Raitipura. Community members rely on commercial use of the area's natural resources to meet daily dietary and income needs. Because few opportunities exist for formal

employment in Raitipura and Kahkabila, local residents depend greatly on extractions of natural resources for their livelihood (Solimar International, 2012).

Much of the fishing is subsistence fishing to meet the dietary needs of the family, but the Miskitu from Kahkabila and Raitipura also sell their catch at several docks located in the town of Pearl Lagoon. According to Eveth and Jairo, fishing is done either by family groups or by groups of residents working communally who either fish from their boats or set out large fishing nets early each morning. Communalism is an ancient indigenous cultural practice, and working communally in fishing and farming is evident in these two Miskitu groups. One aspect of Miskitu culture appears to be approaching extinction: traditional Miskitu dances.

Two participants in Raitipura expressed that they had never seen the traditional Miskitu dances, but had heard they existed in the past. In contrast, one participant from Kahkabila and the Kahkabila guide shared that a group of Miskitu dancers from other areas in Nicaragua travel to Kahkabila each year where, during the Christmas holiday, they perform traditional dances. Even though the Kahkabila residents appreciated and enjoyed the performance, the participant and the guide shared that no one in the village knew how to perform the dances. I asked several participants if there might be any community interest in learning these dances from the traveling group. Participants expressed great enthusiasm for this learning possibility, a response that would have delighted Vico (1984), who also believed that even after leaving school, learning should continue.

The loss of indigenous culture reminded me of the Garifuna festival in Orinoco, Nicaragua, that I attended during the research period. When I was in Orinoco enjoying

the Garifuna dance performances, I was informed that all of the dancers and musicians were Garifuna peoples from Honduras and had been hired to perform at the festival. Although the tourists and the Garifuna peoples in Orinoco enjoy and appreciate the dancing and singing, it was clear that this particular cultural knowledge has been lost in the town of Orinoco itself. Thus, the similarity exists between Kahkabila and Orinoco in that an art form must be imported from an outside source because the knowledge of this art had been lost in the community itself.

It was revealed through conversations with participants that one form of Miskitu culture enjoyed a wider audience than dance and was still performed by Miskitu peoples. During the second trip to Raitipura, as Eveth and I were walking along the road to meet the final participants, Eveth pointed out that the recorded music heard coming from one of the homes was a Miskitu song. A short time later, one participant in Raitipura also shared that Miskitu music was very popular in the Raitipura community and that it often aired on the radio. The final aspect of Miskitu culture to be discussed is the importance and strength of communal life in the villages of Kahkabila and Raitipura. Even though the effects of colonization and *mestizaje* have been strongly felt by all indigenous peoples in Nicaragua, an area of ancient indigenous culture appears to have remained intact. Colonialism and its cultural authority had introduced individualism into the lives of the *mestizos* of Nicaragua, but the residents of Kahkabila seem to have resisted this invasion of Western individualism. Many indigenous peoples in the world struggle to strengthen and recover communal life (Alvarado, 2010), but the research revealed that communalism or *comunidad* has not only been maintained but is thriving in Kahkabila.

One way Kahkabila has been successful in maintaining its communalism is evidenced by the group meetings organized by community elders.

Jairo, the Kahkabila guide, explained that community elders hold meetings regularly to discuss business and community news, and to provide an opportunity for community members to bring forth concerns that affect the community. All community residents are invited to attend these meetings where the proceedings are conducted in the Miskitu language. One example of the efficiency and the power of elders' meetings was the community's decision to build its own high school in the Kahkabila community to avoid travel to Bluefields or Pearl Lagoon to receive a high school education. The high school was constructed with the labor of community members and was financed internally as well. The wood for building the school was gathered from the forested area that is part of Kahkabila land. The vitality of Kahkabila was poignantly exemplified by its willingness and its capacity to undertake and successfully construct its own high school. What is significant about the high school project, in particular, and in the communal elders' meetings in general, is that they are examples of the formidableness of *comunalidad.* Working communally is a vital part of the culture of indigenous people (Esteva, 2010):

> In indigenous tradition, people are knots in nets of real relationships, they are not individuals. There are indigenous languages that have no words for "I/me" and "you" referring to single individuals. Among all indigenous peoples, the condition of the strong "we" is expressed existentially and in the language itself, for this is the subject of *comunalidad.* (Esteva, 2010, p. 121)

Thus, *comunalidad* that embraced the "we" or the collective was seen in the way all community members were called together by the elders to help make group decisions for Kahkabila. Other examples of communalism in Kahkabila were evidenced in the manner farming is conducted in the bush and in the way community members often band together

in commercial fishing enterprises, two examples that were described in greater detail in addressing Research Question 2.

Discussion and Conclusion for Research Question 4

Research Question 4: In which ways does poverty affect the lives and the academic opportunities of participants living in Raitipura and Kahkabila?

Throughout the dialogues, participants reflected on their home, school, and community experiences. One condition that emerged in those discussions was that of poverty. The areas associated with poverty in their communities resonated as follows: (a) the relationship among pregnancy, poverty, and education; (b) the relationship between health care, poverty, and education; (c) family poverty and its effect on academic opportunity; (d) single-parent households, poverty, and academic opportunity; and (e) national poverty and its effect on schools, their resources, and academic opportunity.

Relationship Among Pregnancy, Poverty, and Education

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Americas with about 50% of its approximately 6,000,000 million people living in poverty. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 10% of Nicaraguan children under the age of 5 were moderately or severely underweight and 20% were stunted (Pulugurtha, 2009). Approximately 75% of the people living on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua are living in poverty or extreme poverty (Fadcanic, n.d..), extreme poverty defined as living on less than $1 per day and poverty defined as living on less than $2 per day (*Extreme poverty increases,* 2014). This brief introduction serves as a foundation to better understand the five areas of discussion to answer this research question.

Before this inquiry began, I had not anticipated the magnitude of the role that teen pregnancy would play in the conversations. Of the five female participants, all had given birth to their first child before the age of 18, and one of them gave birth when she was a preteen. Three of the women, or 60% of the female participants, expressed they had dropped out of school because of pregnancy. Two of these women said their mothers had offered to care for their babies so they could remain in school, whereas the third shared that her mother was shamed by her daughter's pregnancy and had banished her from their home before she had given birth to her first child. Teen pregnancy is a concern in many countries, but it is a particularly serious one in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua's fertility rate is the highest in the world outside of Africa, and it is higher than the fertility rate of Sub-Saharan Africa (Lion, Prata, & Stewart, 2009). Nicaragua holds the record for having the highest adolescent birth rate in all of Latin America. Between 40 and 50% of all pregnancies registered in Nicaragua are to women 14–19 years of age (*Teen pregnancy in Nicaragua*, 2011). According to the present research in Kahkabila and Raitipura, 100% of the women interviewed bore their first child within the above range or earlier. None of these young women ever returned to school, and none has ever been employed outside the home.

This teenage pregnancy phenomenon in Nicaragua forms part of the cycle of poverty in which most young mothers live. Many girls become young mothers before they are biologically mature. These often underweight mothers suffer from chronic malnutrition and may give birth to low birth-weight, short-stature babies. Statistically, 47% of pregnant girls in Nicaragua do not complete primary school (Silva, 2012). In Nicaragua, 80% of adolescent mothers drop out of school (Fonseca, 1998). In the inquiry

in Raitipura and Kahkabila, 100% of adolescent mothers had dropped out of school with 50% of them dropping out because of pregnancy. With early pregnancy, a girl's life can change dramatically. Early pregnancy in Kahkabila and Raitipura always aligned with a premature end to education, causing these young participants to become more vulnerable to poverty with the accompanying reality of a lack of future economic and educational opportunity.

Relationship Among Healthcare, Poverty, and Education

Another theme that emerged through the conversation with participants was that of health care. Two families discussed how their very young sons had experienced emotional trauma because of bullying and academic problems in the schools. They were offered no counseling assistance because no counseling services exist in the schools. They could not turn for help to a health clinic because there are no health posts (small clinics) in Raitipura or Kahkabila. Also, two participants, the mother and grandmother, explained how two children in their family suffered from serious health conditions that should have been addressed by medical doctors. Health services were unavailable to these children in their own communities. Unfortunately, the denial or absence of health services is common in areas experiencing poverty or extreme poverty, such as exists in the villages found along the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua. In the following section, I discuss the dire state of healthcare in Nicaragua and how that condition directly connects to poverty.

Most often, poverty has been ascribed to a population that earns less than what is required for minimum subsistence, meaning that the poverty line is measured by income. However, poverty also includes elements of deprivation such as lack of housing,

education, or health care. A family living in poverty has also been described as a household whose basic needs have not been met (Peña, Wall, & Persson, 2000). For example, proper nutrition is a basic need. Nearly 30% of Nicaraguan children suffer some form of undernutrition and in rural areas such as the Caribbean coast, nearly 40% are undernourished. In addition, 22% of children suffer from malnutrition with the risk of malnutrition being six times higher in the poorest quintile than in the wealthiest with the most deprived children living in rural areas in the autonomous regions of the Caribbean coast (UNICEF, 2013). Malnourishment exacerbates poverty as it negatively affects the physical and intellectual development of children. It also affects people's ability to work and generate income, as a malnourished person may exhibit limited capabilities (*Teen pregnancy in Nicaragua*, 2011).

According to the definition of poverty offered above, one reason residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila are living in poverty is because they are deprived of adequate health care. Of Nicaraguans, 58% are unable to access adequate health care and treatment due to poverty and social exclusion from health services. The sectors least likely to get medical treatment are those living in poverty, rural inhabitants, women, and young children. Further, people living on the Caribbean coast were specifically identified among those having the least access to medical attention (Jacobs, 2009). The following section provides a more detailed account of the families' plight in attempting to access care and how the lack of health care affected academic opportunity.

The mother and daughter participants from Raitipura were distraught at being unable to receive the required health treatment for two of the children in their family. Because no healthcare facility exists in Raitipura, they were expected to bring the

children to Pearl Lagoon, a 5-mile walk from their village. Although the trip was possible for the daughter, it was impossible for the son who had difficulty walking. When the health center in Pearl Lagoon determined their inability to help either child, staff suggested they travel to Bluefields, the location of the nearest hospital. Unable to afford even the boat fare to Bluefields and unsuccessful in receiving social assistance for the trip, neither child was seen by a specialist, resulting in no medical care for their conditions. One of the most serious problems in Nicaragua's healthcare system is the lack of or insufficient number of health facilities and healthcare providers. These two young people from Raitipura were victims of this lamentable situation. The following section provides further information about Nicaragua's healthcare system.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America with a population of approximately 6,000,000 people. For these 6,000,000 people, a mere 32 hospitals exist, including three hospitals that serve Nicaragua's entire Caribbean coastal region, a huge expanse of land stretching from the Honduran border in the north and to the Costa Rican border to the south. Three types of health facilities exist in Nicaragua: health posts, health centers, and hospitals. Health posts are small clinics run by nurses. These clinics do not have medical doctors. The next largest is the health center, a facility having approximately two doctors and several nurses. A health center is not able to treat all conditions nor are they able to provide sophisticated health tests and procedures. The largest is the hospital, a complete facility offering full healthcare services (Sequeira, Espinoza, & Amador, 2011).

In Kahkabila and Raitipura, residents are not served by any health facility. Anyone living in these communities and in need of health care must travel to the health

center in Pearl Lagoon to receive an evaluation and possible treatment. This trip can only be made by boat for Kahkabila residents, and it is a 5-mile walk for residents of Raitipura. Travel distance to Bluefields, only possible by a 1-hour *panga* ride from Pearl Lagoon, adds to the cost, difficulty, and challenge of receiving health care. The paucity of healthcare facilities for Kahkabila and Raitipura residents, coupled with the poverty in these communities, contributes to health care being severely compromised for these Miskitu peoples. Next, I explain why health services are so problematic in Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan government stated its intention to build more facilities and hire more healthcare workers, but this can only be achieved if the government invests more money in the health system. According to a 2011 report, Nicaragua spends only 8% of its gross national product on health care, the lowest in all of Central America, and it has the lowest per capital health investment in all of Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition to the construction of more hospitals and smaller health facilities, work needs to be done on existing facilities. For example, 35% of healthcare facilities now in existence do not have electricity and 40% do not have running water (Sequeira et al., 2011).

Family Poverty and its Effect on Academic Opportunity

I did not ask specific questions regarding how much money participants or their families earned, but from my observations and other aspects of conversations, I surmised that all participants and their families were living in poverty or possibly extreme poverty. This conclusion was based on the following information. First, all families participated in subsistence farming and fishing, growing produce and extracting sufficient fish from the lagoon to feed their family members. They occasionally earned income from selling small catches of fish in Pearl Lagoon, money that would be used to purchase essential

items for the home. Only two cases of employment with salaries earned emerged: the husband who worked in Panama who sent remittances to his wife and Ryan's brothers who worked in Pearl Lagoon and regularly sent money to their father.

It has been said that "Poverty rates rise with remoteness and are associated with living far from a paved road and having long walks to schools, health centers and shops" (Wiggins, 2006, p. 1.2). This is a perfect description of the existence of poverty in Raitipura with its remote location, its lack of a health center or health post, or even stores. The village has paved roads, but they were constructed for pedestrians as no one in Raitipura owns an automobile. Finally, all the young people have a 5-mile walk to the high school, which is located in Pearl Lagoon. Therefore, according to Wiggins' definition of poverty, Raitipura is, in every way, an impoverished community. Kahkabila is even more remote because it is only accessible by boat; no roads lead into Kahkabila. Kahkabila has no stores; residents must travel by boat to either to Pearl Lagoon or Bluefields when in need of items other than foods sourced from the bush or the lagoon. Raitipura and Kahkabila subsist on fishing and farming in the bush, and farming in Nicaragua usually links to poverty. According to Wiggins (2006), farmers in remote areas have no access to markets, no credit, and no technical assistance. Residents of both Raitipura and Kahkabila could possibly move out of poverty if roads were built linking their communities to markets where their harvests from the bush could be sold. However, until this happens, the remoteness and inaccessibility of both these Miskitu communities only reinforce their high levels of poverty.

No published poverty rates are specific to Kahkabila and Raitipura, but the number of Nicaraguans living in extreme poverty, defined as earning less than $1 a day

increased from 7.6% to 9.5% from 2012 to 2013. During this same time period, general poverty levels, which include those who survive on less than $2 a day, dropped from 42.7% to 40.5% of its total 6.1 million inhabitants. (*Extreme poverty increases, 2014)*). Thus, more than 50% of Nicaraguans live in poverty, and many people among the most deprived live along the Caribbean coast. One of the effects of this high-poverty rate is that parents are often forced to withdraw their children from school.

Elementary and high schools are free in Nicaragua, but families must purchase school uniforms and school supplies. As a result, families may be forced to withdraw their children from school because of financial difficulties. In Raitipura, one participant explained that her son, who was orthopedically challenged, could not walk 5 miles to the high school and could not afford to hire a *capanera* (motorized buggy) to transport him there each day. He eventually was forced to drop out of school. In this same family, the daughter was unable to pay for transportation to Bluefields to receive an evaluation from the hospital's specialist. This same child eventually graduated from high school but was ultimately unable to attend college due to a lack of resources. This daughter, as well as her brother who could not afford transportation to the hospital, are now young adults, and both are unemployed. They will join their mother and grandmother who also dropped out of school and who also have never been employed outside the home. Another participant from Raitipura expressed that her grandmother had no interest in her schoolwork and preferred that she stay at home to help with chores. Eventually, this participant dropped out of school so she could work in the home. The two participants from Kahkabila also dropped out of school for financial reasons. The first withdrew from the school system because the family could not afford the boat transportation to the high school in Pearl

Lagoon which was, at the time, the only high school available to Kahkabila residents. The second participant left school in the elementary grades because he was needed to help his father fish and work in the home after his mother died. Poverty affects a child's ability to attend school because a child is sometimes needed at home to work (Bless the Children, n.d.).

Thus, conditions of poverty adversely affect a child's school success through malnutrition, the need to help parents at home, transportation challenges, or serious illness. In addition, such circumstances often cause children to fall behind in schoolwork which, in turn, may lead to school retentions. High-retention rates are a serious problem in Nicaragua where only four of 10 primary school students finish school in 6 years (UNICEF, 2013). Certain participants in this study and many of their children experienced the problem of school retentions. Two participants from Raitipura and one from Kahkabila stated they had been retained at least once in the elementary school grades. Thus, 50% of the participants had been retained at least once in elementary school, a statistic exceeding the national average of 40%. It is poignant to recall that one participant shared she was 15 years old when she completed fifth grade, indicating she had been retained at least four times in elementary school. In concluding this section, it is vital to understand that school experiences must be improved for Miskitu children in Raitipura and Kahkabila because education has the potential to break the cycle of poverty.

Single-Parent Households, Poverty, and Academic Opportunity

The research revealed that during the time of the inquiry, five of the six participants, or 83%, were living in a one-parent household. Of these five participants,

one was separated from her husband, one lived with a father who was widowed, and the others had never married and had raised their children with little or no involvement of the fathers. Mothers who have never married are significantly younger, have lower incomes, have fewer years of education, and are twice as likely to be unemployed as divorced mothers (Parke, 2003). The five female participants were all, young, with four of them being teenagers and one being a preteen when giving birth. Two of these women did not graduate from elementary school, none of them graduated from high school, and none had ever been employed outside the home.

The one-parent household has become common in South America where adults aged 18–49 were found to be less likely to marry than in other parts of the world (*Family structure, 2013*). In Nicaragua, as in other countries in South America, married couples have become a minority. Outside of the upper and middle classes in Nicaragua, relatively few couples formalize their union through the church or state. To recognize this situation, legislation was passed in the 1980s in Nicaragua giving common-law unions the same legal status as civil marriages (Merrill, 1993). Childbearing outside of marriage was common and a socially accepted practice.

Rates of nonmarital childbearing were greatest in Central and South America, with Nicaragua and Columbia having the highest rates of all countries surveyed. In these regions, over half of the children were born to unmarried mothers, with Columbia having the highest rate at 85% and Nicaragua at 65%. It is important to restate that the percentage of single-parent households among participants in Raitipura and Kahkabila was 85%, a figure far higher than Nicaragua's national average of 65%. (For comparison, the nonmarital childbearing rate for the United States is 41% (*Family structure, 2013)*).

The research in the two Miskitu communities showed that all households but one were headed by single parents, four of the five were headed by single women, and the fifth by a single male, the father of the teenage participant. This finding is in accordance with research showing an increase in female-headed households in all of Central America, in both rural and urban areas (St. Bernard, 2003). As heads of households, the women must sustain themselves and their dependents. In Kahkabila and Raitipura, the women supported themselves and their families by farming in the bush, occasionally fishing, and by receiving assistance from family members. Also, they depended on children in the family to help with family chores, participate in childcare responsibilities, fish, and work in the bush. Limited resources aligned with most single-parent households.

Children living with single parents are five times as likely to be living in poverty as those in two-parent families (Parke, 2003). Moreover, female-headed households are more prevalent in indigent than in nonindigent poor or nonpoor households. The level of indigence among female-headed households is greatest in Honduras and Nicaragua, having a rate of 39.4% and 35.9% respectively (St. Bernard, 2003). In the communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila the evidence of indigence may be seen immediately in the condition of the homes. Although some of the more recently built homes are attractive, strongly constructed, and well-furnished, the majority of homes tell of the poverty in which the inhabitants dwell. Five of the six participants' homes had shutters but were windowless and were constructed of ageing and unpainted wood and tin. Poverty also means living in scarcity (Thomas, 2013). In citing only two examples, the scarcity of furniture and of running water in most of the homes and, as earlier mentioned, the lack of any books or school supplies, suggest that all participants were living in poverty.

Poverty may also be understood as the negative manner in which certain people are understood and treated in society. Thomas (2013) affirmed that the behavior of affluent children is viewed in a more positive light than that of poor children. Because the rearing of affluent children matches social expectations, it is viewed as "good" behavior, in contrast to the behavior of poor children which is deemed "bad." "The affluent live and learn in abundance with adequate slack for risk and failure; those in poverty, however, live and learn with razor-thin margins, margins not of their own making and often beyond their control alone to change" (Thomas, 2013, para 27). The concept of "reduced circumstances and razor-thin margins" may be understood by examining the death of the teenage participant's mother. The family immediately spiraled out of control with the loss of the mother who was the primary caregiver of the family. The family had no extra resources that might have allowed the hiring of someone to help with caring for the children and the home, thereby enabling the father to continue his revenue-producing fishing business. Therefore, the family's "reduced circumstances" forced the father to abandon fishing and the small livelihood it produced to care for his family. Because of their "razor-thin margins" they had no money for school clothing or even shoes. At this point of indigence, the participant and his two older brothers dropped out of school. Extreme economic deprivation was an immense determinant in this teenager's decision to drop out of school.

All participants in this study were living in poverty, and each of them had dropped out of school: their own personal, educational outcome. This research indicated that the effects of poverty extend for generations. In considering all the participants and their children, they had either been retained in school, had been expelled from school, or

had dropped out of school. In the Raitipura family with the mother and daughter participants, three generations of family members had dropped out of school despite stating they truly believed in the value of education and expressed the belief that a good education, here signifying a high school diploma, would assure them of good employment. It would appear then that their positive convictions regarding education could not withstand the negative effects of the combination of poor school attendance, poverty, one-parent households, inadequate health care, and a school curriculum that most often did not reflect the needs and identity of Miskitu community members.

National Poverty and its Effect on Schools, Their Resources and Academic Opportunity

I had the opportunity to visit two classrooms in a school in Kahkabila. The condition of both rooms reflected a struggling national economy that lacked the resources necessary to create the most basic physical environment for the children. In classrooms, ceiling tiles were missing, broken windows had missing glass panels, cracked teaching boards had missing sections, and electrical wires hung down from the ceiling. One classroom had 10 desks for 20 students, and the other had no furniture at all. I witnessed students carrying furniture into their classroom from a classroom across the road and later learned that this borrowing back and forth goes on every school day. Also, no books or teaching materials of any kind existed in either of the classrooms. Scarcity, seen as a trait of poverty, was quite evident in these two classrooms.

The Sandinista government has directed far more money to the education system than did the Somoza regime, but it remains sorely insufficient. Nicaragua is a poor country having the smallest annual budget of all countries in Central America and the smallest budget in education. From 1999 to 2010, the government spent, on average,

3.5% of its annual gross domestic product on education. Honduras and Costa Rica spent 8% and 5% respectively, with both countries having a far greater gross domestic product than Nicaragua. In 2012, Nicaragua lowered its spending on education to 3.4%, and the 2013 budget anticipated that education spending would fall to less than 3% (Hutt, 2013). Parents and children are negatively affected when the national government restricts the amount of money it can devote to education, a point that will be explained later.

Participants were aware of the lack of learning materials in the schools. They expressed dissatisfaction that books were never given to the children and that only on occasion were any papers sent home by the teacher. Participants from Raitipura and Kahkabila also stated that, because of this, they were unaware of exactly which topics were being taught in school. Parents also expressed the difficulty of helping their children learn at home without books or other instructional materials. Because these Miskitu families were living in poverty or extreme poverty, none was able to supplement the books and learning materials that had not been provided by the national education department. Even though primary school and high school are free in Nicaragua, with only primary school being compulsory, research showed that the Nicaraguan education department expected families to contribute to their child's school and education.

Nicaragua has been criticized for its underfunding of education. However, it should be explained that the International Monetary Fund has forced the Nicaraguan government to restrict support for education. To satisfy a loan agreement from the International Monetary Fund, Nicaragua is required to continue implementing the school-autonomy program, which reduces national funding for schools. Under this system, the government can only pay teacher salaries, provide some training, and make occasional

school repairs. Parents must, in the form of fees, pay for other salaries, desks, books, electric bills, and cleaning materials (Foundation for Sustainable Development, n.d.b) In addition, families are required to purchase uniforms, and, as a result of these expenses, the poorest children may either not matriculate in the school system or drop out of school before completing their primary school education. Although participants in Raitipura and Kahkabila are living in poverty, none of them stated they or their children dropped out of school because of the school fees. If the six participants are representative of all residents, it is remarkable how much they appreciate an education and how much they are willing to sacrifice to achieve it. (The guide, Jairo, explained that the U.S. Agency for International Development office in Pearl Lagoon supported the families and their children by providing backpacks with school supplies for all students in Kahkabila in 2015.) Nonetheless, despite this strong belief in the rewards of education, Nicaragua has one of the highest dropout rates and lowest high school-enrollment rates in the world (Rogers, 2012), a statistic evident in the reflections of each of the six participants in this research project.

Conclusion

I divide culminating remarks regarding this inquiry into two parts. The first section contains various observations related to the characteristics of the PAR methodology that was used in this study. Statements regarding the analysis of the data collection comprise the second part. The first observation pertains to the power and the flexibility of PAR, which became apparent during the period of data collection. I view the PAR methodology as powerful, due to its ability to elicit information in abundance. Prior to the trip to Nicaragua, I had learned about why some Miskitu students drop out of

school. These researched contributing factors were verified during the conversations, but in addition, new factors came to the fore simply because I invited participants to tell their own story and to provide their own reasons for dropping out of school. This emergence of a wealth of new and important information also indicated that the thinking and experiences of the people can be counted on to create a depth of knowledge that, albeit unexpected, becomes worthy and significant, providing the building blocks on which future transformation of the community and its inhabitants is able to take place.

I was also aware of the manner in which the information emerged from the conversations with participants. One immediate and noticeable characteristic experienced in the PAR process was the ease with which participants and I communicated with one another. The conversation began when I introduced myself and explained why I was in the village and shared my desire to speak with participants about their school experiences and those of their children. Following this, each community member exhibited willingness, even eagerness, to share their experiences and ideas with me. I expect that the relaxed tone and the general feeling of goodwill apparent during the conversations may be partially attributed to participants feeling respected, understanding that their experiences and opinions mattered, encouraging immediate camaraderie and honest sharing. The friendliness and welcoming nature of the Miskitu peoples also clearly contributed to the congeniality of conversations and the trust that developed between participants and me. Some participants mentioned that no one had ever asked for their opinion about school before. Because the PAR method honored the participants with open questions and acknowledged that their opinions were appreciated seemed to instantly unite participants and researcher on a journey that both parties felt was

important and meaningful. The strongest observation and conclusion was that this methodology honored the knowledge of participants and allowed them to feel valued as proud representative members of their Miskitu communities.

The main goal of this research was to determine, through interactive dialogues, the reasons participants dropped out of school, and the research questions were formulated to support that objective. Prior research indicated that pregnancy was one reason Nicaraguan young women dropped out of school. In this study, however, pregnancy was not only one reason; it was one of the main reasons women gave, with three of the five female participants stating they dropped out of school because of pregnancy.

A major conclusion of this study is that the national public school system does not sufficiently address the problems associated with early pregnancy. Although the topic of pregnancy needs to be a regular and ongoing subject in the national curriculum, only 18% of Nicaraguan schools use the available sex education guide (Herrera, 2014). Further, health centers in Nicaragua do not provide information to youth or adults about protective methods. According to Herrera, the absence of sex-education programs is due to an implicit agreement between the government and the Catholic Church to prohibit this type of education in schools. In 2010, the United Nations put pressure on Nicaragua to take measures necessary to address teen pregnancy and sexual health. The United Nations stated that the country needed "to ensure adolescents access to safe, legal, and confidential sexual and reproductive health services … and that contraceptives [should be] widely available (as cited in Herrera, 2014, para 8). Therefore, a concluding statement regarding teenage pregnancy in Nicaragua is that both the schools and the

healthcare system must take an active role in educating young people and their families about early pregnancy and must provide appropriate legal and reproductive health services for them.

Another conclusion regarding student dropout rates was that poverty played a major role in the majority of participants' decisions to leave school. Only two participants did not offer poverty as a factor contributing to the cessation of their education or to that of their children. In conclusion, poverty is a grave problem in all of Nicaragua with schools, the healthcare system, and millions of Nicaraguans suffering because of it.

Another conclusion is that during the discussion, health care became a major deterrent to education completion with two participants. Although the limited health facilities are a concern throughout Nicaragua, the problem is especially egregious in the rural communities located on the Mosquito Coast. Being forced to travel to Pearl Lagoon via speedboat for even the most basic of health care places a tremendous strain on the residents of the Kahkabila community. In Raitipura, as well, the 5-mile walk to the health center in Pearl Lagoon is particularly challenging for certain families, especially for the very ill. This limitation of healthcare facilities adversely affected the health and the academic potential of a number of children. Therefore, if the Nicaraguan government desires an improvement in its graduation rates from elementary school, as well as improved high school enrollment and graduation rates, it will be necessary to increase funding not only to the schools but to the healthcare system as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend two projects for future research. The first recommendation relates to health care in the communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila, and I direct the second

recommendation to the formation of appropriate curriculum and learning environment for the Miskitu children living in these communities. The dearth of healthcare facilities in Nicaragua and the lack of health facilities is particularly grave for residents of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. In discussing school experiences, several participants revealed that some children did not receive needed health care. Further, on both trips to Kahkabila, I observed that none of the children or adults I encountered wore glasses; I later learned that the absence of glasses was because none of the residents had ever received eye examinations. Finally, during conversations, I learned that that two of the participants' mothers had died at a very young age, as did the father of the Kahkabila guide. Therefore, with this overwhelming information generated from the research about the lack of health care for Miskitu families, additional research should be conducted in this area.

The methodology employed will depend upon the intent of the inquiry. For example, if the goal is to seek an overall understanding of health care and health conditions for a large number of community members, it may be advantageous to conduct the research with survey questions. In contrast, if the purpose is to develop a comprehensive understanding of health and health care for selected families in each community, PAR may be the preferred methodology. In either case, participants could be interviewed or invited to complete a survey regarding health care. The topics to be included in the interview or survey include (a) the number of people in the family and their ages, including children, parents, grandparents, and aunts and uncles, whether or not living in the same house; (b) the number of family members who are deceased, the age and approximate year that each of them died, and the cause of death; (c) the illness or

illnesses suffered by each of the family members and the age when the illness or illnesses occurred; (d) type of treatment received for the illness (Western medicine, traditional Miskitu medicine, home remedy, or no treatment); (e) hospitalizations of any family member, including location of the facility, age of family member, reason for the health care, and treatment and outcome of the care; (f) visits to the health center in Pearl Lagoon and reason for the visit such as delivery of a baby, blood tests, x-rays, or medical examinations, and the outcome of the visits; (g) prescription medications or herbal Miskitu medicine that family members have taken in the past or are presently taking; (h) participants' satisfaction with the health care received; (i) participants' suggestions for improved health care for themselves and their family members.

The second recommendation for future research is in education. In this research, researchers would query selected parents, students, teachers, and administrators affiliated with elementary schools in Raitipura and Kahkabila and the high school in Kahkabila about curriculum and learning and the type of rapport that exists among students, families, and the schools. A need for this type of research became apparent when, during the research process, all participants expressed concern about the content of the schools' curricula and the type of communication that existed between the parents and the teaching staff.

As in the health inquiry discussed above, this research could be conducted using either the PAR methodology or the survey method. Topics to be investigated could include (a) the representation of the Miskitu culture in the curriculum; (b) whether Creole English or Miskitu should be the language of instruction in community schools; (c) whether Spanish, Creole English, or Miskitu should be the language of instruction in

the high school; (d) the types of relationships that exist among students, parents, and school staff; (e) if there is a caring relationship among students, teachers, and administrators; (f) participants' suggestions for improved school curriculum; (g) participants suggestions for improved relationships among students, families, teachers, and administrators.

Once data have been collected and written into a report, all participants could meet as a group to hear the outcome of the research. At that point, participants could be offered the opportunity to meet on a regular basis to discuss all areas of the report and decide which changes could be made in the curriculum and how family–student–school rapport might be improved. The final phase of the research project could be the implementation of all curriculum changes as well as implementation of activities that would improve relationships among schools, students, and families.

Recommendations for Practice

I offer the following recommendations for the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila. The first recommendation relates to healthcare facilities, and the second recommendation concerns out-of-school activities that may discourage language loss and encourage language maintenance in both communities. The discussion begins with the topic of healthcare facilities in the communities.

Dissertation findings revealed that residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila are required to travel long distances for even the most basic health services. Community members from Raitipura must walk 5 miles to Pearl Lagoon, sometimes through flooded sections of the road, to receive health care. For residents of Kahkabila, the half-hour motorboat ride to Pearl Lagoon is laborious and expensive. Research findings showed

that the absence of healthcare facilities in the villages presented challenges to Miskitu health. Findings also indicated that the lack of even a basic health post or clinic played a role in community children dropping out of school. For many residents, the only trip to the doctor took place once an illness had reached an advanced stage. Therefore, it is recommended that a health post (small clinic) be established in these two communities with nurses assigned to each one. Following is an example of how residents of Kahkabila have been denied health care due to the absence of a health post. During the research period in 2014, I observed that no one in Kahkabila wore glasses: neither the participants, their children, nor any other residents encountered on trips to each village.

After inquiring into this, I was informed that community members do not wear glasses because they have never received eye examinations. It is important to note that this same problem does not exist in the nearby town of Pearl Lagoon where the great majority of residents are of Creole descendancy. An informant indicated that a team of health professionals from Managua visits Pearl Lagoon yearly to administer eye examinations and provide prescription lenses at a reasonable price. These same opportunities must be provided for the Miskitu residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila and with clinics built and staffed with nurses in these two villages, this would become a reality.

The second recommendation for future work in Kahkabila and Raitipura concerns the implementation of language-acquisition practices that may help stem the loss of the Miskitu language in the communities. Because some residents are unaware that language loss is occurring in their community, it is important that this problem is addressed. One way to accomplish this would be to discuss certain sections of the language section of

this dissertation with residents to highlight when language loss has occurred. A discussion of language loss and language maintenance could take place during one of the elders' meetings that are held regularly in each community. I propose that research participants and the guide from each community present the information. I may also participate in the transmission of this information, though that is not a requirement.

During an elders' meeting, I suggest several community members present the findings to the full group. The goal of such a presentation would be to explain how out-of-school activities, instituted in each of the two communities, might help preserve and promote the Miskitu language. These activities, which would be conducted in the Miskitu language and Creole English, might include homework clubs, sports and cultural events, as well as language classes for all members who never learned Miskitu as their mother tongue and for those who wished to improve their Miskitu-language competency. It is also vital that community members be given the opportunity to suggest other activities or practices that could help with language maintenance in the communities. Young community members may feel more comfortable and more willing to participate if both Creole and Miskitu were spoken during the above suggested activities. These activities would need the funding and approval of the elders' council. I recommend that Miskitu activists be paid for their work because with monetary compensation, these community members might be encouraged to take a leadership role not only in these proposed activities but in future activities as well.

Reflections of the Researcher

When I reflect on the dissertation journey, my immediate sentiment is one of gratitude as I wish to honor, Amalia Dixon, the person and dear friend who first

introduced me to the Miskitu peoples of Nicaragua. Ms. Dixon is of Miskitu heritage and presently a California resident with dual Nicaraguan and United States citizenship. In our many conversations, Ms. Dixon shared with me her experiences growing up in the Rio Coco region of Nicaragua where she was a wife, a mother, a mayor, a soldier, and a refugee who fled to Honduras in the 1980s, and eventually moved to the United States to work in the field of education. Ms. Dixon is now planning to return to Nicaragua where she will spend her retirement years with family members living on both coasts of Nicaragua.

Conversations with Ms. Dixon encouraged me to learn more about Nicaragua, and, after examining some of the literature regarding the Miskitu peoples, I arrived at the decision that research in Nicaragua would be of value to me personally in my dissertation work, but more importantly and compellingly, it had the potential to offer worthwhile outcomes for the Miskitu peoples themselves. Thus, I thank Ms. Dixon deeply, as she was surely my introduction to the Miskitu communities, as well as my inspiration to conduct this research. I will always consider Ms. Dixon to be my mentor before, during, and following this dissertation journey.

I was drawn to focus my research on Miskitu families and their relationship with schools when I learned about the high dropout rate of Miskitu children that often occurred during the elementary school years. The literature had offered numerous reasons to account for this tragedy, mostly based on quantitative research projects. From my observation, little attempt had been made to talk to families and to ask them why they or their children had dropped out of school. During my career as an elementary, middle school, and adult-education teacher, I learned the value of talking with and learning from

the children, adults, and their families. Interestingly, it is often the participants who are able to best solve a researcher's set of problems, so the use of the PAR methodology seemed the most logical path to follow. Thereafter, I decided to travel to Nicaragua to meet directly with Miskitu parents and children with the goal of engaging in conversations I hoped would enrich and transform future academic lives: theirs and mine.

While still in the United States, I was informed through readings that several Miskitu communities are located in the Pearl Lagoon Basin where most of the residents were bilingual and even trilingual, speaking Miskitu as their first language, Miskitu Creole English as a second language, and often Spanish as a third language. Even though the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua houses a great number of Miskitu communities, I decided to conduct the research in Raitipura and Kahkabila because of the obvious advantage of the English language that we shared. Language is a powerful structure and one that would also play a great role in the data-collection process. Yet, the communality of language alone would not suffice as an entry to the Miskitu communities.

The diligent and professional work of the two guides allowed me to be introduced into the Miskitu communities of Raitipura and Kahkabila. As I reflect on these Miskitu community members and guides, Ms. Eveth Ingram Peachy and Mr. Jairo Schwartz, I feel tremendous gratitude for the help they extended to me. Each made advance appointments with community members, accompanied me twice to the village of Raitipura and Kahkabila, and then remained with me throughout the duration of the conversations. In addition, once I returned to the United States, Eveth and Jairo helped arrange telephone connections with the four participants that had yet to approve the reports. Just as had been done with the first two participants in Raitipura, I would read the

reports of the conversation over the phone, giving participants the opportunity to make any necessary corrections, additions, or changes. Finally, I am grateful to the guides for their efficiency and congeniality. Because the guides knew each participant personally, they were able to rapidly determine which community member exhibited the qualifications required for the research: at least 16 years of age, of Miskitu heritage, and had dropped out of school in either elementary or high school. Undoubtedly, were I working alone in trying to meet participants possessing these qualifications, it may have taken me several months instead of 1 month to meet and develop a rapport with participants and to complete the research in Nicaragua. Finally, the guides worked with such intelligence and enthusiasm that it became evident they wanted to witness the success of the research, a success that might one day help contribute to improved health and academic opportunities for the Miskitu peoples residing in the Pearl Lagoon Basin. Thank you, Eveth Ingram Peachy and Jairo Schwartz, for helping me as you did.

The content of the data collection itself has offered much for me to contemplate. As the participants, one after the other, unveiled their own particular reasons for dropping out of school, I began to see the enormity of the challenges that confront the Miskitu residents of Raitipura and Kahkabila. One area of concern expressed by participants was the lack of books in the classroom and in the home. Learning how to read is a supreme challenge in the best of conditions, and it is jarringly so with a complete absence of books for the children to read. Therefore, as a former teacher and having extensive experience in teaching reading, I anticipate returning to Nicaragua in 2016 to create small literacy opportunities in the Pearl Lagoon Basin, using reading and instructional materials from my personal children’s library. In addition to helping children and adults improve their

reading skills, another goal is to teach reading-instruction skills to interested adults so that they may become reading teachers themselves and help expand the literacy reach in their communities. I have already contacted the *alcalde* in Pearl Lagoon; he welcomes such a program in his town. It is also my goal to create family-literacy stations in Kahkabila and Raitipura as well.

For the final reflection, I would like to express gratitude to all the professors at the University of San Francisco who introduced me to and taught me the significance and magnitude of societal problems caused by oppression of culture, imperialism, colonialism, and racism; problems that stubbornly persist to this very day. Additionally, I was taught the PAR methodology that helped me pursue a research path that signified more than a means in the collection of facts. PAR taught me, above all, that the most important part of research is what happens after the research project ends. In other words, enabling participants to continue their community work founded on their own knowledge is, for me, the ultimate goal of a research project. Finally, I reflect on my very first graduate class at the University of San Francisco—Leadership Theories—where I learned about the value of servant leadership and how, like PAR, it honors the communicant and recognizes the power and goodness in the participant. Ultimately, I understand that this dissertation is a beginning, merely a steppingstone that holds the promise of improved education resources and learning for the residents of Kahkabila and Raitipura, achieved through the actions of the Miskitu community members themselves.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED-CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CONSENT TO BE A PARTICIPANT

Purpose and Background

Patricia A. Conway, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is conducting a study about the elementary school experiences of eight to ten Miskitu families living on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The purpose of the study is to allow the parents to discuss their elementary school experiences, and the experiences of their child or children, and the number of years of schooling completed. Another purpose of the study is to allow the parents to talk about the school curriculum offered to their children, as well as their working relationship with the teachers in their child's school. The final purpose is to ask the parents if they would like to visit their child's school and volunteer to teach a class or visit and or help in their child's classroom.

I am being asked to participate in this study because I meet the following criteria:

1. I live in either Raitipura or Kahkabila, Nicaragua.
2. One or both of my parents are of Miskitu heritage
3. I attended the Miskitu community schools in either Raitipura or Kahkabila.
4. If I have children, they also attend the Miskitu public elementary schools.
5. I dropped out of school in either elementary or high school.
6. I am willing to converse with the researcher about my school experiences and those of my children in conversations that will last from 60 to 90 minutes.

Procedures

If I agree to be in the study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in a dialogue with the researcher.
2. I will respond to interview questions regarding my elementary school experiences and those of my child or children. I will also be invited to contribute my own ideas about schooling practices school curriculum.
3. The researcher will take notes regarding the conversation and, with your permission will take photographs.
4. The researcher may write field notes.

Risks and Discomforts

1. If any of the questions seem confusing, I am able to ask the researcher to explain the question.
2. If any of the questions make me feel uncomfortable, I may decline to answer it.
3. Confidentiality: I should not be concerned that the researcher will use my name in any report or publication that may result from this study. If any names appear in the report, they will all be pseudonyms; all participants will remain anonymous.
4. When the researcher returns to the United States, she will keep all interview notes, photographs, consent forms and field notes that result from the interviews locked in a secure place in her home. All materials will be kept completely confidential.

Benefits

While there will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this study, the anticipated benefit is that the use of your stories will provide a richer understanding of the educational experiences of some Miskitu children living in Nicaragua. Another benefit is that your ideas as a participant may help to inform schooling practices and curriculum in schools in Miskitu communities.

Alternatives

I am free to choose not to participate in this study.

Costs and Financial Considerations

I will incur no financial responsibility by participating in this study.

Reimbursement

I will not be paid for my participation in this study.

Questions

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and any question I may have had has been addressed and answered by Patricia A. Conway.

Consent

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study or to withdraw at any point. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

I also understand that if I fear loss of anonymity, I may place an X on the line and give the date.

_____	_____
Subject's Signature	Date
_____	_____
Person obtaining consent, Patricia A. Conway	Date

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SUBJECTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, I have the following rights:

Research subjects can expect:

1. To be told the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained and of the possibility that specified individuals, internal and external regulatory agencies, or study sponsors may inspect information in the medical record specifically related to participation in the clinical trial;
2. To be told of any benefits that may reasonably be expected from the research;
3. To be told of any reasonably foreseeable discomforts or risks;
4. To be told of the procedures to be followed during the course of participation, especially those that are experimental in nature;
5. To be told that they may refuse to participate (participation is voluntary), and that declining to participate will not compromise access to services and will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled;
6. To be told that significant new findings developed during the course of the research that may relate to the subject's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject;
7. To be told the approximate number of subjects involved in the study;
8. To be told what the study is trying to find out;

9. To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;
10. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;
11. To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;
12. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form;
13. To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study.

If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher of the research assistant. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Counseling Psychology Department, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1071.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant _____

Name of Community _____

Date _____

Personal Background

1. Please tell me where you were born.
2. Are you married?
3. If you have children, please tell me the names and the ages of your children.

School Experiences

1. Please share with me the name and location of the elementary school or schools you attended and tell me how many years you attended that school or schools.
2. If you attended elementary school, how would you describe your daily attendance? For example, did you attend school every day or have perfect attendance? If you did not have perfect attendance, approximately how many times per week or month were you absent from school?
3. In which way or ways did your parents show their concern about your school attendance? For example, in which ways did your parents either encourage or discourage you from attending school.
4. Please share with me the reason or reasons that you dropped out of school.

5. If you have school-age children, please tell me what grade they are in and which schools they attend. Please share with me some of their school experiences.
6. Did your child or children attend the community preschool? Please tell me about those experiences.
7. How would you describe your child's school attendance? Does your child have perfect attendance? If not, approximately how many days is your child absent from school each week or month? Does your child enjoy attending school?
8. If any of your children have dropped out of school, please explain the circumstances that led to this event.
9. Please explain the relationship you have with your children's teachers at school.
10. Do you feel welcome in your child's school? Please explain.

The Miskitu Language

1. Please tell me about the language or the languages you spoke when you were growing up. Which language or languages do you speak now? If you speak Miskitu, please describe how often and in which situations you speak that language.
2. What language or languages do your children speak and when do they speak these languages?
3. Is the Miskitu language taught in school? If it is, how often is it taught each day?

4. Please share with me the ways in which you and your family members use the Miskitu language in your daily life.
5. Please explain how the Miskitu language is used in your community. Please think of ways the Miskitu language is spoken outside of your home and outside of school.

The Miskitu Culture

1. In which ways do you think the Miskitu culture is being taught in your child's community school? Please explain.
2. Is there anything about the Miskitu culture that you as an adult would you like to learn?
3. In which ways do you see the Miskitu culture represented in your community?

Poverty in Raitipura and Kahkabila

1. Have you ever been denied any community services because you did not have enough money to pay for them? Please explain.
2. Have you or your family members ever experienced any disruption in your education because of financial difficulties?
3. Have you or your children ever experienced any health conditions that interfered with your or their education? Please explain.
4. Before ending our conversation, are there any other experiences that affected your schooling or that of your children that you would be willing to share now? These experiences could also be related to, but not limited to, your decision or your child's decision to drop out of school.

APPENDIX D

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Autonomous region: There are two autonomous regions in Nicaragua: the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS). Both regions were created in 1987, with the first elections held in 1990. The population is composed of indigenous peoples and ethnic communities with multilingual characteristics (Miskitus, Creoles, Ramas Mayangnas, Garifunas). The rate of illiteracy among the population 10 years or older is 43%, with rural illiteracy reaching 55%; illiteracy is even greater among females. The rate of illiteracy for the country as a whole is 24%. Of the population of people living on the Nicaraguan Caribbean coast, 75% are living in situations of poverty or extreme poverty (Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua).

Civilizing mission: A desire by the colonizers to educate. This took the form of educating the Amerindians in the Spanish language and the Spanish culture (Mignolo, 2012).

Coloniality of power: A phenomenon relating to the placement of power. When the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized stood side by side, the culture of the colonizer would always take preference (Mignolo, 2012).

Cultural capital: A sociological term first used by Bourdieu (1984). It refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, clothing, experiences, and credentials one acquires through being part of a particular social class. Sharing similar forms of cultural capital creates a sense of a collective identity. Bourdieu pointed out that cultural capital is also a source of inequality when certain forms of culture are valued over others. Apple (2004), in *Ideology and Curriculum*, expanded on the role of cultural

capital in U.S. school systems and how it promotes inequality. Apple showed how students of certain ethnicities or social classes are put at a distinct disadvantage in schooling because they do not possess the cultural capital of the dominant or elite group. Without possession of the cultural capital valued by schools, students are likely to have less school success, less advanced schooling and, consequently, limited employment opportunities later in life (Apple, 2004).

Doxa: A phenomenon that refers to the domain of opinion or probable knowledge; *doxa* stands in contrast to *episteme*, the domain of certainty. *Doxa* concerns matters of valuation, opinions, and beliefs, such as if something is good or bad or beautiful or ugly. *Doxa* may also be understood as a doctrine. For example to believe in God is an example of a doxa. The doctrine of Christianity is accepted among Christians as a truth, even though it is an opinion and cannot be proved. In sociology a *doxa* is a social consensus about how things work and how they should work; this includes the notion of how to act, dress, etc. that are obvious in certain groups. *Doxa* is not questioned by groups that see it as natural or common sense. No one in the group realizes they could or should question the social consensus (Kohnberg & Magnusson, 2009).

Encomienda system: A Spanish system of forced labor that had been in existence since feudal times. *Encomienda* is a derivative of a word meaning "trust." In the "New" World, *encomiendas* were first delivered by Columbus to conquistadores. In later migrations, the grants or *encomiendas* were offered to priests, soldiers, and settlers. The receiver of the *encomienda* could exact tribute from the indigenous peoples in the form of metals, goods, or labor (Mignolo, 2012).

Ladino: A term used uniquely in Central America that refers to a *mestizo* or Spanish-speaking White person (Mignolo, 2012).

Mestisaje: A cultural construction that promotes the myth of cultural homogeneity. The construct asserts that in Nicaragua there exists one culture that is a harmonious blend of indigenous, mulatto, Black, and *Ladino* cultures (Gould, 2007).

The New Laws: The New Laws refers to a law passed by King Charles in 1542, freeing Amerindians such that grant holders would no longer be able to extract free labor or goods from them. Because the New Laws were not followed in the colonies, abuse of Amerindians continued until the king refused renewal of *encomiendos* (Mignolo, 2012).

Symbolic violence: "The violence that is committed against a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002, p. 167). Examples of the exercise of symbolic violence include gender relations in which men and women agree that women are weaker, less capable of taking leadership roles, etc. than men. In consumer culture, symbolic violence may be seen through the definitional characterization of some things, such as goods, tastes, and lifestyles as being better than others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2002).

Verum factum: A term used by Vico to explain the truth that is verified through creation or invention. When humans create something, such as a work of art, a myth, a language, it must be true because humans created it. According to Vico, the only thing that can be verified as truth is something that has been made by humans (Begin & Fisch, 1984).

APPENDIX E

IRBPHS LETTER OF EXEMPTION

Protocol Exemption Notification

To: Patricia Conway
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #281
Date: 04/22/2014

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your project (IRB Protocol #**281**) with the title **CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ITS EFFECT ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS IN NICARAGUA: A CALL FOR THE DECOLONIZATION AND REDESIGN OF SCHOOL CURRICULUM BY MISKITU PARENTS** has been approved by the University of San Francisco IRBPHS as **Exempt** according to 45CFR46.101(b). Your application for exemption has been verified because your project involves minimal risk to subjects as reviewed by the IRB on 04/22/2014.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect its exempt status. Please submit a modification application within ten working days, indicating any changes to your research. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
IRBPHS - University of San Francisco
IRBPHS@usfca.edu