Cultivating Identities: Re-Thinking Education in Palau

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OMERENG EL SAUL

Tial omesuub el blak lomelemii a dimlak el sebechel meketmokel a le mlak a temir me a cheldechederir tirkal chad el mo medung a ngklir.

Me a kot eng soak el nguu tial techall e oureng a sulel a delak me a demak e le tir ia uchul eng mlo sebechek el lomelemii a skulek. Mora rbebil er ngak el Lulu, Klouldil, Phila, me a ruchedak er a Ngewakl me a Misech, kom kmal mesaul.

Ng dirrek el soak el mereng a sulel a re chedak el ngar er a Ngaraard me a Ulimang me a re ngar er a Ngermid me a Aimeliik. Kom kmal mesaul er a klaiuedingel ma klaseues er kid. Lak el mekngit a rengmiu a le mlak el medung a ngkliu le kom di medengei.

Tokubets el saul a mo er a rechad er Ulimang, rubekul me a remechesil a beluu, me a rengeasek er a Ulimang. Ak dirrek el mereng a sulir a *Beches* Augustino Blailes me a rechad er a Ulimang er a mui el beltik el reng el kirel a omengetmeklel a beluad.

Dirrek el mo er a JeRome Temengil me a Roureur Belau News, ke kmal mesulang el mlo sebechek el lousbech a bebil er a siasing er ngii me a hong el mellusech el mor tial suobel.

Ak kmal mereng a sulir a rechad er a Belau National Museum el mal ulelduBech er ngak sera kurael el mora skuul. Mora rechad er a Palau National Scholarship Office ma rechad er a Board era 2008 el mo 2009, kom kmal mlo mesaul el rokui.

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ABSTRACT

A plethora of cross-cultural research studies has been conducted and published on the conflict or collision between western models of education and indigenous knowledge and learning. Following on the visions of these studies, the research reported in this thesis explores how these tensions between differing bodies of knowledge impact youth identity in non-western societies. More specifically, the study examines the case of how western models of education impacts the Palauan traditional educational models and whether or not the privileging of western systems of learning over Palauan systems does in fact have a negative impact on the development of identity, well-being, and empowerment of Palauan youth today. Theoretical approaches in this study derived from the knowledge of Palauan elders and scholars as well as literature works of Freire, who argues for transformative education as a means of empowering people, and Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral learning.

Methodological approaches include narratives and a Palauan dialogic approach using questionnaires, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Data were collected from June to September 2009 in Palau. Selected participants were the youth of Ulimang village in Ngaraard and a particular group of Palauan elders and scholars that are involved in Palauan education, knowledge, and research. Data were analyzed in two stages: a questionnaire for Ulimang youth and interviews for the Palauan elders. A range of concepts addressed in the analysis, such as *cheldecheduch* and relationships, strengthened the belief that Palauan knowledge was important in the lives of the Ulimang youth. The need to maintain Palauan knowledge to empower Palauan identities and to support the quality of life for Palauans was articulated by the Palauan elders. The importance of Palauan knowledge and values was stressed from the participants and emphasized how it informs identity development in Palau.

NOTES

On language use:

Tekoi er a Belau (Palauan) is one of many Austronesian languages found in the Pacific. There are 3 local languages spoken which are *tekoi er a Belau*, the languages of Hatohobei and Sonsorol, with English and Japanese treated as second languages. Among all the languages in the Pacific, *tekoi er a Belau* is one of two languages in the region that is outside of the Oceanic language family, the second being Chamorro that is spoken in Guam and CNMI (Blust 83). *Tekoi er a Belau* is derived from the Sunda-sulawesi language family and would be closely related to the language groups found in the Sulawesi islands in Indonesia.

In terms of this study, I will also be using the work of Josephs and McManus as a reference for *tekoi er a Belau,* as well my own knowledge. It is important to note that the "new" spelling of *tekoi er a Belau* is still being transitioned into local education and written use. For example:

English	"old" spelling	"new"spelling
And	ma	me a
To	ra	er a
Where are you going?	Ke mor ker?	Ke mo er ker?

My Palauan "spelling" is still very "poor" compared to what the younger generation is being trained in schools today. During my time in schools in Palau, there was no standardized form of written Palauan yet. As such, all misspellings are solely my mistakes and I take full responsibility for them.

Pronunciation:

Consonants

b – as in 'ball'; e.g. *bong* (go)

bt – e.g *btuch* (star). The *b* in *bt* is silent but articulated on the lips

d – e.g. *demok* (Palauan soup with coconut milk and taro leaves). It is pronounced somewhere between 'd' and 'th'

h – as in 'house'; e.g. *hall* (wait)

k – as in 'clever'; e.g. *klalo* or 'object'

kh – e.g. *kot* or 'first'. It is pronounced between 'g' and 'k'

l – as in 'love'; e.g. *luuk* (nest)

m – as in 'mine'; e.g. *mesaul* (tired)

ng – e.g. *ngor* or mouth. Pronounced like the 'ng' in sing

r – pronounced like a rolling 'r'; similar to the 'r' in Spanish words; e.g. *riamel* (football fruit)

s – as in 'seem'; e.g. *semeriar* (excited)

t – as in 'Tom'; e.g *teblong* (two [things]).

w – as in war; e.g. *uum* (kitchen or cookhouse)

Vowels

a – as in *a*rm; e.g. *aibebelau* (riddle)

e – as in *e*nd; e.g. etiu (five)

i – as in *e*ve; e.g. *iliis* (ran away)

o – as in *o*range; e.g. *omngar* (collecting firewood)

u – as in t*oo*l; e.g. *ulekum* ('I wish' or 'If only')

ch – as in *u*nder. This is a glottal stop. Other languages (e.g. Hawaiian) use the symbol, ‘ to represent this; e.g. *cheldecheduch* (story, discourse, meeting, etc.)

GLOSSARY OF PALAUAN TERMS

bai: meeting house

Belau: Palau islands; root word is to speak in riddles

beluu: land, village, district, country

berraod: heaviness

bitang: half

blai: house

buai: public

bul: a prohibition or ban

buuldiil: literally, rupture of the womb; payment for *omengat* to the *okdemaol*

chad: a person, human

Chad er a Belau: person from/of Belau

chebuul: poor or unfortunate

cheldebechel: a club or organization

cheldecheduch: storytelling, discussion, discourse, meeting, talk

chelebuul: state of being poor or in an unfortunate circumstance

chesols: chants

deleuill: relationship

dikesel a beluu: village or community engagement

duch: ability or skill

duch el reng: perseverance, determination, willpower

erungel: whole

kelulau: whispers

kemeldiil: funeral

keruul: mindful or considerate

klebelau: ways of Belau

klechibelau: "Belauness"

melengmes: to be polite; a form of respect out of consideration

merang el chad: literally, a real person; a person of proper conduct and character

merang: real, true

meringel: painful

meringel el chad: very important; highly valued; literally, painful person

mesurech: hot bath

ngeasek: youth; young person

ocheraol: customary Palauan practice when a man desires to build a home for him and his family, his relatives contribute to his need. Also means expense.

oderuchel: to carry out errands; a teaching technique that familiarizes children to relatives

okdemaol: maternal uncle or head of a lineage; usually a mother's brother.

olbiil: house or centre

olengamech: an attempt to seduce; a concept that keeps people on their toes; preparedness

omengat: literally, steaming; Palauan ceremony when a woman gives birth to their first child.

omenged: to go fishing

ongall: a large platter for food

rael: path, road, way, linkages

reng: center of emotions

rolel: his, her, or its road, path, way. Can also be, the path or the way

rubak: honorific term for an older man; a person who holds a chiefly title

sar: salt

siukang: from the Japanese word *'shukkan'* meaning habits, manners, and customs

skel: searching

taoch: landing place for canoes, boats, etc.

tekoi: words, knowledge, ways, concepts, epistemology

Tekoi er a Belau: vernacular; words, concepts of Palau, Palauan knowledge, Palauan epistemology, etc.

uach: leg or foot

ulsemuul: a knowledgeable, well-rounded individual or more; when it pertains to elders, a person who does not have to compete for space to talk

ungil besud: living comfortably; a good life, or in a good or fortunate position

ureor: work

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study:

Story 1:

We were gathered at my auntie's house fixing food, doing daily chores around the area, and enjoying each other's company in the evening. Another auntie's daughter, in the previous evening, was given a severe scolding for leaving the house late at night to indulge in smoking marijuana and drinking with her 15 year-old school mates. She was to be grounded and not to roam about at night. This night we were sitting, we saw her leaving her house to sit and talk with our other younger cousins under the mango tree just across the road from where we were. Her mother called, "I thought I told you that you were to stay inside the house when it gets dark." My cousin shouted furiously, "I'm right here sitting where you can see! And I'm just with the cousins! I'm not going anywhere!" My auntie fell silent, and so did we.

My interests about the decline of Palauan knowledge stemmed from experiences like these. When I undertook this study, I initially thought that the Palauan youth in general did not seem to place significance in Palauan knowledge, such as codes of respect, as a part of their growth. So I became interested in the relevance of indigenous knowledge to Palauan youth through my own personal experience of being a youth from Palau. I have been studying overseas since I was 14, and in recent years, I have realized how little I know about my own culture and how my western education has distanced me from my heritage back at home; from participating and contributing in the community. Additionally the impact of westernization in Palau has changed many aspects of Palauan life today that I felt were important to address to develop an understanding of the social issues occurring today and how it affects Palau youth.

For distinction purposes, when I use 'Palau', I am referring to those who affiliate themselves with being *chad er a Belau* culturally; people from Ngcheangel, Babeldaob (Upper Ocean), Oreor (Koror), and Eouldaob[1] (Lower Ocean). Palauans are of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and while this thesis will address issues relating to their

[1] There are 16 states in Palau. 2 are Dongosaro and Hatohobei and 14 are as follows: Ngcheangel in the north, Ngarchelong, Ngaraard, Ngardmau, Ngiwal, Melekeok, Ngaremlengui, Ngatpang, Ngchesar, Airai and Aimeliik in Babeldaob, Oreor, Beliliou and Ngeaur in Eouldaob

own concerns of the transmission of indigenous knowledge, it would not be fair for me to represent the people of Dongosaro and Hatohobei[2], who have their own epistemologies that are unique to their own way of life. I will use the indigenous name, *Belau*, only where appropriate.

The islands of Palau are situated at the westernmost chain of the Micronesian region. Set in a tropical climate with essentially a rainy and dry season, the islands are "situated among the Western Caroline Islands on the western Pacific rim, approximately 600 km from the nearest large landmasses (Papua New Guinea to the south and the Philippines to the west)" (Berger et al. 1), with a very humid environment. Linguistic evidence points to early Palauans as descendants of Southeast Asian origins with their close similarity to language groups in Indonesia, Philippines, and Taiwan. Chamorro and Palauan are two languages in the Pacific that are not of Oceanic origin. "Each appears to have arisen through separate migrations out of insular Southeast Asia some 3,500 – 4,000 years ago" (Blust 83).

Recent studies suggest that the islands of Palau were settled at approximately 2900 B.C. (Berger et al. 1). Palau is a matrilineal culture in which land and titles are passed down through the women. Traditional village politics are the domain of Palauan men where a system of 10 to 11 ranking title-holders called *rubak*, conduct village and communal affairs[3]. Today, traditional politics continue with the affiliation of matrilineal heritage alongside the democratic government that has been implemented since the time of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) was put into place by the United States of America (U.S.).

1.1.1 Colonial history

Historically, Palau has experienced more than 200 years of contact with the West. Micronesia[4] mostly has a shared colonial history beginning from the Spanish through to the American years. Although similar in its history of contact with the West, each colonial power had its distinct effects on each Micronesian district. For example, Nauru and Kiribati had a

[2] Also known as Sonsorol and Tobi

[3] This may vary between villages. For example, some villages have 10 *rubak* while others might have 11. My father's village have 12 *rubak*.

[4] Micronesia comprises of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) which include Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the Republic of Palau (ROP). Guam is not often distinguished as Micronesia politically due to its status with the U.S. Although the Republic of Nauru and Kiribati are part of Micronesia geographically, their affiliation with Australia and New Zealand often exclude them from Micronesia.

colonial history with Great Britain, which is why they have present relationships with Australia and New Zealand. Likewise, although Micronesia was colonized by the Spanish for only a time, the effects of their culture heavily impacted the Chamorro people in Guam and the Marianas. “Spanish education was too short-lived to leave any permanent traces in the Carolines, but the imprint of over 200 years of Spanish rule in the Marianas is evident in the language, dress and customs of the Chamorro people” (Hezel, “In Search of a Home” par. 17).

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Palau are sometimes referred to as the Caroline Islands or Carolines after Spanish explorer Francisco Lazeano named them after Charles II, the King of Spain in 1686 (Hezel, “Early European Contact” par. 9). The first known documented contact between the West and Palau began with Henry Wilson of the British Empire in 1783, when he and his crew were shipwrecked on the reefs by Ulong Island (Force and Force 2). There is also evidence of previous on and off encounters that were recorded by Europeans and orally transmitted by Palau elders. European contact first began in 1579, the first English visit occurred in 1783, and the first Americans, who were whalers, appeared in 1832 (Parmentier 42-45).

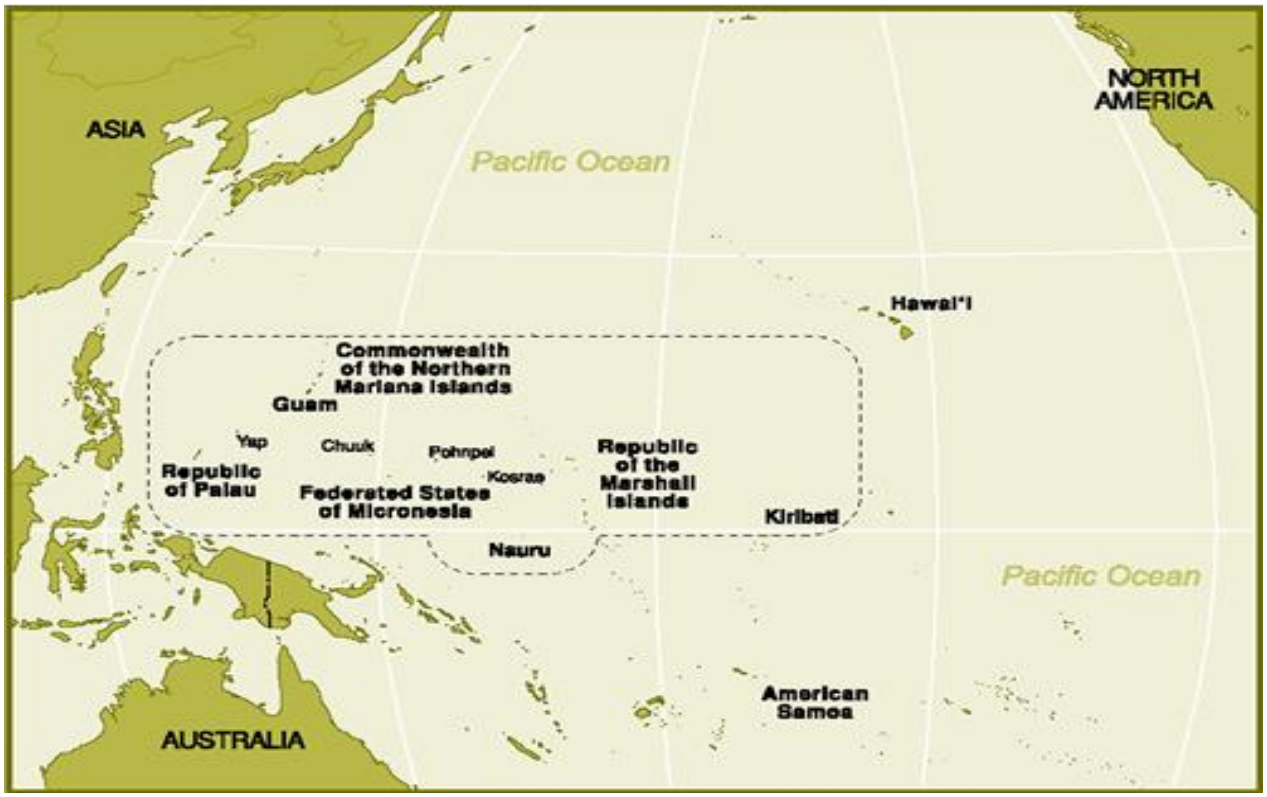


Figure 1 : Map of Micronesia (Heine)

After Captain Wilson's contact a hundred years earlier, a number of colonial groups gradually made their way into Micronesia introducing their values, ways, and beliefs that would change the history of many of the islands. Between 1882 and 1885 there was a "period of exploitation of Belau's resources by individual European traders, in which their commercial rivalry with shifting district alliances, title disputes, and warfare, changed toward the close of the century to a situation of international competition between Spain, Germany, and England" (Parmentier 46-47). The Spanish (1885 – 1899) came to Palau with the intention of indoctrinating the people to the word of God. However, their influence was short-lived due to their 'un-official' status being in Micronesia compared to the subsequent colonial administrations of Germany, Japan and the U.S. that were more 'official'.

The Germans came to Palau with their own system of governance and introduced it during their short period in Micronesia. The 15 year annexation of Palau by Germany from 1900 to 1914 saw the establishment of the first formal school in Palau; a school for policeman with a curriculum of German language, reading, writing, geography, and arithmetic (ROP Ministry of Education 12). Under the new rule, Palauans saw many cultural practices, which were crucial factors of Palauan society and lifestyle, being abolished due to conflict with German values. Many of the changes that occurred created problems in the islands and a tense interaction between the Germans and the Palauans.

Following the Germans were the Japanese who bought Micronesia from Germany in 1914. They also introduced their own values and beliefs and rigorously changed many more Palauan beliefs. "Japan launched economic and social programs that far exceeded efforts of the Spanish and the Germans, perhaps the most important of which was the establishment of an influential school system" (ROP Ministry of Education 13). Then in 1944, 30 years after their colonial time in power, Japan 'lost' Micronesia in the Second World War against the U.S.

After the war, Micronesia was under the American Naval Administration until 1947 (Parmentier 51). Several radical changes and policies occurred between the 1950s to the 1980s. The United Nations (UN) agreed that the U.S. administer Micronesia as a territory and thus became the TTPI. In the 1960s, increased attention from the U.S. suddenly changed their policy of 'slow development' to an increase of monetary funding to establish health and educational services in return for military rights (Parmentier 52). Initially, the U.S. wanted to bring all the Micronesian islands together (except for Guam) as an 'independent' political entity that was to be the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) with an intimate political

association rather than a colonial territory in the late 1970s (Parmentier 52). However, Palauans saw themselves as culturally distinct from the rest of the TTPI and opted for full-fledged 'independence' with separate negotiations with the U.S. By the 1980s, the development of the Compact of Free Association (CoFA) with the United States and other Micronesian islands were on the making. By 1986, The RMI, the present FSM, and CNMI had already given military rights to the U.S. (Islands on the Edge of Time) in exchange for U.S. aid and so-called independence. The TTPI was no longer an entity.

However, this did not come easily for Palau. In 1979, Palau had written a nuclear-free constitution in response to the nuclear testing experiments done by the U.S. in the RMI prior to the Hiroshima (Japan) attacks during WWII. As a move to protect their country from colonial ambitions, the Palauan Constitution did not allow any nuclear substances to pass through, be stored, and used in Palau. A vote of 75 percent would amend the clause if needed (Islands on the Edge of Time). The U.S. did not support this move because the Palauan Constitution was in conflict with the CoFA agreement and the U.S. requirements for military privileges. This delayed Palau's independence and remained a Trust Territory until the early 90s.

A fter a period of civil unrest, violence, multiple deaths, 3 referendums on the constitution, and 8 referendums on the CoFA, and illegal amendments of the Palau Constitution in 1992, the CoFA was established in Palau. In 1994, Palau became an 'independent' nation. However, while it is a sovereign country, the islands still depend heavily on U.S. aid and Palauans take advantage of the opportunity of freely moving to the U.S. without any restrictions. As of October 2009, the CoFA agreement between Palau and U.S. has recently come under re-negotiation (Carreon, "Palau").

The overview presented will provide the reader with an understanding of the influence of foreign values to Palauan society and the impact of colonialism. This study aims to examine how the Palauan colonial history has the potential of influencing and assimilating people as well as affecting identity development.

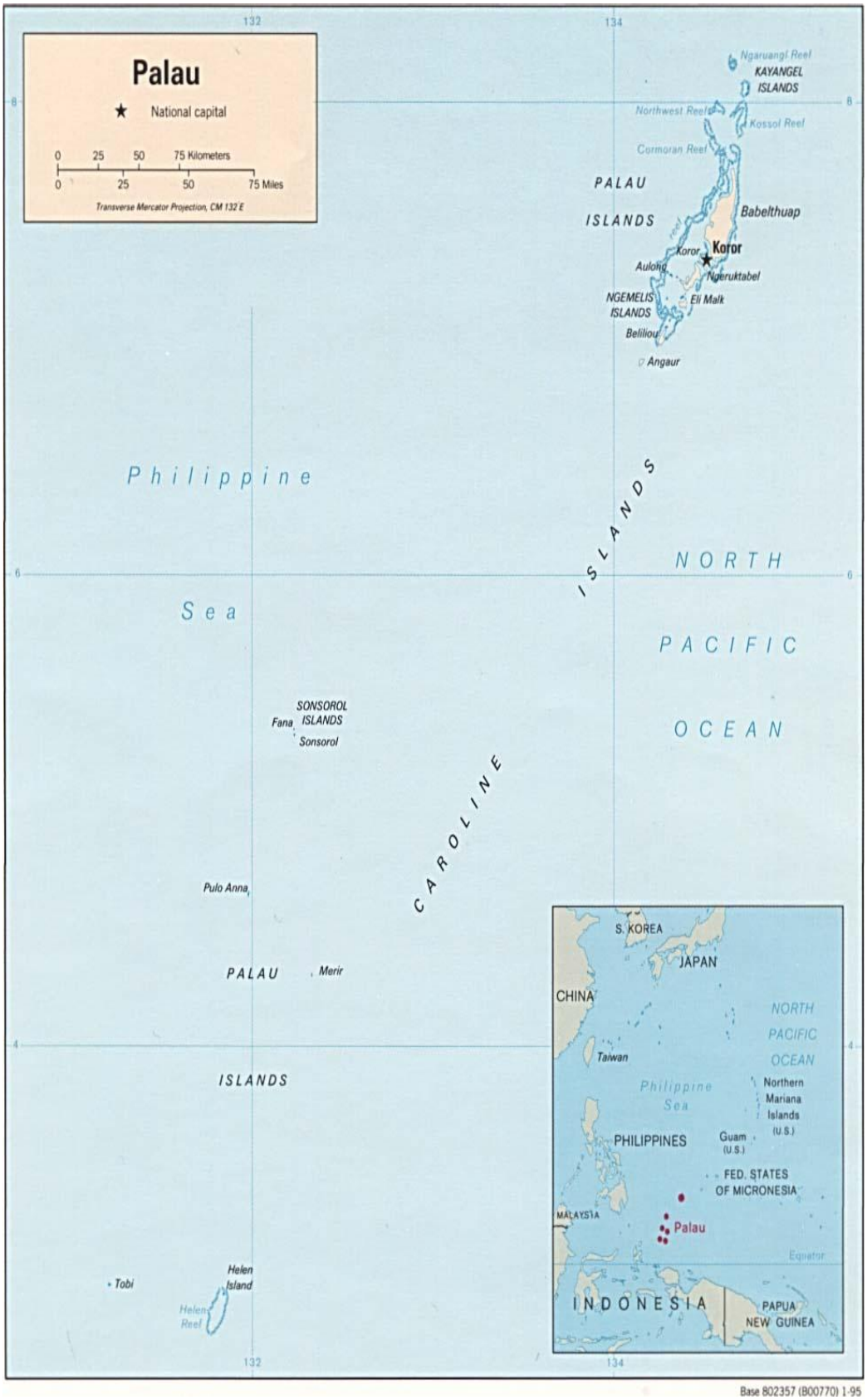


Figure 2: Political Map of Palau ("Palau (Political)")

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Experience 1:

> Growing in up in Palau, my parents spoke to me in the vernacular. All my siblings speak the language and we grew up speaking in *'tekoi er a Belau'*. As a national requirement, children living in Palau attend school. The six classes in my school (Mathematics, Science, History, Health, English, and Religion) were mostly taught in English. Of all the courses in my elementary years, I loved history most. I excelled in it and I enjoyed it. The Egyptians and their pyramids, Mesopotamia as one of the early civilizations that practiced intensive farming, the laws of Hammurabi; all these were like stories that were immensely interesting. But during my whole elementary experience (kindergarten to Grade 8) in Palau, I had only one Palauan Studies course. Books taught in this particular course were in Palauan, and the teacher taught and spoke in the language. It was the same in my first year at Palau High School. I had good grades in all my courses but for my Palauan Studies course, I only managed a C average.

When I initially made the assumption that the youth of Palau did not seem to take an interest in Palau knowledge, it was based on what I saw among the youth living in the urban area of Koror[5]. I wanted to find out why they did not realize the significance of Palauan values. Many Palauan elders and educators see a decline in respect and self-discipline of Palau youths today (ROP Ministry of Education 16), and this was very much what I saw in the youth as well. As I assessed this problem further as part of my research, I realized that part of the problem was not just the youth but the social conditions of Palauan society that influence the behavior of youth today, whether they unconsciously realize it or not. It also seemed to me that the western system of education is perhaps the driving force for continuing this 'disinterest' in Palauan values.

The story mentioned above is a window to what a Palauan youth might experience while going to school. Although they might excel in other subjects, the experience I went through indicates that formal education takes the place of Palauan learning environments that teach values such as respecting elders in most, if not all, of the childhood and adolescent years. "'Why don't they respect authority anymore and follow our customs?' is a lament one

[5] Former capital of Palau and the most economically developed state.

hears again and again. The question comes from the very same parents and legislators who so strongly endorsed the school industry and even voted for its expansion" (Hezel, "The School Industry" par. 10). These experiences led my theoretical supposition that the implementation of an education such as the American educational system that values certain things would definitely influence the development of any young people anywhere in the world; and Palauan youths are not excluded from this.

It seemed to me that the youths' indifference to cultural knowledge is affected by western education. As part of exploring this dilemma in Palau, knowledge of the colonial education in the islands is an important avenue in building an understanding of the dynamics of a foreign institution being placed in a culture where it did not originate. Therefore, I will give an introduction of the establishment of foreign educational paradigms and the 'formalizing' of education in Palau.

1.2.1 Formal educational history

Each colonial power that came to Palau introduced its own set of values on how people should live. First, the Spanish in the late 1800s introduced Christianity, though their time was brief. According to a report compiled by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Palau from 1885 to 1899, the Spanish administration did not include the establishment of a system of formal education. While they provided indoctrination classes for 48 young Palauans, the Spanish viewed Palauans as needing Catholicism, not schooling (12). Following the Spanish colonialist period, Germany bought the islands in 1899 and introduced the first formal Western education (ROP Ministry of Education 13).

After the German era, the Japanese then bought the islands in 1914 from the Germans They turned Micronesia into a profitable empire, increasing economic revenue for Japan. Japanese families and officials migrated to Palau and settled. Young Japanese and Palauan students were taught separately by Japanese instructors. Both the Japanese and local school systems placed a heavy emphasis on moral instruction, divinity of the Emperor and obedience to leadership, pride in nation (Japan), and many Japanese social virtues (ROP Ministry of Education 13). The end of the Japanese period in 1944 left the islands with a mark of the Japanese way of life and the locals with a new set of beliefs. Unlike the Germans and the Spanish, the Japanese left a bigger impact from their rule in Palau, such as their patriarchal system of owning, and schooling (ROP Ministry of Education 13). These attitudes were further integrated when the U.S. took over the islands.

When the U.S. assumed control of Micronesia as a Trust Territory following the Second World War, it extended elementary schooling through six grades and expanded enrollment everywhere, but had a policy of non-intervention with respect to the local cultures (Hezel, "The Price of Education" par. 5). Even in Palau in the late 1940s, the communities largely supported the schools which were managed by the local people (ROP Ministry of Education 15). In the 1960s however, things changed for the U.S., and its relationship with Palau and the rest of Micronesia:

> "In 1963, the last year of Kennedy's presidency, the US suddenly reversed its previous policy of slow-paced change and modest annual subsidies in favor of rapid development…Influenced by new theories of economic growth… the US doubled its annual budget for Micronesia in a single year and raised it dramatically… The yearly subsidy of $6 million in 1962 was increased eightfold to almost $50 million by 1970, and by the end of the next decade it had doubled again to about $100 million" (Hezel, "The Price of Education" par. 6).

A program called the Accelerated Elementary School Program hired American contract teachers and Peace Corps volunteers initiated by the TTPI government (ROP Ministry of Education 15). A large education bureaucracy developed during the latter years of the 1960s and secondary education began to be established in all the districts in Palau.

The American period proved to be a time where change was happening much faster and Micronesia had to adjust rapidly. With so much money coming in to the islands and American economical theories being implemented in the region by U.S. officials, it was difficult for the people to not become dependent on the sudden offer of money to develop the islands. Additionally, the acceleration of 'adjusting' to yet another culture coming into the islands was rapidly changing the lifestyle of many Micronesians. Since Palau's independence in 1994, there have been more changes to the education system and the islands still use the American system of education. Latest data from Palau's Ministry of Education indicate some noticeable changes that are found in Palau's education system today. Some examples are given (16):

- Expansion of the education system from only elementary schools to an elementary, secondary, and post secondary system
- A change from 'outsiders' running the system to Palauan administration
- A decline in respect for educators

- A decline in self-discipline by children
- A decline in the close partnerships that previously existed between family and school
- Requirement that teachers now have an associate's or a bachelor's degree
- More students who are bilingual or trilingual when they enter school
- An increasing 'brain drain' from Palau
- Greater acceptance of Palauans moving to other places; but, there is still a strong desire to eventually return

What has been shared in this section is a brief overview of the different paradigms of education that were, and still are, implemented in Palau. Because of these different educational systems, this thesis will explore the effects of an education system that does not support the needs of a specific culture like Palau as well as addressing the different concepts that often come into conflict with Palauan values of education.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of the Study:

This thesis examines the impact of western education on Palauan society in terms of the social conflicts that are seen amongst the Palauan youth today. An important factor that is often overlooked by educational policy makers is whether or not an education system adopted from elsewhere is in harmony with the epistemology of a cultural group. More often than not, it is highly likely that it never is, due to the system originating elsewhere. On top of that, Palauan students who undergo western education are not western people themselves. As such, this thesis also explores whether strengthening cultural knowledge that is already in practice will contribute to fostering youth development in Palau.

1.3.1 Tensions between western education and indigenous knowledge

Western education, as said earlier, did not originate in Palau. As such, the expectation that a pedagogy which works in one cultural setting (such as the U.S.) will work efficiently in another (such as Palau) is problematic. It does not consider the epistemic implications of human thought in a situated environment. Moreover, the decision in Palau to formalize western schooling is an issue that needs to be explored further. Formalizing foreign epistemologies will certainly create problems about where Palauan epistemology fits in for

Palauan youth. It raises questions about whether western education is more valuable than indigenous education.

In Palau today, formal education is a requirement for all young people while Palauan knowledge is treated as an informal learning paradigm. While there is a Palauan studies course in most public schools in Palau, it is nevertheless, one 'formal' Palauan class out of all other subjects taught in schools today. A study conducted by Palau's Ministry of Education in 2004 revealed that out of seven required courses for Palau High School students, one course was Palauan studies, with the other six being English, mathematics, career development, history and geography, health, and science (36). This also raises the question of whether a Palauan paradigm is expected to succeed in a western institution.

1.3.2 Devaluing indigenous Palauan knowledge

Experience 2:

> I became more English-oriented when I continued high school in Chuuk from 1999 to 2002. This was mainly because students came from all over Micronesia, and English was the medium in which all of us could communicate and interact. If we were caught speaking our own languages in the presence of those who did not understand it, we were punished for it. During my second year there, I was sitting down with a friend from Pohnpei in one of the district[6] huts on campus. I turned and asked him, "Hey, one question for you. Are your thoughts mostly in your language or in English?" He thought for a while and responded, "It's mostly in English." I told him that I was the same.

Micronesian parents in the 1970s often believed that if their children went off to get a western education, they would be free of the hardships that they, the parents, had grown up with. Yet, they also expected their children to maintain their cultural values. However, when their children returned back to the islands, parents did not realize how much they had changed (Hezel, "Who Shall Own" par. 5). It is still seen today in many Palauan families, but youth become more exposed to American values within Palau while their parents who went

[6] Xavier High school is a Jesuit institution located in Chuuk in central Micronesia in which I attended for 3 years (1999 – 2002). On its campus, the students of each cultural district in Micronesia build local huts or 'summer houses'.

to America and became exposed to American culture that way. What happens presently among children between the ages of three to eighteen is that when they begin formal schooling, they learn a new set of values that are quite different to what children learned in the past two or three decades.

Like many other cultures in the world, Palauan youth's foundations of learning start at the home. Values are instilled in youngsters throughout their growing years. For Palauan youth, they learn Palauan values from their parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins, and other extended family members. However, when they begin their formal education in a western schooling model, they are integrated into a whole different set of values that may be in conflict with those learned at the home. For example, when children spend time with their parents or grandparents at home, they are given chores around the house and learn to listen to their elders. What they are acquiring is that they are participating in practical activities that integrate them to a whole body of knowledge as they grow older. For example, they learn to respect their elders by listening to them. They also learn how to keep their areas clean and free of debris which teaches the value of cleanliness.

When children go to school, they learn to read and write. They learn to speak English and read in English because most textbooks are in English. When they come home, some are expected to do their house duties, or they watch television, or go out and play but completing their school assignments must be done. The older they get, the demands of school require them to spend more time with homework and gradually become integrated into a life of western schooling. They learn at school about the value of western knowledge. "Most of the important things a child learns at school are not the result of what he studies, but the overall effect of the schooling process on him" (Hezel, "Who Shall Own" par. 12). In the story mentioned above, the use of the English language in Micronesia is developing in young people today an understanding of the context of American life and its values within their own societies.

1.3.3 Identity

Another observation is the effects of western education overwhelming Palauan values. While Palauan values are still being integrated as children develop, the formalizing of western education places less value on acquiring Palauan knowledge. This dynamic creates a problem for young people's development in Palau if their initial foundation is devalued. If what Palauan youth learn at a young age of what it means to be a Palauan is undervalued by

western schooling when they get older, it is certain to cause challenges to identity construction. What is occurring in Palau is that many of the young people are turning to alcohol binge-drinking, stealing, substance abuse, increased suicide, disrespecting elders, and many other social problems that I argue, are the result of fast-paced social change. While a foreign way of thinking is not negative in my view, the importance of learning Palauan values during childhood is a critical factor in developing a positive identity in Palau.

Experience 3:

> For a personal project in 2008, I decided to interview my grandmother about her life experiences and the oral histories that she knew. I asked her if it was appropriate if I could record her and learn from her. When she agreed, I set up all the equipment I had and made questions previously about what I would ask her. She started to talk about the oral histories of our village and although I was very interested, I could not understand most of what she was saying because the words and concepts were unfamiliar to me. After intense transcribing, breaking down the terms, and constant translating by my parents, I was so happy to learn about the history of my father's ancestry.

This story is an example of how Palauan knowledge can inform Palauan identity. When I researched about my history, it developed a sense of understanding myself and my roots. I argue that there is an increasing gap in how education in Palau addresses the identity needs of Palauan youth today. Young Palauans spend most of their week in formal education. When they return home, parents and older family members are working to earn wages while the young people do their assignments. The only time the young and old have time together is during the evening meal. For me personally, it took a greater effort to 'research' my family history because this knowledge was not taught or learned in education. Additionally, obtaining a western education overseas has taken up most of my time. I had to schedule a time and go out of my way to obtain a part of myself. This is not what education should become for Palauan youth.

This gap between education and identity is further perpetuated, and perhaps exacerbated, by the kind of education that Palauan youth receive today. It is only when they are not in a formal educational curriculum that they are being taught and provided knowledge of their roots; but this is also time-constrained. "How a people came to be, is an attempt to lay down a basic construction of the relationship between an environment and the people who

inhabit that environment. It is through this relationship that any people, any culture will develop its view of the world and their personal relationship to that environment" (Chilton 3). I argue that there is a profound relationship between education and a person's identity. For example, Palauan youth learn about the European Middle Ages, vassals, and Adolph Hitler in their history classes. They learn the history of World War II from the perspective of the Americans rather than talking to their grandparents whom experienced first-hand, the effects of American and Japanese conflicts in the Pacific. This shows me that there is a detachment from learning and its ability to empower Palauan identities in a positive way.

A component of this study is also exploring how identity is defined. "Part of the problem has been that so much of the discussion has been around the politics of identity rather than the nature of indigeneity…" (Gegeo, Cultural Rupture 495). The notion of identity is a complex paradigm that means different things in different places and situations. One way of looking at identity is through how it is shaped epistemologically. "Home then is not only the physical space that one inhabits, it is also the cultural values and beliefs that shape and guide how one sees and understands the world" (Asang 16). In terms of this study, my aim is to explore how Palauan epistemology and learning shapes identities in the Palauan context.

Experience 4:

> University experience had improved my reading, writing, and speaking skills in English. I first began as a business major but I soon learned it was not for me. I enrolled in an anthropology course in the second semester of my first year and I really enjoyed it. I changed my major to anthropology because of my interest in culture. My last year of my undergraduate studies, I enrolled in a seminar course that discusses Pacific issues. I had initially thought to do a study about Palau issues. When I bought the idea to the professor, he thought that it would be best if I do some other Pacific culture other than my own.

My experience in university learning has taught me that western education values objective reasoning for pursuing an education. In my view, my educational journey is about learning about myself, therefore, my identity. More importantly, I am interested in exploring how the place of education is a crucial part of identity development in Palau and if it is an empowering paradigm for the youth as articulated in this story.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Research Questions:

This thesis will be exploring three key concepts according to how I understand it. The first is education and recognizing its power as a tool for implementing change. Education as I see it should be an empowering paradigm that can shape and strengthen people. For Palau, education should be inclusive of all forms of learning whether it is formal or informal, western or indigenous. Learning should embrace all forms of pedagogies and not a 'one size fits all' model. My exploration of education will examine a pedagogy that attempts to fit the cultural values and needs of the Palauan people, especially focusing on the youth. "… an indigenous pedagogy is one that emerges out of the local context of practice, and more significantly, among those who use it, there is a sense of ownership – it is their pedagogy because they have shaped it to suit their needs" (Hua 2).

The second paradigm that will be addressed in this study is the crucial implementation of indigenous knowledge into the education of Palauan youth. Because it is initially their basic foundation, rather than attempting to re-condition Palauan youth with a different set of values, the seeds that were first planted should be continually maintained and further strengthened instead of dwindling, as Kuartei emphasizes:

> "The leaders and the elders in Palau must take an active role in evaluating and empowering our youth to be strong as Palauans and as true leaders of tomorrow. This is not a passing thought, but critical element of a developing nation. The development of youths must be an active participatory process mandated and supported by the governance, the culture and the very ideals of building a nation" (par. 5).

My argument is that Palauan knowledge should be more involved in the development of the youth if they are to understand their place in society.

This brings me to the last paradigm that will be studied which is identity. Implementing Palauan knowledge into the education of the youth will serve as an avenue of empowering Palauan identity; this is the assumption that connects all three of these broad paradigms. "Perhaps the most important prerequisite for being personally empowered is to have a sense of identity, an understanding of who you are, something which only results from a good knowledge of one's history and culture" (Regenvanu "A New Vision"). If identity is to be empowering, the need to explore notions of identity is a crucial part of this study as well.

Experience 5:

> Sometime during my first year of my master's studies, a colleague and I were in class and we were discussing with the professor about our potential research topics. While discussing and getting feedback from each other, me and my fellow classmate realized that we both wanted to focus our research in our own communities to try and find ways to explore certain issues that our islands are facing. We both knew we wanted something that we can bring back to our communities. During the class, our professor posed a question that would greatly affect how I would think about research. It went something like this: Why do research about your own culture and come to University to do it when you can just stay in our own culture and do it?

When the professor asked me this question, I was greatly disturbed by it. I began to question why I was in university and my purpose. When I pondered for the answers, I realized that my educational endeavors were primarily based on my sense of identity as a Palauan. I choose to study because I want to contribute to Palauan society. For clarity and better focus, three theoretical constructs are used to strengthen my research questions. The first framework is the concept of indigenous knowledge and epistemology. It draws upon many Palauan writers, elders, and my own knowledge about Palauan concepts. The second is Freire's notion of transformative education in which he addresses that "man's ontological vocation is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively" (14). The second theoretical paradigm is Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory. Their argument in which learning is situated according to the circumstances given, whether it is culture or environment, should not be ignored; that "there is no activity that is not situated… emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than 'receiving' a body of factual knowledge about the world; on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other" (33). The importance of situating education to the needs of Palauan youth is framed by this notion. It is from these theoretical frameworks that are the basis of my inquiry, which explores how western models of education affect the value of Palauan knowledge and if this poses a challenge in developing Palauan youth identity.

1.5 Organization of the Study:

Chapter two will review existing theoretical literature on indigenous pedagogy and indigenous knowledge and how it impacts identity development. This will focus on the works of Paulo Freire, and Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger.

Chapter three will be the methodology section. This will look at the concept of *cheldecheduch* and how I used this indigenous methodology to collect my data for this study.

Chapter four is the first part of the data analysis. This chapter will focus on the questionnaire data that was obtained from the youth of Ulimang in the state of Ngaraard in Palau.

Chapter five will be the second part of the data analysis. This will analyze the interviews that I conducted throughout my time in the field that focused on the relevance of Palauan knowledge for the education of Palauan youth.

Chapter six is the final chapter of this thesis. This will conclude with an overview of the study with some final implications of the study and further recommendations for research.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The rationale for conducting research on how the current education system in Palau is not addressing the identity needs of the Palauan youth is presented in this chapter. There is a plethora of literature on indigenous pedagogies and also on Pacific education. Identity and 'indigenity' is also a body of knowledge that has been studied in multiple angles. While there has been research that explores Palauan models of education, this thesis is not aiming to study Palauan models of education only. Rather, this study focuses on how education is an influential instrument in determining identity development. Moreover, this thesis aims at exploring how indigenous values and knowledge are not taking a resilient role in indigenous identity development. This looks at Palau's case specifically and perhaps it can inform other indigenous cultures about how it can address their specific needs as well.

The concept of education is often defined according western values. As such, it is probably the most debatable paradigm of learning. Often when people think of education, the things that come to mind are classrooms, the teacher and students, chalkboards, pencils and paper. As such, there are many definitions of education, even stereotypes of it; but generally education that is seen in the global world today originates from western values of what it means to learn. This type of education is what Freire argues as the 'banking' concept of education. "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (53).

This definition of education is perhaps epistemologically fitting for western countries. But for other countries such as Palau, it may be narrow depending on the context of their society and their epistemology. For instance, the relationship between a teacher and a student in the 'banking' concept of education has a definitive line between who knows and who does not. "The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it" (Freire 54). This is where the classroom setting implies this separate relationship between teacher and student that may not be appropriate in other cultural settings. In Palau, their 'classroom' settings can reveal the relationship between teachers and students. For example, a mat weaver (most often a woman) sits with other women teaching the craft of weaving. In this setting, the distinction between the teacher and student is quite different from

the west. The teacher sits with her students and engages in discussion, while their hands are busy weaving, all doing the same thing.

Another example of educational perspectives is a gentleman with a doctorate in anthropology specializing in indigenous Palauan politics is considered to be an expert and a professor by western university standards. But what of the *rubak*[7] who holds no doctorate and yet was the main informant of the gentlemen who now holds a doctorate? He is certainly not a professor in the western sense of the term. He does not have a degree. But he certainly possesses knowledge in his capacity as a traditional leader. So, is he 'educated'? The following review of the literature presents the works significant to my research study, namely, indigenous knowledge and epistemology, western education, and identity. The details of this chapter will be organized into three sections: 1) an exploration of indigenous knowledge and epistemology in Palau, 2) tensions between western models of education and non-western paradigms, and finally 3) how these two bodies of knowledge affect identity development.

2.1 Indigenous Knowledge and Epistemology:

In exploring education and its values in different cultures, this section explores the concepts of indigenous knowledge and epistemology, particularly in Palau. These two concepts are clarified in this section, including the key markers of Palauan knowledge and epistemology. In terms of education in Palau, examples are given in terms of how Palauan knowledge is being passed on and maintained for the next generation using pedagogies that do not necessarily include the classroom environment.

2.1.1 What is indigenous knowledge and epistemology?

Brush illustrates indigenous knowledge to be the "systematic information that remains in the informal sector, usually unwritten and preserved in oral tradition rather than texts… Indigenous knowledge is culture specific" (1 – 21). For example, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo. describe how the people of Kwara'ae make a metaphorical distinction between introduced knowledge and indigenous knowledge. Introduced knowledge is anything that came in from the 'sea', whilst indigenous knowledge is anything from within the 'shore' and continues inland (Whose Knowledge 381). Such distinction of knowledge is most fitting for the

[7] Traditionally a male titleholder of a clan in Belau but it can also be used to address an elder male.

framework of this thesis. However, I also consider indigenous knowledge as knowledge in which was evolved in an appropriate pace. In other words, knowledge is indigenous when change occurs without being pushed by forceful demands by outside factors. As Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo highlight, "…the contemporary emphasis on globalization, global capitalism, economic re-structuring, and free trade has intensified pressure on fragile economies… to focus on large-scale, centralized, export industries" (Whose Knowledge 378). As a result, this emphasis has also pressured fragile 'knowledges' in many indigenous cultures.

Epistemology, on the other hand, is not knowledge but rather how knowledge is created. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo define epistemology as:

> "…concerned with who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, sources of evidence for constructing knowledge, what constitutes truth, how truth is to be verified, how evidence becomes truth, how valid inferences are to be drawn, the role of belief in evidence, and related issues" (How We Know 57).

Indigenous epistemology is then how cultures create knowledge, when it "refers to a cultural group's ways of theorizing knowledge…" (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, How We Know 55). In regards to this part of my thesis, the focus is on Palauan indigenous epistemology and Palauan indigenous knowledge.

2.1.2 Palauan knowledge and epistemology

There are many concepts that exist in Palau today that are clearly different from the colonial values and knowledge that are now implemented in schools and Palauan life. This section describes some of these concepts that give the reader a glimpse of Palauan epistemology before the influence of western practices that are still maintained today. Such aspects of knowledge include the use of the Palauan language and epistemological concepts of custom and culture.

2.1.2.1 Tekoi er a Belau

Language is an important indicator of knowledge, how knowledge is created as well as being an important tool in education. In the case of Palau, like any other language in the world, the use of the vernacular (*tekoi er a Belau*) contributes to the understanding of how Palauans conceptualized and developed knowledge in the past and ensure its continuity to the present. "Language is part of practice, and it is in practice that people learn" (Lave and

Wenger 85). While the vernacular may be used every day at the home and in discourse outside of schooling, the Palauan language is not extensively used outside of these domains. In mid-2009, a bill introduced by Senate Vice President Kathy Kesolei established into law in Palau to the preservation and protection of the Palauan language(s). This government bill established a commission where committee members investigate methods of preserving and encouraging the language, develop Palauan words for foreign languages, and publish material in Palauan (Carreon, "Toribiong"). This move demonstrates that Palauan leaders are aware of outside influences that are pressuring the continuation of the vernacular.

Epistemologically, language is a key factor in learning about the origin of word meanings. For example, the Palauan word *meringel el chad*, which means most important, literally translates to, 'a person in pain'. "In Palauan thinking, the mind cannot ignore pain. It occupies your consciousness; therefore, its presence cannot be avoided. In a sense, a person is most aware when he is in pain. 'Meringel el chad' demarcates what gets attention as being important" (Asanuma, "Meringel El Chad" par.1). The continuation of language as part of Palauan knowledge is very important to continue in terms of education in Palau. "The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe"(Thiong'o 4). The understanding of Palauans 100 years ago is most definitely not the same as today. Their isolation from the outside in the past contributed to their understanding of their centrality in the universe, like many other cultures before western impact.

2.1.2.2 Tekoi (er a Belau) and Rael

It was mentioned in the earlier section that *tekoi er a Belau* refers to the vernacular. It is also dependent on the context it is used that the meaning of this word or phrase can change. The term *tekoi* can be roughly translated as words and concepts. *Tekoi er a Belau* then implies words of or from Palau. However, if one wants to talk about fishing techniques, then *tekoi er a omenged* (literally words of fishing) is used. *Tekoi er a blai* (words of the house) means knowledge of the house, clan, or lineage and *tekoi el buai* (words of the public) translates to village affairs. Thus epistemologically, *tekoi* is a word that encompasses many concepts in Palauan understanding. It is with this observation, that *tekoi er a Belau* can also

be in reference to Palauan custom, culture, knowledge, and perhaps even epistemology, although it is not used specifically as such[8].

Another marker for Palauan knowledge, customs, and culture is the word *rael*, which translates to road, path, or way. The use of *rael* can mean the physical road, walkway, or path. Likewise, it can also mean ways in the abstract sense. For example, Parmentier describes the word *rael*:

> "… the word 'path' refers primarily to numerous trails… which connect villages. The word can also be used to refer to social action in two related senses. A path is a method, technique, patterns, or strategy…But paths are also established linkages, relationships, and associations among persons, groups, and political units which were created by some precedent-setting action in the past, and which imply the possibility, as well as the obligation, for following the path in exchange, marriage, cooperation, and competition" (109).

For example, when a member of the family implies appropriate cultural decisions, they would say, '*Ng merang el rolel*[9] *a tekoi*', which roughly translates to, 'They are the real ways'. *Rael* is then often an appropriate implication of how things are done and methodologically, can also be used in context with doing things in a particular method.

2.1.2.3 Bitang me a bitang

Palauan thinking stressed the importance of two sides of everything or *bitang me a bitang* (half and half or *this* side and *that* side). McKnight explains, that "with each faction in a duality conceptually balanced against its opposite, the Palauan world view takes on philosophical aspects of the Chinese 'yin-yang'… for example, a person is not considered to be good or bad, but rather good *and bad*" (4). This is evident in the social structure of Palauan life. Clan lineages are divided into two conceptually balanced groups (*uach*), ten or eleven village chiefs divide their leadership within a village[10], villages are divided into two

[8] This is my own observation as there are the concepts, *klebelau* and *klechibelau* that can also pertain to Palauan ways, knowledge, customs, and being a Palauan (see glossary). This will also be seen in the chapter of the data analysis. On a personal experience, when family members reprimand inappropriate cultural measures, they would say for example, "*A ilechang a diak el tekoi*" which can translate to, "Those are not the ways".

[9] *Rolel* is his, her, or its road, path, way. Can also be, the path or the way.

[10] See figure 3 for example.

geographic parts with two landing places (*taoch*), and Palau is loosely divided into two federations.

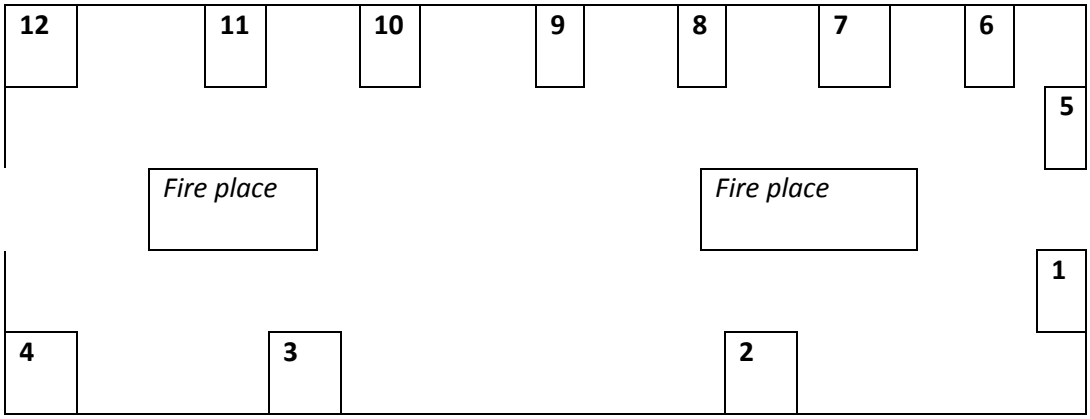


Figure 3: Arranged seating of the *rubak* of Ulimang in the *bai* or meeting house (Soaladaob).The two openings illustrate the main entrances to the *bai*.

According to figure 3, this is the arranged seating of the *rubak* (chiefs) of Ulimang village in the *bai* (meeting house). The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th *rubak* are allied together and form one half (*bitang*) while the 5th to the 12th *rubak* form the other half (*bitang*), forming two channels of leadership[11]. Issues of the village are debated and discussed thoroughly among the *rubak*. Physically, the concept of *bitang me a bitang* can be seen epistemologically in the structure of Palauan leadership. Also, discourse in political matters among village chiefs are based upon this concept of *bitang me a bitang*, and is also found in other types of engagement in Palau within, for example, lineages (*blai*) and clubs or organizations (*cheldebechel*).

The concepts explained provide an understanding to how Palauans conceptualize their knowledge. It is evident in these examples that single words do not often mean a single thing and often a whole sentence or phrase is needed to understand how it is used in its appropriate context. In addition, these bodies of knowledge provide a window to the significance of language use, and understanding the ontology of cultures and how it addresses the importance of continuing and maintaining it.

[11] This arranged sitting is specific only to Ulimang and may be different in other parts of Palau. However, the conceptual halves are the philosophy of arranged seating in most of Palau except maybe Hatohobei and Sonsorol.

2.1.3 Continuation of Palauan Knowledge - siukang

This part of the chapter examines some customs in Palau that are still practical in the islands. Palauan education like many other institutions, integrates into society, practices that are part of everyday life. With it, knowledge is transmitted and constructed from one generation to the next. Educational models, particularly in Palau, are often found within the practices of common life transitions or rites of passage (birth, marriage, death, etc). In addition, there is also a wealth of learning found in Palauan custom through participation. The modern Palauan word for custom, *siukang* is a derivate of the Japanese word, *shuukkan* which means customs, habits, and manners. According to Wilson's interview with her informant, she mentions:

> "…as I grew more familiar with Palauan 'custom' and with how people talked about *siukang* events, I realized that I had not heard anyone use a Palauan word to describe this complex system of exchanges. There was a Palauan term for each part of this system, each individual exchange event, but not for the system as a whole" (103).

This section examines various forms of *siukang* in Palau. It looks at some traditional practices in addition to looking at two forms of learning spaces that are still common in Palau today. In terms of some traditional practices in Palau, two rites of passage and two customary practices are considered. These rites of passage are *omengat* and *kemeldiil* while the customs examined are *ocheraol* and *cheledecheduch*. Following these practices, there is also an overview of the forms of 'formalized' learning spaces. Two such examples in Palau are *cheldebechel* and *cheldecheduch*.

2.1.3.1. Omengat

Omengat literally means steam bath. This is a celebration in which a woman who has given birth to her first child is celebrated and a ceremony is taken place after 2 or 3 months of giving birth. She undergoes a hot bath between 3 to 10 days that involves a *mesurech*, a hired medicine woman, and a bath of traditional medicine with scalding water 2 to 3 times a day[12]. According to the Palau Society of Historians, the number of days in which the new mother undergoes the baths is dependent on the number of days allotted either to her mother's or father's clan (Rechuodel 32). The higher ranking the clan is, the more days she endures the hot baths. On the day of her appearance she does a steam bath (*omengat*) and is presented to

[12] The woman doing the bath and the bathing process are called the same thing (*mesurech*).

the public (mostly her husband's relatives) with her lineage attire. Before her appearance, payments from the husband's family are made to pay the price for impregnating the new mother. After the celebration, the *okdemaol* (maternal uncle) pays off the debt of the ceremony, takes his obligatory pay, and distributes the rest of the money as he sees fit. The customary payment to the maternal uncle is called *buuldiil*[13] which is given by the new mother's husband's kinswomen (Palau Society of Historians, Rechuodel 32). If the new mother has a father in the household, he will also receive a customary payment.

The *omengat* is still a widely practiced custom in Palau. This important rite of passage is very much what every Palauan woman undergoes. Additionally, this ceremony is embedded with the values of kinship as well as the appropriate measures of cultural conduct. For example when a female relative undergoes the *omengat*, women of the house come together to contribute, provide support and companionship. They also assist in taking care of the infant while the new mother goes through the hot baths for several days. In this way, young girls learn to take care of their young cousins and learn ways of being with family. Men on the other hand, work separately gathering firewood or building temporary structures where people congregate for the day of the celebration. They learn to cooperate and regard their elder male relatives. Such are some of the things that are learned when participating in the *omengat* ceremony.

2.1.3.2 Kemeldiil[14]

Funerals are a part of every culture in every part of the world. Though it may be performed differently, this rite of passage is always associated with sadness and mourning. For example, when the deceased is presented within of the household, a group of women surround the body and mourn for their relative. These women are known as *ngar er a sar*[15]or *ngara sar*. "*Ngara sar* is divided between the close female kin of the deceased mother's side and father's side… Their food is prepared by the family of the deceased in a way that reflects their sorrow" (Palau Society of Historians, Rechuodel 41).

[13] *Buuldiil* literally means the rupture of the womb; used to describe payment by a man and his lineage to his wife's maternal uncle

[14] Note the comparison of *buuldiil* and *kemeldiil*.

[15] *Ngar er a sar* is literally on or at the salt. This probably pertains to the tears that taste like salt and so would refer to those who are close kin of the deceased.

Kemeldiil is probably one of the most practiced customs in Palau today. It too, is an avenue where people learn who their relatives are and who should be respected and acknowledged. For example, children of the house whose kin has died are required to give out food and drinks for guests. That way, people know that these children are related to the deceased. Another example is when relatives come and give their customary payment for the funeral of their relative; their names are usually announced individually, or most often as a lineage group. Such methods require people to listen and learn the relationships of the deceased. The process of *kemeldiil* is still very much a large part of Palauan society today. Although it has adopted the use of the dollar as part of the custom, the process is still conducted as a lineage group and the relationships are an important avenue for learning.

2.1.3.3 Cheldecheduch[16]

Another practice seen in Palau is called *cheldecheduch*. According to the Palau Society of Historians, *cheldecheduch* is the settlement of the estate of the deceased (Rechuodel 47). This practice is usually done a few months after the *kemeldiil* of the deceased relative. When the lineage and relatives come together for this custom, they remit with money and values to clear out any debts that their deceased relative might have had. Additionally, it is also a time in which, if the deceased had a family, the elder relatives discuss inheritance of the children[17] and marital partner.

Today the *cheldecheduch* is occasionally done a few months after the *kemeldiil*. With people who are more often working jobs and maintaining the modern lifestyle, the *cheldecheduch* is usually done right after the funeral of the deceased. However, this practice is very much seen throughout Palau. Participation of *cheldecheduch* is usually the elder relatives and those who are of married status for their capacity to contribute to the payments. However, there are children who are present with their parents and *cheldecheduch* usually occurs in the evening with food and a long exchange of dialogue. This is another practice in which builds relationships among kin and requires learning about one's place and capability in participation.

[16] *Cheldecheduch* encompasses many meanings. In this case, it is a customary practice that also requires discourse and engagement in dialogue for the kin groups in settling a deceased relative's debts and estates.

[17] *Cheldecheduch* is usually practiced if the deceased was or is married and has a family.

2.1.3.4 Ocheraol

The practice of *ocheraol* is done by a married male who is in the process of building a home for his family. "After marriage, a husband is responsible for providing shelter for his wife and children. An *ocheraol* will probably play a major role in fulfilling this responsibility" (Ysaol et al. 366). For example, a man who is married may live with his parents. As years go by, he must fulfill his obligations to build a house for himself and his family. So he discusses with his relatives to hold an *ocheraol* at a convenient time. At the time of the *ocheraol*, the man and his relatives come together to raise money to build a new home for him. This practice is also often conducted in the evenings or at times when there is no work to be done.

For example, Ysaol et al. explain that a man of any age can hold an *ocheraol*, and he may hold more than one *ocheraol* in his lifetime. "Usually *ocheraol* events are for the purpose of building a house or extending an existing house" (367). Today, this practice is still seen in Palau. In many ways, this custom is like a bank loan in which men are obligated to their relatives if they have contributed a share for building a home. "In former times, an *ocheraol* was held to fund *bai*, house, or canoe construction. In modern times, the *ocheraol* has been used to fund the construction of both business and residential structures as well as the purchase of automobiles, boats, and other durable goods" (Ysaol et al. 367). The *ocheraol* is another practice in Palau that is important in building an economic living. Such practice like the *ocheraol* is an important process in building relationships and maintaining lineage ties.

2.1.3.5 Cheldebechel

A *cheldebechel* is a group of people who are part of organization. Often translated as clubs in English, these groupings are often age, gender, and status based. According to the Palau Society of Historians, all villages in Palau have *cheldebechel* in which they name. Clubs are organized by the dual division system or *bitang me a bitang*, and are organized accordingly (Rechuodel 67). For example, a prestigious *cheldebechel* of men can consist of high-ranking, older men who have already established themselves with their contribution to village affairs. They would conduct village affairs and are responsible for protecting and supervising village activities. A less influential *cheldebechel* of men would be younger men that teach boys essential fishing, canoe-building, or sailing skills. "The club system… served

the welfare of the village and fostered a powerful value of social obligation as an ideal product of learning and schooling" (ROP Ministry of Education 11-12).

Today the *cheldebechel* is still in place. However, as school systems have established themselves as institutions where the youth spend most of their time, this structure is competing with another learning system. Most *cheldebechel* for women today gather for the custom events like the *kemeldiil* and the *omengat*. Occasionally, some women *cheldebechel* continue teaching traditional dance to younger women of the same kin group or village. Although a very important practice in maintaining relationships, its role in Palauan society today is changing rapidly as a result of influences from the outside.

2.1.3.6 Cheldecheduch

Recall earlier that *cheldecheduch* can refer to the customary practice of settling estates of a deceased family member. However, *cheldecheduch* is generally translated as speech, discussion, discourse, or a meeting. That relationship is why the practice of *cheldecheduch* is called as such. In this section *cheldecheduch* is a time when elders sit around after the evening meal describing oral histories to younger members of the kin group. This space is often the place when young children learn about their histories and origins. "Story-telling was one teaching technique used by elders. At home as well as in public, elders taught children respect and proper conduct by narrating stories with morals" (Palau Society of Historians, Traditional Education 20).

Cheldecheduch is also a time for lessons. When parents engage in discourse with their children, they teach basic skills, but more importantly, the roles and responsibilities of their children as they mature. For example, a daughter stays with her mother's mother, and she learns about her clan and lineage. "She learns the skills and knowledge for women's roles, such as taro swamp techniques, marriage, motherhood, the operations of a household, childbirth and child raising, affinal relationships, and being a member of a lineage or clan related interests"(Palau Society of Historians, Rechuodel 70). Today, the use of *cheldecheduch* is changing. While there are occasions where stories are told or when men take young boys in their kin groups to talk to them, the role of *cheldecheduch* is changing to a space reserved for schools to teach, and less often on parents to teach those basic skills and responsibilities in Palauan society.

The examples shown above reveal that Palauan indigenous knowledge is still in existence through the practices that play a prominent role in Palauan society. They contribute to learning through participation, like any other educational institution that requires participation. In addition, the response to changes in modern Palau is seen through the use of the U.S. dollar in custom payments, the use of canned goods in food exchange, and modern technology such as using media, microphones, cameras, etc. to address a custom event coming up through the radio, announcing to the public the money given to help in the custom, and to record the events for future reference. Most importantly, the establishment of schools and sustaining a living through the workforce have contributed to the changes and perhaps, a lessening of some of these *siukang*.

In the mid 2000s, a proposed bill by former Senator Yukiwo Dengokl was introduced in the *Olbiil er a Kelulau* (OEK - Palau national congress) to protect and promote traditional knowledge for the people of Palau. This bill stemmed from the exploitation of indigenous knowledge by foreign bodies to promote their economic and commercial profits. In addition, the exploitation of knowledge was also misrepresenting the Palauan people and providing inaccurate accounts of their own knowledge (Dengokl: 2005). Such changes occur in many parts of the world. In Palau, there are measures taken such as this bill, however, there needs to be a better understanding of the implications of policies and bill proposals for both parties of indigenous needs and global pressures. For example, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo refer that while anthropologists, for example, draw on indigenous cultural knowledge, they are carried out and conceptualized within the theoretical and methodological frameworks of Anglo-European forms of reasoning and interpreting (How We Know 58). It is perhaps critically important to understand the epistemology of these different cultures to make a better decision for the future. The next part of this chapter will look at how western values in education, while important epistemological values in their culture, often become a pressure in other cultures.

2.2 Tensions between western education and non-western paradigms of education:

To critically examine education in Palau today this part of the chapter looks at how western education came about and its expansion to other cultures. Then, some western values of education that come into conflict with Palauan values that were stressed in their education systems before colonialism are examined. These include: formalizing education, the

'marketization' of education, western reasoning, science and the scientific method, individualism, the education for all policy (EFA), and the impact of literacy.

Western education as it is seen today developed out of the need to expand the workforce. Aldrich states that education has changed from family or "domestic" education to a "schooled society". For many people in the nineteenth century in Europe, the decline of domestic education coincided with the decline of the domestic economy (10). The Industrial Revolution gave way to parents looking for jobs to earn wages and bring food to the table. "In such situations infants and young children who might otherwise have been nurtured at home must be put out to schools or childminders ..." (Aldrich 10). When children began to attend schools, this then expanded on teaching jobs to educate children. Thus the term 'formal education' came about when education gradually became the mass schooling of children in the late 1800s.

When the economy expanded and populations grew, the need for western nations to grow, spread across to other territories in the world. Western nations found themselves in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, as well as the Pacific. Their administration introduced a new system of education in these territories and began to educate the locals to their ways of life and their values. As seen in chapter one, Palau was exposed to Spanish, German, Japanese, and more recently, American systems of education, all with their own standpoints of development and societal values that in turn influences what they think of as ideal development and worthwhile learning.

2.2.1 Formalizing education

How does one tell the difference between formal and informal education (IE)? According to Mahoney, people may associate formal education (FE) with particular learning environments such as classrooms and a way of learning that emphasizes product rather than process and how learning takes place (p. 31: 2001). It was recalled earlier that education in the west developed from being a domestic education to a schooled society (Aldrich 10), thus establishing the foundations of what is FE and IE. As such, it can be assumed that a domestic education is considered an informal kind of education. IE in western culture dates back to the emergence of its history.

> "In ancient Greece, for example, instruction and the classroom were places reserved for those not seen as mature enough to join in. It was assumed free citizens would best learn from each other via dialogue and discourse. They

gathered in the Forum and on the streets to talk, debate, and test each other's ideas" (Jeffs and Smith 10).

Taking Mahoney's perspective on IE, learning is treated as a process rather than a product, where critical thinking is encouraged (p. 32: 2001). This is the tradition that underpins western education and epistemology. However, the argument that there is a difference between formal and informal schooling has perpetuated the perception of FE as being more structured, institutionalized, and organized than IE. According to Colardyn and Bjornavold (21), they use the Cedefop glossary to define FE and IE as follows:

a) Formal learning consists of learning that occurs within an organized and structured context and that is designed as learning which may lead to formal recognition such as a degree.

b) Informal learning is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning and can, to a degree, be understood as accidental learning

This notion of FE has also regarded other non-western paradigms of learning as informal because of their characteristics being similar to western IE. In Palau for example, dialogue is best done in the evenings. Children sit with their elder relatives after the evening meal and listen to discourse that encompasses many Palauan values within the stories. This was one element of education that was prominent in the past. While it infrequently continues today, its value is no longer as practical because of the new education system seen in Palau. As a result, FE is therefore more esteemed and has undermined 'informal' notions of education in Palau. Education should not be defined as such. There should be no discrepancy to how people learn in any society, whether formal or informal. To segregate education in such a way demeans one paradigm of learning over the other. "Education is about the empowerment of individuals. It is about discovering, and providing the conditions which encourage the fuller development of abilities and skills in every sphere of human activity – artistic, scientific, social and spiritual" (Simon 3). Just as acquiring knowledge holds no prejudice against what is or is not knowledge or what is formal or informal knowledge, learning should not be biased to what is considered formal and informal education. "...any definition of education must be broad enough to include learning experiences which take place outside the framework of formal institutions..." (Sherman and Kirschner 18).

Because FE originated in western models of learning, it is a paradigm that is foreign to Palauan culture. Education in Palau was never treated as formal or informal in the first place. While there were traditional 'institutions' that had particular knowledge acquisitions, they were not formalized in the western understanding. In Palau, there are existing educational spaces such as *cheldebechel*[18]. Unfortunately, this system of education is not as active as it once was in the past. Due to the influence of western education, *cheldebechel* organizations are becoming less practical as one of Palau's educational paradigms. However, the establishment of *cheldebechel* is an important model to further explore in the context of Palau. While it might not be formal in the western sense, it is certainly in the context of what Palauans valued and may still value.

2.2.2 'Marketization' of education

According to Connell et al., education, was built around the 'business' understanding. "... there was evidence of the business mind at work, examining the efficiency of schools, economising in school organisation, and demanding value for money spent" (20). The notion of education in western societies became a means to an end. Structuring education around the basis of monetary value is a prominent force in western education; it was treated as another product to market for parents who could afford to get their children into schools as well as being a source of funding educational initiatives. Populations grew, more parents worked, and more children went to school. It is not surprising to see that one of the goals for western education is to contribute to the workforce as Aldrich (10) had mentioned.

Indeed even in the Pacific, they are not exempt from this model of education. Roughan argues that education patterns now found in Pacific schools reflect the reality and demands of the market place (p. 50: 2002). This can be seen throughout the relationship with Palau and the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. "Federal funding of education programs increased… in both dollar amounts and program areas. A host of educational programs were installed that have advanced the curriculum and opportunities for Palauan youth, but have also increased economic dependency on the U.S." (ROP Ministry of Education 15).

Although Palauans may have their own distinct values on what their educational goals are, the underlying values used in Palauan schools today are based on western objectives of education. Roughan mentions that in spite of the strong and close connection many Pacific

[18] See section 2.1.3.5 for more details

students retain through their physical connection with nature, coupled with significant distance from the metropolitan centers, still the basics of schooling in Solomon Islands is not that different from a school in New South Wales or the middle of Denver in the U.S. (p. 48: 2002). For example, the education master plan in the Palau attempts to relate Palauan values and beliefs in its education system. "… being a Palauan means that one places a high value on: respect, sharing and cooperation, participation in community activities and decisions… humility" (ROP Ministry of Education 9). Despite all this, the education curriculum in Palau is influenced by western values of education. As such, this imported system of learning, already having an established curriculum that uses monetary value as an avenue for education, will manage the flow of the system.

2.2.3 Reasoning

A characteristic found in western education today is the development and value attached to logical reasoning and what is truth. For example, myth and fact do not necessarily come together in western logical, scientific judgments, except when it comes to religious beliefs. Sherman and Kirschner state that Americans they worked with apply and extend the techniques and theory of science to many realms of life that they would not so treat if they took supernaturalism seriously (176). Basically, western epistemology discards any concepts without scientific data to support it in their reasoning. While oral histories in many indigenous cultures certainly encompass an abundance of mythical traditions in western thinking, western academics treat non-western histories as a critique of their histories rather than facts or based on truth.

For many Pacific cultures like Palau, reasoning is based on their own ontology of how they know. Much of it is based on dreams, spiritual omens, and whatever else constitutes their epistemology in relation to their environment. While mythological in the western sense, these aspects of Palauan knowledge and epistemology are relevant in the composition of their reasoning and their reality. For example, because Palauans are an oral culture, they use many proverbs in their teachings to the younger generation. A proverb like, *ng kora chelid er a Ngebuked, el di rirekir er bab*[19] pertains to "a completed task, indicating to another that work

[19] According to McKnight when he was in Palau he describes the following: "As part of the festivities of a village feast or in celebration of some event, such as the completion of a community hall, Palauan young people produce a variety of named dances. One type of dance, called *ruk*, was never conducted in Ngebukd… It was said that the gods of the village had done their dancing in heaven before coming to earth and thus it was not necessary for the people of Ngebukd to dance" (p. 14: 1968).

need not be prepared" (McKnight 14). The rough translation for this proverb is: *Like the gods of Ngebuked, who completed it up above*. The significance of this proverb is seen of the people of Ngebuked today, who still abide by this proverb because of what the gods did in heaven. While this saying may not teach any scientific credibility in the western perspective of education, it is certainly an important indication of the history and significance of why the men of Ngebuked village in Ngaraard do not perform a traditional men's dance to this day.

2.2.4. Science and the scientific method

Because much of Plato and Aristotle's philosophies have been continuously taught throughout the history of western education, their theories provide the basic foundation of education today, and Palau in particular. For example, experimental sciences during the late 11th to 12th centuries were founded on many of Aristotle's theories (Beck 44). This has also influenced the development of logical explanations in western education. The scientific method, for example, is one such concept that is prominently taught in formal schooling. It is found in many fields of science ranging from biology to physics, astronomy and even psychology. According to Butts, the scientist should observe nature, gather a wide range of facts, generalize from these individual facts to their common qualities, and convey these similarities in general formulas (249). In fact, this method greatly influenced western theories of economy that is widespread in the education curriculum and the structure of institutions (Beck 73). Because of its widespread and influence, it is also found in the Pacific region and in Palau.

Gathering information in Palau and the Pacific is not to say that it is different from western ways of data collection, but rather what these cultures value are what is different. Legitimatizing knowledge construction is based entirely on where it was or is created. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo. also support this notion that while gathering information is achieved through the senses, the interpretations of what such information conveys will vary across epistemological communities (How We Know 62). The scientific method stated by Butts (249) is an assumption which only western cultures might use, but is in fact a method that is applied in Palau, and arguable in many other cultures as well. Based on a society's ontology and knowledge of the past, what they choose to take is what they value. A fact in western epistemology does not necessarily mean that it is a fact elsewhere. For instance, Battiste mentions that studies in the last decade assume that European reasoning and logic are assumed to be universal, timeless and stable; and are indifferent to the processes of

indigenous knowledge and learning (17). And to stress again that gathering information in different cultures is based on how they perceive their world. This is where Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory can be applied, in that learning is situated according to the factors of the environment people are in. "…it is important to consider how shared cultural systems of meaning and political – economic structuring are interrelated, in general as they help to coconstitute learning in communities of practice" (54). Thus, in Palau there was a system already in place prior to colonization. However, due to western influence, the relevance of education falls in context to the situation it is in, and its foundations.

2.2.5 Individualism

Another prominent aspect of western education is the value of individuality and individual accomplishment. According to Butts, individualism suggests that the individual man should be loyal principally to himself and should develop his own personality in all its aspects, creative, artistic, emotional, and physical as well as intellectual in the realm of education (208). Again, while this may be true in western education, it may not hold the same merit in other societies. For many Pacific Island cultures, education is not based on individual success, but rather success is determined through the collective efforts of family, kin, and lineage. The individual belongs in a family who in turn belong to a community. Thaman supports this by mentioning that formal schooling influenced by ex-colonialist values promotes individual merit while most Pacific cultures emphasize human relationships and collectivity ("Towards Cultural Democracy" 24 – 25).

So while children in Palau learn collective values at the home, they also learn the value of being an individual in school. They are taught simultaneously without being consciously aware of how these two different bodies of knowledge and values of the societies they are learning from are implying in their teaching. In many ways, there is no space for them to understand and acknowledge these differing concepts. But despite the notion of individuality in western education, it is difficult for the concept to place itself firmly in small islands like Palau. Environmental factors influence the epistemology that supports the value of collectivity. Island societies are fundamentally different in landmass to continents with larger spaces and perhaps in terms of 'situatedness', the context of learning collectivity is appropriate in small-scale societies. Lave and Wenger imply that the learning evolves out of participation in a specific community of practice engendered by pedagogical relations and by a prescriptive view (97). Nevertheless, the sense of individuality is seen among younger

people as they now have the means to go overseas and live out of the context of island societies, especially those who live overseas. Indigenous societies like Palau have to deal with both aspects simultaneously.

2.2.6 Education for all

One aspect in western paradigms of education is the notion of education for all. For example, Beck explains that in the mid-eighteenth century, "Europe gave rise to leaders who… had a centralized authority which could order into existence a system of universal, compulsory primary education" (73). This was very much driven by economic changes in Europe during the Industrial Revolution. Aldrich also supports this by mentioning that this notion is dominated by state-provided apparatus of free, universal and compulsory schooling for children from the ages of 5 to 16 (22). Universal and compulsory education, while its intentions are for providing good, quality education for children, is nevertheless a western concept. In fact, in Palau's Education Master Plan for 2006 – 2016, one of the global initiatives in which the Ministry of Education is developing is to promote educational access for all. "Education for All (EFA) is a worldwide effort, also spearheaded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to make education available to meet basic learning needs of all people in the world"(2).

The notion of education for all is very much a foreign concept to many Pacific cultures and in Palau. In traditional Palauan education for example, men and women had different roles in society and so were taught different knowledge(s). What men knew as their part in society, such as fishing, hunting, house and canoe building, etc., women did not know and vice versa. The Palau Society of Historians mention that when children were given a task, girls performed duties such as weaving baskets and preparing meals during mealtimes while boys would collect firewood, cook fish, weaving fish traps and making bamboo spears (Traditional Education 7). This did not, however, imply that men and women had unequal opportunities. On the contrary, the segregation of their knowledge constituted that while they had different roles in society, both sexes played equally important roles in their contribution. Palauan society was and still is a matrilineal society. Land and titles are passed through the female line but the men are the ones who 'caretake' for the title and land. This notion of

education is embedded with the dual concept of *bitang me a bitang* that is seen in Palau[20]. So while they had different educational access, they ALL had a contribution to Palauan society.

2.2.7 Oral tradition and literacy

Another aspect of western education explored in this study is the impact of how reading and writing has affected oratorical values in Pacific and Palauan education. Because being print-literate is a fairly new system of communication introduced in oral cultures such as Palau, it is a body of knowledge that is a challenge for many Palauans. Knowledge of the past in Palau is held in by memory over a span of thousands of years. Because Palau did not have a system of writing, the major means to communicate that memory is through speech. For this time span, the development of speech would have been as complex in Pacific societies as writing is in many western cultures. For example, storytelling in Palauan or *cheldecheduch* as it is called, is a method that is used orally to tell stories, talk about histories, and teaches valuable lessons. Kesolei et al. writes how "story telling expertise is an art worthy of respect and heartfelt praise. Legends were used to teach, admonish, and record the past. The written form lacks the oral beauty of the presentation…" (preface)[21].

In Palau's colonial history, writing became a serious practice when the Japanese introduced their system of education. "Nearly half of the total school hours were devoted to Japanese language instruction. Most graduates could write in simpler forms of Japanese, but few mastered the highest form of written language" (ROP Ministry of Education, 13). Since the decline of Japanese rule in Palau in the 1940s, English has now paved its way as the medium of communication in Palau. Despite the implementation of English in schools, Palauan youth still struggle with the English language in addition to struggling with the Palauan language. Tamtam, a Ni-Vanuatu socio-linguist suggest that foreign literacy usages and practices borrowed from the west do not truly apply to the lives of rural villagers and are often not understood by village people (p. 53: 2004). As such, conclusive evidence from various western researchers that suggest illiteracy as a problem in the Pacific is not an adequate ruling in determining development and capacity-building in places that would have

[20] See section 2.1.2.3 for more information

[21] While storytelling can be defined as *cheldecheduch*, the Palauan term encompasses more than just story telling. *Cheldecheduch* depends on the context in how it is used (see glossary). Kesolei et al. translated the Palauan version of this book.

had oral communication for thousands of years compared to a hundred years of being exposed to writing.

Tamtam also adds that in village settings in Vanuatu, the use of the English language is not an essential skill and that residents do not view illiteracy as a dilemma (p. 59: 2004). In western societies someone who is dyslexic is considered to have a disorder because of their limited ability to read. That does not hold true for an oral society like Palau. A person who is dyslexic would never be thought of as having a disorder because most Palauan youth struggle with reading anyway. Palau is a complex oral culture in the same way that western societies are complex literate societies as Tamtam mentions (p. 59: 2004). While reading and writing are important learning tools in Palau society today, more attention should address the value of oral communication as well. Because formal schooling today measures their literacy needs using foreign policies without actually looking at the social context of oral communication in Palau society, Palauans are at risk of devaluing their indigenous histories.

Several values in western education often clash with indigenous paradigms of education. Western and non-western aspects of education are both constituted by its epistemological foundations and are further developed by a people's understanding of their ontology through time and experience. The intention is not to make negative judgments against the western system of education. Rather, the goal is to raise the issue of how aspects of a culture do not necessarily work in another culture by simply 'importing' another epistemology, or "internalizing knowledge" (Lave and Wenger 47). These aspects that have been addressed are just some of the more noticeable conflicts between two different epistemologies. The following section attempts to explore how these two exceptional bodies of knowledge and its conflict threaten to disempower Palauan indigenous identity.

2.3 Identity:

This section addresses whether conflicting values of Palauan indigenous knowledge and western education affects identity development for the younger generation of Palauans. My aim is to show that there is a need to address identity development for youth in Palau, and that social change occurring in Palau and the conflicting values of differing epistemologies are not empowering Palauan youth in their identity. By addressing this issue, notions of identity is explored as well as the concept of identity in practice, learning, transformative

education and empowerment. Furthermore, it is investigated if there is an undermining of Palauan knowledge in Palau today.

2.3.1 Exploring identity

Many researchers have developed theories of identity depending on the particular approaches in their discipline. The notion of identity in this thesis addresses that it is ultimately, a human construct and therefore the issues pertaining to identity revolve around social theories. According to Castells, identity is people's source of meaning and experience (6). Identity, like education and epistemology, is always subject to change as society continues. As Jenkins puts it, all human identities are in some sense, social identities. "It cannot be otherwise, if only because identity is about meaning… Meanings are always the outcome of an agreement or disagreement, always a matter of convention and innovation, always to some extent shared, always to some extent negotiable" (4). An identity is a concept which people find a purpose and sense of self-worth, a way of "being in the world" (Wenger 106). Identity is then a conception of being human and of existence, whether it is good or bad.

As such, identities are not treated as a single body of meaning, but a range of meanings. For example, the term indigenous identity speaks differently to perhaps, a non-indigenous identity. Then again, an indigenous identity also ranges in meaning as well. The idea behind the term 'indigenous peoples' emerged from the colonial experience, whereby the first peoples of a given land were marginalized after being invaded by colonial powers in which they are now the dominating people over the ones who came first (Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples 6). Pacific peoples who were intensely colonized by Europeans (e.g. Maori, Hawaiian, and Chamorro) often portray a certain attitude towards their situation given the fact that they are indigenous to the land they are from, but have little or no control over their own governance. So they would have to negotiate their identity differently compared to other Pacific people who do not experience that (e.g. Ni-Vanuatu, Fijian, Yapese, etc.). In a report compiled by the United Nations, the earlier definition of indigenous peoples made less sense to uncolonized people as they were not displaced nor were they replaced by European settlers (Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples 6).

Identity then is affected by experience and is thus meaningful to the individual, the community, and as a society. These meanings and experiences are found within people's

practices in society and culture. "The relative weight in influencing people's behaviour depend upon negotiations and arrangements between individuals and these institutions and organizations" (Castells 6-7). It is with this understanding that this thesis approaches the notion of identity, that "even though issues of identity as a focus of overt concern may become more salient at certain times than at others, our identity is something we constantly renegotiate during the course of our lives (Wenger 108).

I compare the notion of identity to a tree rooted to the ground. A tree which has roots that go deep into the earth is akin to one who has a grounded identity that results in an empowered individual. In turn, a young tree or a seedling is akin to a young member of society, gradually growing and finding its ground as they learn about their world. Whatever is the result of their character as a member of society when they grow is reflected to the health of the tree. Understanding or being aware of one's role in society is the most fundamental aspect of a rooted identity, especially in Pacific cultures. For example, in a conference presentation by a prominent leader in Vanuatu, he suggests that a make-up of a good citizen is an individual who is able to understand the functioning of society and their role in it. They will then be able to deal with social issues and conflicts in an informed approach (Regenvanu "A New Vision"). In the case of Palau, the youth are being hindered from becoming contributing members of society because the system is not actually acknowledging the need for an identity in practice.

2.3.2 Identity as practice

Earlier in this chapter, there was an exploration of epistemological conceptions of education in Palau and the west. The theoretical argument is that because these two bodies of knowledge are at times very different in their values, taught at the same time, but perhaps one even more than the other, is greatly affecting the identity of young Palauans today. Its affects, as not being positive, are due to an introduced set of values and beliefs that are overwhelming the already established values as well as the presumption that acquiring these two bodies of knowledge is not a struggle to learn. Lave and Wenger articulate that "learning as internalization is too easily construed as an unproblematic process of absorbing the given, as a matter of transmission and assimilation" (47). Time and again, this process has shown to be a challenge in many indigenous cultures, especially with the stipulation of being an overnight remedy to social change. Thus in terms of learning, there is a profound relationship between identity and practice. Wenger argues that "developing a practice requires the formation of a

community whose members can engage with one another and thus recognize each other as participants. As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context" (105).

Embedded in the practice of culture, of any culture, is how knowledge defines identity. While people may define an identity based on ethnic heritage, it is nevertheless a human construct and as such, has no quantifiable significance as to the practice of identity.

> "Who we are lies in the way we live day to day, not just in what we think or say about ourselves, though that is of course part (but only part) of the way we live. Nor does identity consist solely of what others think or say about us, though that too is part of the way we live. Identity in practice is defined socially merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but also because it is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities" (Wenger 106).

It is with this understanding of identity as practice that learning is of critical importance to develop and define who we are. Learning must be shaped and negotiated just as much as identity is being shaped and negotiated.

2.3.3 Learning

Currently, the education system in Palau, I argue, is not in any way engaging the youth nor is it grounding their identities to become positive participants of Palauan society. Furthermore, their participation in society is not encouraging as it is thought to be. We can see this by the way many youth in urban Koror[22] enact their lives in Palauan society by turning to underage drinking and driving, drug abuse, sexual abuse, increased suicide, gangs, and much more. Asanuma describes a disturbing issue that is a growing social issue in Palau:

Story 2:

"Jane Doe (not real name) is a fourteen years old girl and on the streets more than she is at home. She sleeps at the PCC (Palau Community College) track and field with a handful of boys. And you can imagine that the only possession she has power over is her body to use as she pleases. She has nothing else at her age to give but her body for her to feel important if that makes any sense to most of us. Jane wants to go to school but no elementary school can

[22] Former capital of Palau

take her since she dropped out at fourth grade. GED (General Education Diploma) and Adult Ed cannot accept her because she is less than 18 years of age.

Jane was adopted by her mother's sister and her husband… As you can guess, Jane was violated by her adopted father possibly before her fourth grade year. When Jane reported it to her mother, she was immediately disowned and sent to her natural mother. Her natural mother eventually did not want to do anything with her and rejected her. At this point onwards, Jane cannot trust anyone and we cannot blame her. Jane finds the track and field safer than home and the boys more fun because she gets to decide when to give her body for sex unlike at home" ("Nobody's Child" pars. 4 – 5).

It is unsettling to many Palauans to see these arising problems in the islands. However, little is being done to prevent this particular issue from continuing. "A public service official in the line of work with juveniles confided in me that it is almost useless to do anything because parents do not care" (Asanuma, "Nobody's Child" par. 4). Moreover, there is a lack of understanding about these changes in Palau. For example, Thiong'o explains that "the effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief …in themselves… It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own." (3). With the current education system not being able to include some youth into the system, it seems a hopeless future for them. Additionally, parents are ignoring the problem, as if it will go away on its own. Many Palauan youth today are struggling to find who they are in Palau.

Without the support of the system, they find avenues to engage and participate to fill their need to be part of society. "Engagement in practice gives us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participating" (Wenger 104). In terms of learning in Palau, if the lack of support in the system is evident, then perhaps the problem lies in what is being valued to develop Palauan identity. Lave and Wenger argue that, all theories of learning are based on fundamental assumptions about the person, the world, and their relations, and their concept of legitimate peripheral participation is a dimension of social practice (47). If participation is developed through a learning structure that places value on western knowledge, then the identity will reflect that. However, the problem with Palau is that there are two epistemologically different bodies of knowledge that are simultaneously being encouraged, and perhaps are a cause of confusion that affects learning and identity. "When we come into contact with new practices, we venture into

unfamiliar territory… We do not quite know how to engage with others. We do not understand the subtleties of the enterprise as the community has defined it. Our non-membership shapes our identities through our confrontation with the unfamiliar" (Wenger 108). If practice is through learning, then the practices must be positive to develop a positive identity, and perhaps should be more familiar to be dealt with better decisions.

2.3.4 Transformative education

Several scholars have argued that the structure of the western education system acts as a bank deposit that creates an environment where people do not fully participate and therefore are being dehumanized through this process (Freire 53). Others have similar arguments about conventional explanations of learning as a process by which a learner internalizes knowledge rather than learning as increasing participation in communities (Lave and Wenger 49). As such, there is a need to be liberated from an educational system that creates idle and demoralized people as well as developing the need for empowerment, motivation, and fulfilling participation. This can be called a transformation of education or transformative education. This notion is mainly through a pedagogy that transforms individuals to be constructive and engaging participants of the development of their societies.

As I have indicated, there is a need to look at the structure of Palauan education because of its lack of engaging Palauan youth today. Education is a very influential instrument in determining how learning is absorbed, how knowledge is passed and continued, throughout every society and culture. Because of such authority, it too is also an agent of how learners develop and negotiate their identity. Bracher reveals that identity is important to learning because it is a crucial factor in the motivation to learn and pursue knowledge (xii). What should be avoided is an education system, such as the system introduced in Palau, which denies the opportunity to participate in society and a 'culture of silence' (Freire 13). If this dilemma occurs because the education system is a foreign, introduced system of teaching and learning that is not targeted for Palauan youth (rather than American youth for example), then a critique of the educational structure needs to be addressed.

2.3.5 Empowerment

It has been mentioned that western epistemologies are alien concepts to indigenous people who have their own ways of knowing. Despite its use to shape non-western people in their societies, western epistemologies remain to be the main paradigm for indigenous people and for Palauan youth today, alienating as it is. As Gegeo accurately puts it, "we get ourselves into an intellectual bind when we try to work on such issues using only the frameworks of the powers who colonized us in the first place" (Cultural Rupture 503). While learning another language or another way of living (culture) is not a disadvantage or a negative aspect of education, it is important for all young people to learn their own foundations and maintain the trend. Introducing another trend not only confuses their development but creates an unnecessary shift in identity. Regenvanu suggests that traditional knowledge is not that it is not taught, but rather it is eroding. At the same time the quality of formal schooling is not adequate to give a complete understanding of the "white man's" system either; and that students are left with less capacity than they would have had if they had not gone at all into formal schooling ("A New Vision"). Whether it is a 'banking' concept or 'internalization' process of education, it remains that what is first understood and learned initially, tends to be the most effective in empowering.

When Palauan youth understand themselves and their identities, they will be able to process other information and accept other people and their differences. Both western and Palauan knowledge are taught in Palau, for example, without the youth understanding the differences of why they are valued. If they are learning about Palauan knowledge primarily, it must be continued so they can expand and build upon their understanding. "In practice, we know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, usable, negotiable; we know who we are not by what is foreign, opaque, unwieldy, unproductive" (Wenger 108). While they are learning in practice Palauan education as well as unconsciously learning values in western education, they are not learning to understand these two dynamic systems, which disempower them. Bracher suggests that helping students (or youth) develop strong, resilient identities is the most effective way of preventing various social problems such as crime, substance abuse, prejudice, etc. (xii). In my view, creating a pedagogical framework to be more relevant to Palauan epistemologies and values will help to address the problems that Palauan society is now faced with.

The literature relevant to the theoretical framework which questioned if there are conflicts between the currently applied system of western education and traditional Palauan knowledge and epistemology were presented in this chapter. It also addressed that conflict between these bodies of knowledge does affect identity in Palauan youth today. Examining these theories required a detailed overview of indigenous knowledge and epistemology in Palau and an investigation of some of the values in western education that might conflict with Palauan values. An exploration of the notions of identity and its relationship to education and practice was then followed.

The literature in this thesis reveals a trend in how influential education is to notions of identity. Trends found in much of the literature show education informs many other niches of knowledge, epistemology, values, and many other aspects of culture, and how these bodies of knowledge reflect identity and further identity development. In the case for Palau, the youth are currently not engaging fully as beneficial participants in Palauan society. The need for re-thinking education in Palau is an important decision that will affect the development of Palauan youth, to enable them to be constructively resilient in their identity and to contribute their part as full members of society. The following chapter describes the research methodology that I employed to collect data for my research in 2009. While this thesis argues for the relevance of indigenous knowledge and epistemology to be part of education, the next chapter also explores the use of an indigenous methodology that was applied in the collection of the data in Palau.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this thesis is presented in this chapter. Several methods and theories were applied to investigate the research questions in this thesis, which explores education and identity development in Palau. This chapter is organized in the following sections: 1) the underlining theories of the research, 2) the research design, 3) data collection, 4) the data analysis, and finally, 5) the limitations.

3.1 The Underlining Theories:

My research basically used two forms of methodologies. The introduction of the thesis employed a narrative methodology in the research. When I conducted fieldwork in Palau, I used an indigenous methodological approach. The main methodology was through the use of *cheldecheduch* and my knowledge of cultural appropriation. Following these, I examine the qualitative design in my thesis and the ethics and ethical considerations.

3.1.1 Narrative

In the beginning of the thesis, I introduced the interest of my research using narratives to open the window to understand the goal of my research. I chose to use narratives because of the method of storytelling in Palau (*cheldecheduch*) as an instrument of learning. Because Palau is an oral culture, the people use storytelling to pass on knowledge. In effect, I chose to utilize narratives into my thesis to reveal it as a story that needs to be addressed, continued, and shaped for the benefit of the Palauan people. Mbunwe-Samba reveals how oral traditions are a testimony of the way of life of a people and that they are the product of an experience rooted at a particular time in the life of a society (105). The narratives I presented in this thesis address some of the issues that my generation (and younger) are experiencing life in Palau as outside influences are shaping their identities.

I personally feel that using narratives is advantageous in bring people to listen to other people's stories. When stories are articulated in a personal level rather than in third-person, it is much more connective and relatable in many ways. According to Dunbar Jr., stories are a source of cultural history that connects cultural traditions, worldviews, and ideas about a people (96). Thus, I use the narrative methodology to articulate my experience growing up in

Palau, and how it ties in with the issue of disempowering identity for Palauan youth living and growing up in the islands with learning Palauan and western knowledge simultaneously.

3.1.2 Indigenous methodology

This research, although employing western methods of collecting data, was mainly examined in an indigenous approach. "The indigenous experience is distinct yet diverse; many similarities are obvious yet significant differences can be identified" (Cunningham and Stanley 404). The methods applied were modified to fit the cultural norms of Palauan society, the circumstances, and changing beliefs and values. In terms of collecting field data, the methodology I used was never an idea to reflect upon. Because I am a Palauan and I grew up in Palau, the methodology employed in the field was not a particular selection to choose from. Rather, my cultural upbringing informed the approach of collecting data. In using Smith's description of Kaupapa Maori research, she aims to create a space for Maori research (183). I did not create a space for Palauan research. Rather, there is already an established approach to gaining knowledge and learning. As such, the methodology employed in this research was using the practice of *cheldecheduch* in Palau.

3.1.2.1 Cheldecheduch

Recall in chapter 2 that there were two ways *cheldecheduch* was used; one was the customary practice of settling a deceased relative's estates while the other was a discourse methodology, in which I used the latter in collecting data. When I spoke with elders, particular *cheldecheduch* was applied that differed from the *cheldecheduch* I conducted with my younger participants. "Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology" (Smith 15). As I focused on a specific cultural group of people, in which I am also part of, it was appropriate and sensible to use indigenous protocol as part of my methodologies to find the information that I considered valuable in this study. While I did use western methods to obtain my data, my approach was mostly done within the Palauan cultural context. For example, when I spoke with elder participants, I was more passive and observant rather than controlling the flow of the discourse. Denzin et al. imply that indigenous methodologies are fitted to the needs and traditions of specific indigenous communities (323).

Another way that I approached *cheldecheduch* was applying it as a formal discourse. For example, when traditional chiefs gather at the *bai* (meeting house), this particular approach is very formal. Thus while *cheldecheduch* can mean story-telling, it can also mean that a meeting is being carried out. For example, after the evening meal a relative would say, "*me de chadecheduch*" which means, "Let's talk/discuss". But when chiefs are congregating in the *bai* and people are walking by, someone would say, "*Lak e mongerodech! Nga er ngii a cheldecheduch er a chelsel a bai*" or "Don't make noise! There is a meeting in the *bai*".
When I met with my elder participants, the discourse was varied according to the way it was being handled. If it was less formal, I followed the flow of conversation. But if it was conducted in a very formal setting, I also adjusted myself. In terms of my younger participants, the *cheldecheduch* was conducted less formally.

3.1.3 Rolel a tekoi - Cultural Appropriation

In conducting any series of research, there are protocols one must observe depending on the setting of the research and how data is collected. For example western approaches of research are designed in a certain way in which tries to extract as much useful data as possible for a limited amount of time[23]. Because methods employed in earlier years for research purposes were modified for the western scholar in search of answers to a research question, it is understood that the creation of those methodologies are what they are now, even through years of shaping and modifying them. For instance, before I was able to conduct research, I was required to fill out a human ethics application under the University of Canterbury. This was culturally appropriate based on the University's belief on ethical grounds of conducting research on people.

Personally, I was limited to a three month stay in Palau and so I had to work with being aware of my restricted time. On top of doing my research, I had also my familial obligations to maintain, which I expected to do anyway. This is where the emphasis of relationships was also put into play with my family. However, managing my time with family and research also helped to expand more on my observations with the younger members of my family. With my research focusing on Palauan knowledge and cultural practices, I became more attentive to behaviors and approaches. I could not help to think about day to day practices and my relationships, and not relate them to my research questions. Personally,

[23] Given that researchers are always in a time constraint with their university requirements, deadlines, etc.

I felt it was useful for me to do this as I had a chance to engage with family, and then conducting interviews with my informants where I was able to share what I observed.

3.1.4 Establishing and maintaining relationships[24]

Conducting research in Palau was handled in an indigenous approach. For example, a methodology of collecting data for Palau in the past was to search for an elder relative with particular knowledge and go under his or her wing for months or even until their death. Not only is this a traditional indigenous methodology of learning but a culturally appropriate one in which one maintains the relationship for life. Knowledge, in the Palauan belief, is highly restricted and private. Research (although not the word itself) is about creating relationships and such is the methodology behind knowledge acquisition in Palau. It is never a means to an end. Once a space is created and a relationship builds, it does not come to a closure but continues on. In obtaining knowledge, it is at least courteous to maintain those ties with people who have contributed to your benefit.

It is also important to note that while I knew some of my participants to a certain[25] degree more than others, there is a connection between Palauan people and perhaps many Pacific cultures that does not draw a distinction between who is closer to me and who is not. For example, because we are from the same place, it does not matter who we are. For example, one of my elder participants mentioned this:

> "*For example, we would talk and we might not know anything about each other. But when we talk it's like we've known each other before. Because I don't want to show you that I don't know you. But when you leave, then I ask someone else, 'who's that? Who's the mother? Father?... The most important of all is relationships! So when you talk to them, you know how they are approached, their roles, where they are coming from when they respond to you in dialogue…*"

Terms such as 'acquaintance' do not hold significant meaning in Palau society. So although I met some of these people for the first time in my life, culturally I already had a connection with them long before I even established one. My place in Palau society is already determining how I am viewed by those who are older. These include my age, sex, my

[24] See chapter 5, section 5.2.3 for further analysis of the participants' perceptions on Palauan relationships.

[25] I use the word 'certain' rather than 'better' because the latter implies that those that I know less do not have a better relationship than those I know more.

parents, etc. If, for example, I approached one of my elder participants asking for their name, it would have created a tense environment between us. My actions would have determined how myself and my family are foolish. These niceties all work in relation to how the conversation is going and what are appropriate cultural protocols. Because of these culturally 'pre-established connections' it was not difficult to arrange interviews but at the same time, I was always aware of my ties to my family and whom I represent. Even for the youth, I had only gotten to know a few of them better when they participated in the research. However, it did not deter their trust in me or my responsibility to all of the Ulimang youth as members of the community.

3.1.5 Qualitative approach

My research is conducted in an entirely qualitative in approach. "Qualitative research is a distinct field of inquiry that encompasses both micro- and macroanalyses drawing on historical, comparative, structural, observational, and interactional ways of knowing" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 1). Although there was very little quantitative information, they were not relevant to the depth of my research questions. My study was mainly about the experience and knowledge of my participants and their perspective on learning in Palau and that connection to identity. Additionally, it was a very personal research which affects the people of Palau and the future, especially the youth.

Another factor in qualitative research is in translating the data that was collected in Palau. In terms of representation, there is the notion of putting concepts, knowledge, and values in the appropriate context, if not accurate representations, in the best of one's ability. This study will employ a range of meanings and interpretations of the Palauan language and so it is essential in understanding that I am responsible for the translations of the data.

3.1.5.1 Subjectivity and objectivity

Freire points out that one cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity. Neither can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomized (32). Debates of whether indigenous knowledge is non-objective and therefore less relevant in scientific research has caused a number of negative reactions among theorists who focus on the qualitative approach, especially among indigenous people who prefer to study their own cultural groups. In my view, nothing is objective in research and study. Because humans are all subject to

how the world and the universe work, we as humans study the phenomena of nature subjectively. For this thesis and with much of the data collection it employed a subjective and personal tie to the research as it relates to my experience and connection to Palau. Merriam et al. mention that all understanding becomes subjectively based and forged through interaction within fields of power relations (416). Moreover, because I am from Palau, this thesis is viewed as my participation in contributing to Palauan society.

3.1.6 Ethics and ethical considerations

How one approaches a certain group of people for collecting data is bound to certain and appropriate measures. In this day and age where people are being researched by many other people from different cultures, ethics has become a vital part of obtaining knowledge for the benefit of their research. Smith points out how the word 'research' is probably one of the dirtiest words for indigenous peoples (1). Indigenous peoples all over the world are addressing their growing concern for being exploited through outsiders' research of them and their culture. The human ethics application that I mentioned earlier is one such protocol through universities to try and prevent such happenings.

3.1.6.1 Insider and outsider

There is an important factor to be mentioned regarding the ethics of being an inside researcher. According to Bridges, he articulates the notion of how many 'insider' groups feel that outside researchers cannot understand the experience of a community to which they do not belong and they therefore should not attempt to that community (375). He further emphasizes that whether being an outside or inside researcher, it should not prevent or exclude outside research because it does contribute to understanding a community in a different perspective. This holds true and for Palau specifically, where the concept of *bitang me a bitang*[26] can also be used. There are advantages and disadvantages of being an inside and outside researcher. For example, Palauan knowledge is highly restricted because the people do not want it to fall into other people's hands. As a Palauan and an 'insider', I can be restricted to certain Palauan knowledge because of being an insider – a Palauan – rather than being an 'outsider'. Certain lineages have their own knowledge and do not easily give it away to other lineages. They protect their knowledge from other Palauans who might exploit that

[26] See the section *bitang me a bitang* in chapter 2, section 2.1.2.3 for more information.

knowledge for their own lineages' benefit. However, having said that, an outsider must always follow protocol and follow ethical standards so as not to exploit indigenous people from what they can benefit from[27].

Like subjectivity and objectivity, being an insider or an outsider is always a debatable area within research. While I do view myself as an insider in Palauan culture, I am also an outsider in many aspects when it came to collecting data. Merriam et al. also mention how positions are relative to the cultural values and norms (416). Being an insider or an outsider should flow and be as fluid as people continuously change roles from being in one form or the other. For example, my age was certainly a factor to being an outsider. In fact, as a youth in Palau compared to my elder participants, I am still a learner and so my inquiry of learning their knowledge is appropriate in that context. And for the youth of Ulimang, they viewed me as an older cousin and so had a different perception of me when I spent time with them. Another important point in mentioning is my place in Palauan society, which situates me in a way that my elder informants were able to distinguish where I was from, who were my parents, and what lineage I belonged to. "The views of both insider and outsider must be accepted as legitimate attempts to understand the nature of culture" (Merriam et al. 415). So while I am an insider within the culture, I am also an outsider within the different categories of society. It is very much like the notion of identity as it ranges in meaning.

3.2 The Research Design:

This section explains the setting of my research by pointing out some of the questions that I asked about Palauan knowledge during fieldwork. Following the background of the research, a selection of the participants is explained to illustrate the choices I made to strengthen my research.

3.2.1. Background

In the beginning of my research, my main question was to find out whether the Palauan youth highly value their cultural knowledge. Based on my own observations among the youth living in urban Koror, I concluded with the assumption that they did not hold any importance in their own cultural heritage by the actions they carried out while I was there. For example, I saw my young cousins who talked back to their parents, staying up late at

[27] See Chapter 5, section 5.3.3 for more details about Palauan notions of knowledge as private property

night even during school days, and going against the *bul*[28] that was implemented by the traditional leaders of Ngermid[29] in 2009. These examples mentioned are some aspects of Palauan culture that form the basis of learning respect in Palau. Based on what I saw in Ngermid and throughout Koror, I had assumed that youth today did not see the significance of perpetuating Palauan knowledge in their lives.

I then decided that I wanted to explore this trend in Palau. I wanted to discover why this was occurring again and again among the youth today. In the beginning, I had blamed the youth themselves for not upholding their own cultural values, but as my time doing fieldwork in Palau went on, I learned a great deal by observing the conditions of the social environment and how it shapes the interactions and identities of people. It was by these observations that I wanted to see how much the impact of western values influences the way people interact, looking specifically at the Palauan youth. Lave and Wenger call this a "relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing" (50). Education, a primary source of learning, is the basis of how people shape their thinking and their actions in society. What better paradigm to explore how western education and Palauan indigenous knowledge influences youth today in Palau? For these reasons, I decided to explore this phenomenon affecting Palauan youth and society.

3.2.2 Selection of participants

The participants of this study included 16 people, all of whom were Palauans. They were divided into 2 groups of people, *ngeasek* (youth) and *ulsemuul* (elders). The *ngeasek* were a total of 9 people. Among these participants, 5 of them were male and 4 were female. The main reason I wanted to include youth in this study is because I wanted to see their perspective on Palauan knowledge and whether or not they deemed it important in their learning. Their selection was based on the youth being Palauan, they were students in the current education system, they participate in Palauan practices, and they were from Ulimang.

Among the *ulsemuul*, there were 7 people that participated, in which 2 of them were men and 5 of them were women. These participants were selected based on their understanding of Palauan knowledge and epistemology and their standing in Palauan society.

[28] A *bul* is a traditional ban that becomes regulated in a village. The *bul* can be used for different settings such as creating a curfew for young members of a village as mentioned above or a closing of certain reefs to prevent overfishing and replenish itself.

[29] village in Koror.

The criteria that enabled their selection are because they were Palauan, they are involved in education at different levels, their knowledge of Palauan ranged depending on their standing and experience, and because I knew them or have heard about them based on their involvement in the community.

3.2.2.1 A re ngeasek[30]

I mentioned earlier that I wanted to look at a specific group of Palauan youth. I had selected the youth of Ulimang because first of all, it was a personal choice for me to interview a group of youth that I had a good relationship with. For example, when there was village work to do, I was participating with them. When I conducted activities to explore our village prior to the research, they wanted to participate with me. I also selected them because they were a group of young people that had a more practical application and knowledge of Palau. I say this because (1) they all grew up in the village setting, (2) they currently reside in Ulimang village, (3) they are all participating in formal education, and (4) as well as participating in village affairs.

This is not to say that they are more knowledgeable compared to youth living in urban areas. If I had chosen, for example, the youth of Ngermid, the impact of modern change was slightly more prominent than those who lived in Babeldaob. My assumption is clearly based on how their identities (youth from the village compared to the youth in the urban areas) are also ranging in meaning. So my choice to select the youth of Ulimang as my participants was because of my assumption that they had a more grounded identity in Palauan knowledge. I also selected them because they were all related to me. Despite the youth of Ngermid being related to me as well, I already chose to work with the youth of Ulimang. As an older cousin, it would not only be easy for me to talk and share ideas with them, but also see Palauan knowledge being applied. Moreover, because of my position as a female, and an older cousin, I wanted to observe their participation in Ulimang, their communication with me and amongst each other when I'm with them, as well as the cultural protocols that were in play.

I also had to distinguish what age group I wanted to look at. I had initially thought to look at a range of young students from elementary school (grade levels 1 to 8), high school (grade levels 9 to 12), and college. But this proved to be difficult because my questions would be challenging for elementary students to contemplate, and college students had other

[30] The youth

obligations and demands from their studies and so I felt that asking them to participate would not produce results that I aimed to look at. In addition, less Palauans go to college and so it would be hard to look for willing participants. So I decided to stay with Palauan students between the ages of 13 and 18. They were old enough to understand certain concepts of education, knowledge, and culture, but young enough to not have specific teachings or selected majors (as college students would) that might affect, or perhaps influence, their thinking and still learned general western knowledge in school. For the youth, parental consent was provided.

3.2.2.2 Ulsemuul[31]

When I began looking for *ulsemuul* participants, I emailed the few of them that I knew, informing them I would be back in the islands and would like to get together. I attached information regarding my research which was my research proposal and the interview questions. During the three months that I was in Palau, I had no specific schedule for when to conduct interviews with the *ulsemuul*. My time was merged with both family affairs and doing my research, and I did things as I went along. I gave them at least a week's time before I called their personal assistants to schedule a meeting if they were not so busy. Of course, some time slots with my informants did not work out and we had to reschedule many times due to changing circumstances, which was not a problem for me. I organized myself around their availability and if they cancelled, it was understood as they also have other work and cultural obligations.

The people I chose to interview were engaged with various forms of Palauan knowledge and epistemology in their occupations, their clan lineages, and day to day living. My informants also had different levels of involvement in local practices and activities so it would be inaccurate to say that they had expertise in one specific area. Rather, they have a range of experience and expertise in different areas of Palauan knowledge. For example, one of my informants was older and his experiences went further back to the 1940s when Palau was transitioning from the Japanese times into the American government. Another informant was much younger and her experiences would be more recent. Like their identities, their knowledge would then range in meaning. "Our identities incorporate the past and the future

[31] Palauan term that refers to people (usually elders) who are knowledgeable (see Chapter 6 for more details).

in the very process of negotiating the present" (Wenger 109). So the practices and customs currently still being practiced in Palau would have different perspectives from the *ulsemuul*.

Age was also an important factor in choosing experts. Palauans have a reverence of older people as being wise and knowledgeable. This is also a contributing factor to the selection of my experts (e.g. an elder family member). Most interviews were kept personal since we related personally through discussions and issues about Palau, knowledge, and pedagogies. Each participant was given a consent form, both in English and Palauan, to read and sign along with being briefed on the objectives of the project, and if they had read through what I sent to them earlier to get their ideas and thoughts around it, before the interviews began.

3.4 Data Collection:

The methods that I applied in collecting my data were two forms. The first method was using questionnaires for the Ulimang youth while the second was interviews for the *ulsemuul*. All data collected were qualitative in nature as the questions were open-ended.

3.4.1 Background

While in Christchurch, I came up with these methods that I found appropriate for my research questions as well as to strengthen my observations. I developed these questions, filled out an ethics application, and wrote a research proposal and appropriate permission slips for both the elders and youth. On the 30th of June 2009, I departed New Zealand and headed home to Palau to attend an archaeological conference that was held between the 1st to the 3rd of July 2009. In addition to this, I was also home to conduct research for three months. The opportunity for me to travel back home was made possible by the support of the NZPSA (New Zealand Post-graduate Study Award) and the conference organizers of Pacific Island Archaeology in the 21st Century: Relevance and Engagement (*Dikesel a Beluu*), that I attended while I was there. This trip brought me back home to Palau after 4 months of being away in New Zealand. For the 3 months I was there (from 30 June to 27 September 2009), I spent most of my summer catching up with friends, relatives, co-workers, and such, as well as conducting interviews throughout Koror[32], Ngerulmud (Melekeok), and Ulimang (Ngaraard).

[32] Urban center of Palau

3.4.2 Questionnaires

In order for me to get an idea of what the youth of Ulimang thought about Palau knowledge, I developed a questionnaire that was a qualitative analysis but with a few quantitative inquiries as well. For example, the questionnaire first asked about sex and age. However, they were more open-ended as the youth continued to fill their answers. There were a total of 11 questions in which 2 of them were close-ended. I chose to do a questionnaire because I wanted them to be open-ended but at the same time take less time for me to code due to my time constraints. I did not choose to interview the youth because I felt that interviewing them one-on-one or as a group interview will put pressure on them. If I did a one-on-one interview, my impression was that they would be more nervous in expressing their thoughts while alone with them.

My other concern with doing a group interview was that they would have to compete or express their ideas with their peers and I did not want to put that pressure on them. For example, when I first started university, I never asked questions in class and always sat at the back. This is not to say that I was not a good student. On the contrary, I learned at a young age that observing in silence is the appropriate way of learning. When I was 'encouraged' to ask a question, I felt I was being pressured. For example Tuafuti explains that when Pacific children challenge their parents, it is often considered disrespectful. Thus, when they go to school, they apply this behavior as an implication of respect to their teachers. "The origin of such behavior lies in people's cultural relationships" (5). It is culturally challenging for a youth to express their thoughts because as a youth, they are meant to absorb and apply rather than respond to those who are older. Their responses will be seen through their application. It was not necessary for me to put the Ulimang youth in such a position, and I was mindful of my relationships with them.

The questions asked was mainly interested in the youth about how they identify with being a Palauan, their view of Palau knowledge, if they valued it, its implementation in their lives, and if they saw it being taught in and out of formal education. I had got 9 of the youths to participate in the questionnaire by talking with a few of them a week before and to ask if they would like to take part in my studies. I also asked them to recruit other youth of Ulimang if they wanted to participate. I informed their parents of my research objectives and gave them appropriate consent forms to fill out for the ethics requirement before the day of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted in the evening when they came back to Ulimang village after school in Koror. At the time of conducting it, their school year had

already started and they participated on the 23rd of September. And so around 7:00 p.m. with the rain pouring hard, the 9 youth arrived at my family home in the village to meet me and we left to the villages' landing dock to carry out the questionnaire.

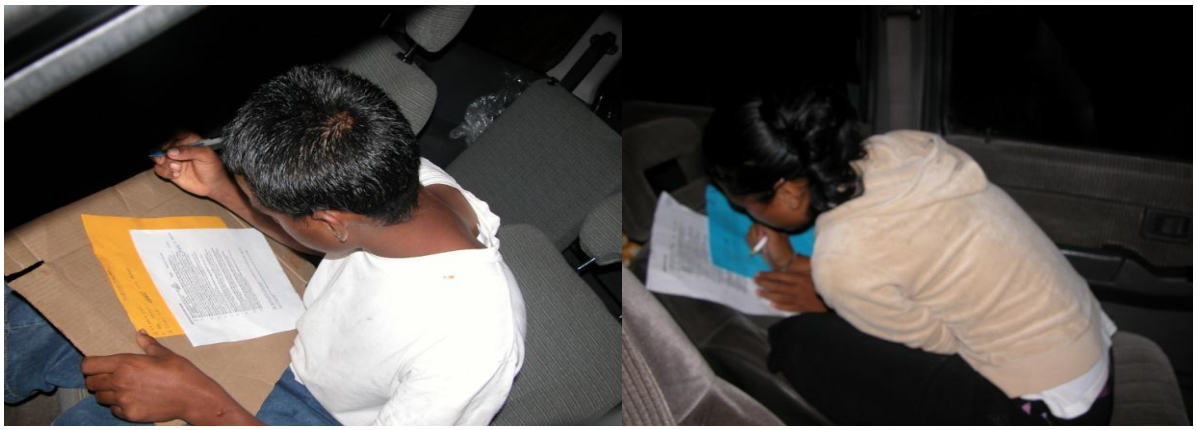


Figure 4: Ulimang youth filling out the questionnaire

Before conducting the questionnaire, I asked the youths to help load my car with what I provided for them. I brought a box soft drinks, a bag of ice, a cooler (ice chest), and some food. These they loaded and I proceeded to drive down to the dock while they walked there. When I arrived at the dock, I unloaded a few things while they came and started unloading the rest. I asked a few of the girls to prepare the food and the boys putting the ice in the cooler (chilly bins) with the soft drinks. After all of this was done, I took out my betel nut[33] bag so the few of them that chewed betel nut could help themselves and then began with the questionnaire by thanking them for their help in participating. I gave them a brief explanation of what I was doing and why I needed their help and then asked some of them to pass out the questionnaires, answer sheets, pens, and pencils.

When they were done answering the questions, they proceeded then to fix themselves some food and drinks. Some parents came and went, making sure they were with me or just checking up if they were okay to go home due to the rain. Then the youth chatted for a while and I asked them to help me to load the things back into my car. The activity concluded when some of the youth ran home when the rain was slowing down. Others, I dropped off at their homes if they did not want to get wet. This was how my data collection with the Ulimang youth was conducted

[33] Betel nut is the fruit of the areca tree that is chewed in Palau and other parts of the Pacific (Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands) and Southeast Asia.

3.4.3 Interviews

For my *ulsemuul* participants, I chose to collect data through interviews. When I conducted interviews, there were a total of 7 informants. I had 9 semi-structured questions and 6 unstructured interview questions, all of them being qualitative in nature. For the elder participants, I chose to do interviews rather than questionnaires because I felt that if I wanted to grasp the deeper meanings and their relationship to Palauan knowledge and education, an in-depth interview would strengthen my research more so than a questionnaire. "The goal is to seek deeper collective interpersonal understanding" (Miller and Crabtree 196). Additionally, Palauan culture is an oral culture and interviews are more closely in line with the methodology of *cheldecheduch* as part of discourse.

Before each interview started, I gave them a consent form to grant me permission for their time. Then I would present a small token of my appreciation (a box of chocolates or betel nut). During the interviews, both Palauan and English were used together but mostly, they were conducted in Palauan. On average the interviews lasted for less than an hour, although some lasted over an hour and half. I mainly took notes with a notepad and used a digital recorder for the interviews. Some interviews were conducted during my participants' working schedules and so were done in their working spaces. 2 of the interviews were done after work in their offices, 1 was done early in the morning, 1 was conducted before lunchtime, and another one was done in the late afternoon. One interview was done at a participant's residence in the evening while another interview was done at a restaurant during dinner time. The interviews ranged from formal, semi-formal, and less formal settings.

Although I did have interview questions, I did not use it strictly during each interview. Rather these questions acted as a guide for flow of the discussion topics. Because of this, some interviews had different questions than others, which were specifically modified to that participant's skills, knowledge, and interests. Additionally, the interview questions were explained more as statements rather than directed questions where possible. This is perhaps due to the cultural inappropriateness of asking questions or seen as questioning participants. For example, in proper Palauan protocol, it is frowned upon to ask questions constantly. This can be seen as being disrespectful to questioning authority or be communicated to the person that one knows nothing about proper behavior. The Palau Society of Historians explains that at home, parents demonstrate esteem for one another and children would learn this by observation (Tradtional Education 5). Being a young Palauan, the expectation is for me to

conduct my behavior properly as it reflects my family and lineage. Proper conduct reflects that my family taught me well, and this includes questioning authority.

The interview questions that were addressed to the *ulsemuul* basically dealt with the value of Palauan knowledge, the challenges of having Palauan knowledge and western influence, and how they saw the youth approaching Palauan knowledge. Also, there were questions that were asked to the participants based on their experiences. For example, there were questions that I wanted to ask for those who were career-oriented educators (meaning those who had experience in any form of pedagogy, mainly Palau and western) that were mainly focused on what education is in Palau today and what their views are. There were also questions for those who focused more on research or scholarly work (academia, publications, etc.). These questions revolved around their own challenges when they experienced western education and research. My interviews with the *ulsemuul* were conducted to learn more about their experiences as Palauan leaders and experienced teachers in their capacity.

3.4 Data Analysis:

In terms of analyzing my data, I employed two main methods. For the youth of Ulimang, since I asked them to participate in a questionnaire, I organized their responses in the format of a table and reviewed the differences and similarities of the questions that were asked of them and their answers. Additionally, I did a comparative analysis of their responses, coded and categorized them according to the number of questions that were asked. As for the *ulsemuul*, I transcribed the data that I collected and coded them according to themes that came about as a result of transcribing and reviewing them. I did this by looking through their responses and color-coded them according to the overlapping responses and major themes that came out from their answers.

3.5 Limitations:

No research could be without its limits. In my situation, my time was limited to three months of making sure I collected the information I needed. In addition to my time, I also had to limit the number of my samples in both interviews and questionnaires. To make use of more youth to participate or even more of my informants to interview would risk an enormous project that would not fall under the criteria of a master's thesis as well as not having a certain objective. Resources were also a limitation for my research. For example, I

did not have a video camera to be able to draw out the expressions and the details of how my informants responded to questions. Also, it would have been good to video record some of the youth's participation in the questionnaires and how the setting was conducted.

A limitation that can be observed in this thesis is the fact that my approach was through my knowledge of being a Palauan, and thus an insider. A researcher from a different cultural background, and perhaps if the researcher were a male, would have obtained particular data that I would not have gained because of my status as a young Palauan woman. In addition to being an insider, issues of translation can limit researchers. In my case, taking a Palauan concept and translating it to English has proven to be challenging. Another limitation is that this thesis will ultimately be presented in a western framework and although it contained some Palauan epistemological approaches, this thesis is under a particular process for a western university. It would be limited to a western discourse rather than employing another major discourse, such as employing a Palauan framework.

This chapter addresses the purpose and goal of this thesis, which was to analyze the research questions that relate to Palauan indigenous knowledge and epistemology, conflicts between western education and non-western paradigms of education, and how both these bodies of knowledge affect identity development in Palau. I began the chapter by first exploring the underlining methodologies that was used in obtaining my data. These were using a narrative approach, indigenous methodology (*cheldecheduch*), *rolel a tekoi* or cultural appropriation, qualitative approaches such as subjectivity and objectivity and finally, ethics and ethical considerations of being an insider and outsider in doing research. An examination of the design of the research was followed by giving a background of how I designed my research, a description of the selection of my participants whom were the *ngeasek* of Ulimang and the *ulsemuul*. The collection of data used questionnaire and interview methods and the analysis of my data was through transcribing, coding, and categorizing. Finally, an examination of my limitations as a researcher was time constraints, being an insider, and writing this thesis in a western framework.

Chapter 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA: Ulimang Youth

This chapter presents the Ulimang youths' perception on how Palauan knowledge plays an important role in shaping their identity. The first section of the chapter consists of a qualitative analysis of Ulimang youth's responses to questions about what Palauan identity means to them, their views on Palauan knowledge, and the role education plays in providing access to Palauan knowledge. As such, the sub-sections are divided according to each question that was asked of them using the questionnaire[34], their responses, and a discussion of those responses. The analysis of the data also includes a discussion of the responses of the youth of Ulimang.

The questionnaire was composed of 9 questions that were qualitative in nature. Of the 9 youth of Ulimang who participated in the study, 5 were male and 4 were female and were between the ages of 13 to 18. The participants' identities are concealed to comply with the ethical policies of university standard academic research when working with minors. This is done through the use of pseudonyms for each of the youth participants. Additionally, I translate their answers where needed and indicate where I have translated with a small letter-case '*t*' in parenthesis. All of the youth attended the same high school except for the 13 year old, who attended the local elementary school.

Grade Level	Age	Male	Female
8th grade	13	1	
Freshmen (9th)	14		1
Freshmen (9th)	14		1
Freshmen (9th)	15	1	
Freshmen (9th)	15	1	
Freshmen (9th)	17	1	
Sophomore (10th)	16	1	
Juniors (11th)	15		1
Seniors (12th)	18		1

Figure 5: Range of age and sex between grade levels

[34] See appendix 1

Each grade level was represented by at least one youth of Ulimang but there were more freshmen (9th grade). One reason for this limited number of high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors is that many of the youth of Ulimang live in Koror[35] during the school year and return home for holidays. Reasons for more numbers of 9th grade students is that since the recent completion of the Compact Road Project[36] in 2008, families are either starting to move back to their villages from the urban town or students now have the Palauan government provide transportation from the village to schools in urban Koror. Because of this, the youth in their freshman (9th) year are the first students to experience going to school from their villages instead of leaving their homes to live with relatives in Koror where most secondary institutions are located. This explains why their numbers are larger while the upper-class (10th, 11th, and 12th grade) students are smaller because their fellow village mates live in Koror for convenience of its close distance.

4.1 Questionnaire for the youth:

Since there were 9 youths who answered the questionnaire, their responses are named according to the question that they answered. For example, each question is sub-sectioned and a table is provided to structure the participants' pseudonym with their response as seen in the coming section. Chapter 2 mentions that there is no one word for Palauan knowledge and epistemology. The use of *siukang* pertains to Palauan customs while the word *tekoi*[37] is not often associated with Palauan knowledge however epistemologically connected it is. For that reason, the questionnaire that was conducted used the words *klebelau* and *klechibelau* to describe Palauan knowledge and culture[38].

4.1.1 Ulimang youth

In the data collected from the questionnaire, I wanted to understand the youths' perspective on indigenous knowledge in Palau. To give the reader a better understanding of

[35] Former capital of Palau

[36] 2008 saw the completion of the first-ever paved road that connected the island of Babeldaob to the urban center of Koror. All the states in Babeldaob have access to the main road.

[37] See chapter 2, section 2.1.2.2 for more details

[38] It is important to note that *klebelau* and *klechibelau* are not words to describe Palauan knowledge, although they too are part of it. I recognize the fluidity of the Palauan language and I do not want to dwell on 'deconstructing' Palauan concepts as it is unnecessary for this thesis.

the 9 Ulimang youth, a brief description of each participant is given. James is 15 years old and he is a freshman in high school. Michael is also 15 as well as being a freshman in high school. Gary is a sophomore and he is 16 years old while Katie is 14 years old and is starting her first year in high school. Paul is the youngest of the Ulimang participants. He is 13 years old and is in elementary school but is finishing up his last year and beginning high school next year. Peter is 17 years old and is currently a freshman too. Amanda is also in her first year of high school and is 14 years old. Rebecca, however, is 18 years old and she is finishing up her last year in high school while 15 year old Sharon is a year behind Rebecca. The 9 youth from Ulimang who were given 9 questions to answer to the best of their understanding, are named sequentially.

1) Do you identify yourself as being a Palauan? Why or why not?

Participant	*Response*
James	I'm Palauan because my parents are Palauan too. That makes me a Palauan.
Michael	Yes. I'm Palauan and that's it. (t)
Gary	Yes. I just want to be a Ngaraard person
Katie	Yes I am a Palauan because my father is Palauan. And I don't know some of the culture so I want to know.
Paul	Yes. I am also Chamorro
Peter	Yes. I am Palauan from Ulimang and I like to do things for Ulimang. (t)
Amanda	Yes. I think of myself as Palauan. A real Palauan should know Palauan '*tekoi*' and the culture. (t)
Rebecca	Yes I do identify myself as Palauan because my dad is from Palau. He's from Ulimang, Ngaraard so I do consider myself as a Palauan.
Sharon	I am Palauan because I was born in Palau and I was raised in this place. As time went by I became used to being Palauan and the customs of my country. (t)

The first research question for the youth examined how they defined their identity as a Palauan and what it means for them. It is clear from their responses that they identified with being a Palauan through heritage. The three major themes that came out were through parentage, the practice of Palauan customs, and place. James, Katie and Rebecca mentioned that their parents are from Palau and so that made them a Palauan. By virtue of their parents' ethnicity, these youth construct their Palauan identity through descent. Peter, Amanda, and

Sharon on the other hand, identified with being a Palauan through cultural practices. Katie also continued in her response that she did not know enough of the culture, therefore implying that her Palauan identity might be meaningful if she was familiar with Palauan custom. This is interesting because her response reveals that her Palauan identity being negotiated due to the fact that she knew little about Palauan custom. Additionally, her response emphasizes the argument about empowerment issues[39] in the education of Palauan youth today. The initial foundation of Palauan identity, which is Palauan knowledge and epistemology, must be further maintained. Katie's response demonstrates her interest in further assuring her own Palauan identity by expressing her desire to learn.

Peter said he likes to do *ureor* for Ulimang, which means that when there are village projects such as the cleaning up of Ulimang village or road maintenance, he enjoys participating in activities that grounds his identity. Amanda associated her identity with Palauan *tekoi* and culture. In this case, Amanda points out that a Palauan should know how to speak the vernacular and participate in Palauan cultural practices. Sharon also stated that her involvement in Palauan practices has made her Palauan. In addition, she mentioned that she has gotten 'used' to practicing Palauan customs which reveal that this is what she knows about being a Palauan. Her response entails that this is what she grew up with and therefore, it is what she has become familiar in placing herself as. Her response echoes Michael's answer when he said, "I'm Palauan and that's it". His answer tells me that the question was irrelevant, because what else can he be? He's Palauan and that is all he knows and he is. In other words, what he was saying to me was, 'what kind of question was that?'

Gary, Peter, and Rebecca's notions of Palauan identity also revolved around the concept of place in Palau. They mentioned Ngaraard, one of the 16 states in Palau and Ulimang, a village located in Ngaraard. Their responses echo the fact that they grew up in this particular place including their ancestral history of living in Ulimang. Sharon continued in her response that part of her Palauan identity is the fact that she was born in Palau which suggests that her birth in Palau further strengthens her place as a Palauan youth. Paul's response on the other hand was not too specific, only that he does identify with being a Palauan as well as a Chamorro from either Guam or the Northern Mariana Islands. This reveals his dual-heritage identity. From the responses of these young members of Ulimang, they have emphasized that descent, practice, knowledge, and place are important aspects to

[39] See section 2.3.5 in Chapter 2 for more details

their Palauan identity. History, participation, and good knowledge of cultural practices are aspects of an identity that Lave and Wenger have argued about; that "learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities – it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person"(52).

2) What do you think when you look at local Palauan knowledge, values, and beliefs?

James	To me it's good because values and all of those are just good to me, but I don't know about my parents. I think they are OK with it.
Michael	It's like I have to help our place.
Gary	Yes. We will learn its importance in Ulimang like cultures and beliefs
Katie	NA
Paul	They're not really helpful
Peter	Yes. I'm a youth in Ulimang and I know a little bit of Ulimang's knowledge like stories. (t)
Amanda	I haven't started learning about Palauan culture and all of that but I do apply some of it today. (t)
Rebecca	The way I look at it our knowledge is increasing, I mean we're learning a lot, we're more advanced now. Our values are increasing also, some of values already changed. There are some things that was not valued long time ago that are valued nowadays. Our beliefs have changed also. We have gotten used to this American culture, that we have changed what our beliefs were.
Sharon	When I look at Palau, its customs are looking like it's going to disappear because there are many people from different countries in Palau. Also, our spiritual beliefs are changing so our beliefs and values are getting lost. (t)

The second question was intended to understand the youths' perception of Palauan culture, custom, and practices in a very general way. Two major themes came about as I analyzed the youths' responses: the concept of knowledge, and the idea of participation. Most of the participants expressed that Palauan knowledge was valuable and important for them. Paul on the other hand, thought that Palauan knowledge was not very helpful. Recall that Paul was of a dual-heritage identity, Palauan and Chamorro. His response indicates how he may find Palauan knowledge difficult to comprehend thus affecting his notion of identity as a Palauan youth. Katie, however, did not answer the question. When I looked at her answer

sheet, it showed that she was aware of the question, by the question number being present on the paper without an answer. Perhaps she could not elaborate what she thought about Palauan knowledge because of her initial answer to the first question about wanting to learn more. Or perhaps I worded the question in a way that was difficult to put an answer to.

Many of the youth expressed different observations of Palauan knowledge that were very remarkable for their age. They often associated Palauan knowledge with values such as respect, culture, and *siukang*. What is striking is how Peter and Amanda, for example, associated Palauan knowledge with *tekoi*. It tells me that they are aware of the meaning of *tekoi* and how it embraces different conceptions of *klebelau* and *klechibelau*. They are aware that *tekoi* goes further than just the vernacular. In addition, Rebecca and Sharon perceive Palauan knowledge in terms of change, whether it is good or bad. They are perceptive to outside influence affecting Palauan knowledge. For example, Rebecca talked about an increase of knowledge while Sharon on the other hand, saw a disappearance of Palauan knowledge. This shows, for them, how much they are aware of what is considered to be Palauan knowledge and what is not.

Participation is also what came out from two of the youths' responses. For example, Michael stated that Palauan knowledge is about helping while Amanda talked about applying it in life. They point out that the Palauan knowledge that they know about is part of the way they live. More importantly, they reveal that contribution and practice are fundamental to their understanding of Palauan knowledge as part of their Palauan identity. "What narratives, categories, roles, and positions come to mean as an experience of participation is something that must be worked out in practice" (Wenger 106). In essence, they experience Palauan knowledge through practice and participation.

3) Do you think it is important to learn about Palauan values, ways, and beliefs? Why or why not?

James	It's very important because if people from different countries ask and we can respond to them about our customs, language, and some. And they become proud. (t)
Michael	Because we are Palauan. (t)
Gary	NA
Katie	Yes it is important to learn Palauan values, ways, and beliefs
Paul	Yes so you will know about the culture and why Palau is unique.

Peter	Yes, we really have to know our culture, us Palauans, because they are very important to us youth of Ulimang. (t)
Amanda	We really have to learn our Palauan language and all of that, because we are real Palauans and this is our country/land and home that we live in. (t)
Rebecca	Yes it's really important for us Palauans to learn what our values, ways, and beliefs are. We have to learn these so if we happen to go off island and people will ask us we're from where and what our values, ways, and beliefs are. So when they do ask we can explain and even demonstrate it if they want to see how we Palauans are.
Sharon	It is very important because youth today are more interested in the lifestyle of Americans and so learning about our culture helps to strengthen and hold our culture and little bit longer. And also we can help teach the younger generations still coming. (t)

I sought to identify from the third question, whether the Ulimang youth thought that Palauan knowledge is important to them. Eight of them thought that it was important to learn about Palauan knowledge. Gary however, did not give an answer. From looking at his answer sheet, he accidentally skipped it because the numbering of his answers was off (e.g 1,2, 4, 5) so he did not reveal what he thought about acquiring Palauan knowledge. There were several concepts that came about from the youth's responses. The first was representation of being a Palauan. For example, James and Rebecca stated that if people asked them about being a Palauan, they would take appropriate measures. Even Paul indicates how it is important to show his uniqueness of being a Palauan. They pointed out that part of valuing Palauan knowledge is to be able to represent their community well. As young members of the Ulimang community, it is important to them to learn about their culture because their identities are embodied in it. Wenger states that our identities provide a context in which to determine what, among all things that are potentially significant, actually becomes significant learning (109). That is why these Ulimang youth want to learn about Palauan knowledge.

Another concept that came about from the responses was the fact that they are Palauan. For example, Michael, Peter, and Amanda stated the importance of learning about Palauan knowledge because they are *merang el chad er Belau* or real Palauans. Amanda's answer indicates that the importance of learning *klechibelau* is because of being a Palauan, not just through ancestry but by virtue of practice and living. A Palauan, to these youth,

should have Palauan knowledge because he or she is Palauan; it is fitting, reasonable and truer. According to Asanuma, this is an authentic Palauan measurement that has been used to describe those who possess qualities of good conduct and principles. "It follows that such persons place high value on propriety…" ("Mera el Chad" par. 1). For the youth, they reveal that being a Palauan is evident in the practices, in its existence, and that is what makes it "real". So to them, a *merang el chad* is a grounded person who knows about Palauan knowledge.

A third concept that was addressed by one of the youth was again the idea of change. Sharon for example, emphasized that Palauan knowledge is important now because of outside influence. Her response shows how Palauan knowledge is being overwhelmed because more youth seem to be interested in American culture. She perceived that Palauan knowledge should be continued and maintained for a while longer, which indicates that she must feel Palauan knowledge will ultimately disappear. Her view suggests that outside influence is threatening Palauan culture.

4) Do you think schools in Palau should apply Palauan knowledge in the education curriculum? Why or why not?

James	I think they should, because the age like us must know all about them properly.
Michael	We have to use the schools because it will help us in another time/future. (t)
Gary	Yes. So they will learn everything in the past.
Katie	Yes cause education helps the school to buy stuff for the school.
Paul	Yes so students can learn more.
Peter	Yes, it's very good to learn about our customs/culture in school. (t)
Amanda	We really have to learn about our customs/culture in school because it is very important to us, the youth. (t)
Rebecca	Yes, so students can learn more. Maybe they will start knowing more about how to respect other people.
Sharon	Yes. Mostly in Palauan class.

In terms of learning Palauan knowledge in the school system, all the Ulimang youth agreed that it should be part of the curriculum. Some of them responded that students should learn more which indicate that they perceive the school system to be a place of absorbing as much knowledge as they can. Amanda for example, said it is important for the youth to learn about Palauan culture in school. James also emphasized that their age groups should learn

Palauan knowledge properly, and that the school system can provide that means while Rebecca addressed the importance of values in her response. She articulated that perhaps Palauan youth do not know the appropriate conducts of being a Palauan, such as respect. Another aspect that was addressed was time. Michael for instance, said that learning Palauan knowledge will help Palauan youth in the future whereas Gary mentioned that schools can provide an avenue to learn more about their past. These responses suggest a historical tie to being a Palauan. Learning about their heritage is an important aspect of Palauan knowledge, in their responses.

Katie on the other hand, responded that schools can provide economical and financial support. Perhaps she saw that her other courses in high school have appropriate tools and materials that make learning unproblematic and that could be applied to Palauan knowledge as well. Sharon expressed that she saw Palauan knowledge in her Palauan studies course. Her response suggests that she probably does not see aspects of Palauan knowledge in other parts of the school curriculum. The Ulimang youth indicate that the school system does not teach enough of Palauan knowledge and that it should. However, their responses can also suggest that the school system is not situated for Palauan knowledge. For example, Lave and Wenger argue that a learning curriculum is essentially situated. "It is not something that can be considered in isolation, manipulated in arbitrary didactic terms, or analyzed apart from the social relations that shape legitimate peripheral participation" (97). The youths' responses suggest that Palauan knowledge that is contextualized differently is not going to work in the same way that was intended for American education.

5) Do you see it (Palauan knowledge) working/being applied in your school?

James	Yes. Mostly they do
Michael	No. Everything is different than before
Gary	Yes. Especially Palauan class
Katie	Not really cause some schools don't have enough stuff.
Paul	A little.
Peter	Yeah, the schools also teach us about Palauan custom/culture. (t)
Amanda	Yes I see it in school because there are a lot of people in school learning about Palauan custom/culture when they are studying Palauan studies. (t)
Rebecca	No, students nowadays need more discipline on respecting elders and other people.

Sharon	The way food is fixed/done, meals (or times of eating), funerals at my house/clan. Also when we discipline our kids. (t)

The responses to the fifth question were very mixed. James and Peter for example, agreed that they saw Palauan knowledge in school but did not give any specifics. Their responses probably pertain to their Palauan studies course that is a requirement for most public schools in Palau. Otherwise, they could mean the school environment, where, for instance, teachers speak Palauan to them in and out of class. Other responses were in agreement but specifically stated that they saw Palauan knowledge being applied through their Palauan class. Their responses also suggest to me how I asked if they saw Palauan knowledge in school. Perhaps the way they perceived the question was asking whether the school curriculum taught Palauan knowledge in their understanding of a formalized environment of learning rather than the everyday engaging of Palauan knowledge in and out of classroom environments.

Some responses mentioned how they saw very little of Palauan knowledge in school. Katie again referred to school supplies that indicate her view of having less school materials did not necessarily mean a good curriculum of Palauan knowledge. Other responses adamantly stated that they did not see any Palauan knowledge being applied at their school. Michael, for example, argued that things are different now than in the past which tells me that he was talking about change and outside influence. Rebecca also mentioned in her response that youth today are much more different than what she knew of being a youth. These answers are important in that the youth probably see themselves as very different given the fact that they live in more rural settings compared to their urban age group living in Koror. Another youth on the other hand, did not mention if she saw Palauan knowledge in schools but instead gave examples outside of the school environment. This is interesting in that it tells me that she probably does not see much Palauan knowledge at work in school and more importantly, what she is learning in her Palauan studies is not something she considered as a practice of Palauan knowledge. Overall, the responses to this question were ranging in meaning.

6) ***What are some of the means that you see at home, with friends, etc, in applying Palauan knowledge?***

James	I mostly see them everywhere when I go, or come from.
Michael	No. Every people are already adapted the way in the U.S.
Gary	Sometimes with my parents at home and it really helps me

Katie	Yes.
Paul	Show respect, no saying bad words and be nice to the elders.
Peter	If I take it to my home, it is my parents who teach me the real ways of Palauan custom/culture. (t)
Amanda	It's very, very good so we can be good Palauan people when we leave our homes to the public. (t)
Rebecca	I see it with relatives, with friends, and at home. Yes it does help because it makes me get along with a lot of people I don't even know. It makes me fit in more.
Sharon	Technology is getting really advanced in Palau (t). So people are doing everything the easy way not the old way. Like early Palauans used to do.

The sixth inquiry in the questionnaire attempted to find out where the Ulimang youth saw Palauan knowledge in action and some examples. Firstly, it shows most of them thought more about spaces where Palauan knowledge acquisition takes place rather than actual examples of them. For example, they mentioned that home is the central space in which Palauan knowledge is most prominent. This is important because they suggest that the home is the primary focal point of Palauan knowledge rather than at the school. I see this as a positive outcome because Palauan knowledge is not well-situated if it is taught in a western-styled environment, i.e. the classroom. For example, Lave and Wenger assert that learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people participating in, with, and beginning from the socially and culturally structured world (51). As such, the space where Palauan knowledge is contextualized, at the home, is an important indication of its epistemological origins. From the responses of the youth, seeing that they did not associate what they learn about Palauan knowledge in school signifies that they are aware of a more indigenous construction of Palauan knowledge.

Two of the youth participants argued that Palauan knowledge has changed considerably. Their responses seem to indicate that the change occurring is not an encouraging aspect of Palauan knowledge. For example, Michael mentioned that the U.S. lifestyle is more prominent today while Sharon emphasized the impact of technology has made people less motivated to persevere. They both indicate that Palauans today are at the point of losing their culture or perhaps that Palauans may have already lost many aspects of their *klechibelau*, suggesting that they are aware of ways of being a Palauan, but modernization has affected

much of the lifestyle compared to the past. Paul on the other hand, gave examples of what he saw as Palauan knowledge which suggests that he is aware of some cultural practices that he learned. His response shows that he is distinguishing what is Palauan knowledge and what is not.

7) ***Do you think that the younger generation is experiencing a loss in Palauan values, ways, and beliefs? Why or why not?***

James	When I look at it, our culture is disappearing because people are doing things differently, and the land, and my friends are forgetting our language. (t)
Michael	It is getting lost because times are changing and because people now are usually different from other people as well. (t)
Gary	Yeah a little.
Katie	No because Palauans know the values, ways, and beliefs.
Paul	No because elders cherish the past.
Peter	Our culture cannot be lost! Don't take the American custom/culture in front of ours! (t)
Amanda	Of course! Because youth today would rather have the custom/culture of the Americans!
Rebecca	Yes because of this new era. Now we depend more on the American money or the new technology. Especially the money. If there is no money, it's like we're nothing.
Sharon	It is very important that we (t) understand and learn our culture because it's just important knowing everything about our life.

The seventh question regarded the youths' notion of loss or change in Palauan knowledge today. Several youth expressed that the younger Palauan generation are losing their Palauan knowledge. For example, James mentioned that his peers are forgetting how to speak Palauan. Amanda also stated that youth are more responsive to the American culture, for example money, as Rebecca mentions. The Ulimang youth are clearly aware of what is changing as they are growing up. Their responses suggest an experience where they are able to notice differences between these two bodies of knowledge, and seem to emphasize a sense of loss. This is important because it is clearly affecting their Palauan identity. Wenger for example, mentions that such an identity is relating to the world as a particular mix of the familiar and the foreign, the transparent and the opaque (108).

Other participants argued that there was no disappearance or loss of Palauan knowledge. They stated that Palauans still value it and that the past is still very much relevant today. Their answers seem to point out that Palauan knowledge is the core of their identity. Peter, for example, fervently expressed that it is not possible to lose Palauan culture because it should not be any less valued. Sharon also acknowledged that Palauan knowledge is part of life. "Were social life actually lived within an instantaneous slice out of time, then it would be without content or meaning" (Layton 3). Although the Ulimang youth had different responses to the question, the underlying meaning behind their answers is how Palauan knowledge defines the meanings of their Palauan identities. This is important in showing how their different responses evoke a similar meaning about a part of their lives as young Palauans.

8) Do you think that our culture and knowledge is worth maintaining for the future? Why or why not?

James	Yes, because I don't want to grow up looking at the younger ones forgetting our language, it's like losing everything they spend their lives on.
Michael	We have to get all that is the good, old custom/cultures like respecting our elders and all of those good ways for our land/country (t)
Gary	Yes
Katie	Yes cause you're a Palauan person so you know the culture comes to the future.
Paul	Yes
Peter	Yes it really has to. (t)
Amanda	It is really good for us to know our custom/culture and continue it on in the future because it is something we have to follow, because it was our way in the olden days until today.
Rebecca	Yes because if we don't then we might lose our island and our freedom. We have to maintain our culture in order for us Palauans to have a bright future.
Sharon	Yes. We young people have to start strengthen and learn more about our culture before the elders are gone with their knowledge about more of our culture.

Overall, the Ulimang youth all agreed that Palauan culture and knowledge are worth maintaining for the future which strongly supports the importance of *klechibelau* for the Ulimang youth. Their responses clearly show how Palauan knowledge is very much the foundation of their identity. James for example, expressed a fear of growing up to see the loss

of culture. This shows a deeply attached part of himself to Palauan knowledge, and a loss means a part of his identity loses its meaning. Similarly, Rebecca emphasized a loss of freedom. This is interesting because it makes the connection with what Freire talks about in the empowerment of individuals, to shape their futures and their identity through their own ontology. For example, a more holistic and relevant education would be to develop people's power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; "they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire 64).

This is a key concept in grounding and affirming their identity. The loss of Palauan knowledge is something that these youth are afraid to have happened because it is so much a part of their being. Amanda also suggested a connection of the past to the present and how it all weaved together to form her identity. The continual building of their being relies on the foundation of the identity, which is Palauan knowledge. Layton underlines how individual relationships are assessed within the framework of more generalized expectations and values embodied in a community's shared culture, and transforming it through practice (3).

9) Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share?

James	No.
Michael	Yes. First we have to get some of our customs/culture in the past because if not we keep on changing and we become so different from our past. (t)
Gary	No.
Katie	Yes, Palau is a good island and the people know the culture, values, ways and beliefs.
Paul	No but thanks for asking.
Peter	I don't have any other thoughts but I would just like to say, we should not throw away our culture/customs, us Palauan people. (t)
Amanda	Tia Belau. This is Palau (t)
Rebecca	No
Sharon	Thanks! Hope I was helpful!

The last question that I asked was to give the youths a chance to express their thoughts and concerns on any issues that I might not have covered or not covered adequately in the study. Several of them had no comments although some did express their gratitude for asking and for their contribution. They did not realize how much they had contributed to my study, but more importantly, the relevance of their stories will contribute to Palauan social

issues. As such, their participation reflects their contribution as young members of the Ulimang community. The other participants who made comments reiterated whatever they said in the previous questions and it is not necessary to repeat again. Only that the youth of Ulimang were very much aware of how Palauan knowledge defined their identities as young Palauans.

The Ulimang youths' responses to the questions of what Palauan identity means to them, their views on Palauan knowledge, and what education is doing in providing access to Palauan knowledge, is explored in this chapter. Nine youths from Ulimang participated in this study that ranged between the ages of 13 to 18 and they all attended formal education. I use pseudonyms to protect their privacy as well as to give a more personal touch to the analysis of the data. In conclusion to the analysis of the questionnaire data provided by the youth of Ulimang in September 2009, the youth reveal how indigenous Palauan knowledge plays a crucial role in Ulimang youth's identity development. Moreover, their understanding of the differences of what is Palauan and what is American strongly suggests how much Palauan youth today are aware of the social changes occurring in Palau. They are also clearly aware of the changes that are happening in the development of Palau as a nation and how Palauan knowledge should be a part of the social development of Palau's youth.

The data also revealed how they coined the term 'education' as an equivalent to school and classroom lectures. This is significant information that suggests their perception of what is considered to be education. The current school system they are experiencing is education to them while Palauan knowledge is not. To them, Palauan knowledge is part of living, of everyday circumstances. This difference can perhaps associate western education as more formal than Palauan knowledge. However, given the fact that the Ulimang youth place esteem on Palauan knowledge, the distinction is irrelevant to their identity development. For example, Lave and Wenger argue that a learning curriculum is a field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed from the perspective of learners. A teaching curriculum on the other hand, is developed for the instruction of new comers (97). Thus, for the Ulimang youth, their learning curriculum is Palauan knowledge and furthermore, they are treated like newcomers in the western education system. In many ways, their experience compared to my view of education (that it should have a more holistic approach) is not the same. To them, being a Palauan is not education, but a way of life whereas my perspective argues that education should not distinguish Palauan knowledge and western knowledge apart.

Moreover, the Ulimang youth show an immense amount of learning about who they are outside of the school environment by indicating their involvement in Palauan customs, their roles in their homes, and the community of Ulimang. As Freire indicates that education should affirm men and women as beings in the process of becoming (65), so does Wenger in emphasizing that identity is a negotiated experience that people define who they are by their experiences through participation, through meaningful actions (105). Given that the youth were very much aware of the social issues occurring in Palau, they suggest a level of development of identity that, while still a learning process, is also pointing out their participation in being contributing members of Ulimang village and as young members of the Palauan youth.

The next chapter presents an analysis of qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured and unstructured questions that were given to older members of the Palauan community when they were interviewed between July and September 2009.

Chapter 5: Presentation and Analysis of Data – *Ulsemuul*[40]

An analysis of the interviews conducted during fieldwork in 2009 is addressed in this chapter. The focus was primarily the *ulsemuul* views of Palauan indigenous knowledge and how it can play a role in the development of the youth in Palau today. The dialogue revolved around questions on their views of Palauan values, the impact of outside influences, and how they saw the Palauan youth today. In total, there were 7 informants who participated in my research, 5 of which were female and 2 were male. Senator Regina Mesebeluu and Senator Kathy Kesolei are members of the Olbiil er a Kelulau[41] (OEK) and have been involved in the fields of Palauan education and research for a long time prior to their political careers in Palau since 2008. Minister of Education Masa-aki Emesiochl is a long time educator and mentor in Palau while Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs Faustina Rehuher-Marugg is also a prominent promoter of Palauan culture and heritage. Director of the State Incentive Grant, Maura Gordon has also been deeply involved in her career as a promoter of cultural practices and an advocate for improved social development in Palau. Meked Besebes, an ethnographer at the Belau National Museum (BNM), and Joe Chilton, a lecturer at Palau Community College (PCC), are the younger members of this study, but who also continue to engage with community agencies and organizations in promoting cultural heritage, Palauan values, and development.

The organization of the data in this chapter differs from that of the previous chapter which analyzes the questionnaire data by the Ulimang youth. Rather, this chapter focuses on the overarching themes that came up throughout the structured and semi-structured interviews[42]. As such, the chapter divides the major themes into sections. Each theme is discussed with each informant according to their perspectives, strengthening the overall theoretical purpose of the thesis. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the data analysis and the general understanding of what the informants believe to be important in maintaining Palauan knowledge for the empowerment of Palauan youth. It is important to

[40] A person or a group of people who are knowledgeable. Asang describes this term as a person who is knowledgeable, well-rounded and is a respected member of the community. "Usually a person that does not have to compete for space to speak, says very few words, but is usually meaningful and well-informed" (153).

[41] Olbiil er a Kelulau is the Palau National Congress

[42] See appendix 2 and 3

note as well, that while themes and sections are segmented to organize this chapter in a cohesive presentation, there are common overlaps that link them together.

In coding the interviews, there were five major themes which my informants discussed in varying degrees. These were (1) The impact of westernization in Palau, (2) the concept of *deleuill* (relationships), (3) Palauan knowledge, (4) the concept of *duch el reng*, and finally (5) the notion of development.

5.1. The impact of westernization:

The first theme discusses how the *ulsemuul* perceive the impact of westernization in Palau. This section is divided into three parts: how westernization has impacted lifestyle in Palau, economical perceptions, as well as an analysis of westernization's impact on Palauan values. In analyzing this theme, I attempt to bridge how westernization impacts indigenous knowledge and education in Palau.

5.1.1 Lifestyle

The theme of the impact of western values was brought up in each dialogue with my participants. For example, Meked explained that it is a valid observation that people feel that some aspects of Palauan culture should be abandoned, and that new ideas coming in from the outside should be embraced. "*Ng berraod – It is a very heavy burden*", she said. "*The lifestyle today is just too much for them.*" For example, juggling between *siukang*[43] and work are some things that have caused a great deal of hardship for Palauans. Although Meked suggested that the struggle between Palauan custom and work may be a reason for the Palauan people to abandon *siukang*, she certainly did not indicate that it should be abandoned. Outside influence can also change many cultural values associated with certain lifestyles. Dir. Gordon referred to the basic preparation of food as an example. "*Children and the structure of home have also changed. Today we have refrigerators and stoves. The way we prepared food in the past was a big means of transferring skills and information.*"

Sen. Kesolei also illustrated how fishing today is by no means exempt from change.

"*We've commercialized it. So your father, who of course is a fisherman, is no longer required to go fishing for the family. He can just go to the store and buy some fish. So lifestyle changes affect some of the values we have*." Additionally, the reliance on foreign

[43] See Chapter 2, section 2.1.3

workers has become a part of everyday living, across most villages in Palau. Foreign workers are hired from overseas for house cleaning, gardening, and have also become caretakers for Palauan children. Joe said, "*Who are in the taro patch now? The Bangladeshi*!" Sen. Mesebeluu and Min. Emesiochl also emphasized that today most Palauans hire foreigners to do work which, in the past, was the role of parents.

The statements given by my participants emphasize a distinction between the past and present lifestyle in Palau. For example, certain Palauan values associated with particular lifestyles can change due to 'replacing' it with another lifestyle. This reveals that the epistemologies behind these lifestyles change, gradually lose their essence, or become lost as another becomes more relevant to people. For instance, the time it takes for a boy and his father to hunt for fish can be half a day to many days. The exchanges, processes, and epistemologies behind the act of fishing are present. The knowledge and skills acquired through the practice of fishing are relevant aspects of Palauan lifestyle in the past, and occasionally in the present. However, a father can more often drive to a fish market about 10 minutes away from home after a day at work. Fishing, then, is no longer a usual cultural space for learning. As seen in section 2.1.2.2, *tekoi er a omenged* (fishing techniques) has no epistemological significance if conducted around the fish market.

Another factor that is illustrated in the responses of the participants is the changing of roles. For example, in the past, those who held primary responsibility for children were older members of the family such as parents, grandparents, aunties, and uncles. "A girl spends time with her mother, watching and learning the tasks and responsibilities intended for women. A boy spends most of his time with his father, learning the techniques used in fishing and all the skills and knowledge that are intended for men" (Palau Society of Historians, Rechuodel 69). Today however, Filipina helpers take care of the children and Bangladeshi men go to the taro patch and farm while parents earn wages. They are trained to become child minders and farmers, but do not learn Palauan ways of doing so. These changes have also affected knowledge acquisition and learning. No longer do women and their daughters use the taro patch as an educational space because there are foreign workers who tend to them while children go to school and parents go to work. Change, due to outside influence can alter many lifestyles and theoretically may alter processes of indigenous knowledge acquisition.

5.1.2 Economy

Sen. Kesolei explained that when she was growing up, material things were not common. "*To have money, a good job at the office, and wearing good clothes, those were the perceptions at the time on what success meant. But today, they are all common.*" White collar jobs are viewed as sophisticated occupations among the Palauan youth in terms of economical standards. Min. Emesiochl, in his response, mentioned how people are concerned with "*skel a keruul*[44]", meaning that earning wages as means of making a living has occupied most peoples' time and concerns. For example, Sen. Mesebeluu explained, "*your father is still working and there are many responsibilities that Ngirairrung*[45] *is required to do. He can take out money to pay for food for a gathering of the rubak (chiefs) in Ulimang.*" The responses from my participants emphasize that there are existing tensions between western and Palauan notions of economy.

Other participants had another view of economy. Joe expressed how outside influences shaped his view of economy and what it means to him as a Palauan. "*I talk about self-reliance, but I am not self-reliant. I talk about independence but I'm not independent, because I get a pay check… I don't have a boat to go fishing and get my food.*" He also observed that people in Palau today perceive money the way a drug is perceived. Dir. Gordon also contemplated that the economy should consider the resources and environment we have in Palau:

> "*The challenge is the economic needs of the people. If people don't have the money to buy food, I guess the challenge is the resources. They don't have access to land to plant their food or if they don't have money to buy what they think they need, then that will move them to degrade the environment…It would be good to find some economic opportunities for everybody so that we can live a good life and not destroy what we have.*"

Meked also suggested that people should consider being really proactive in living on an island. "*Our environment must help our lives. It has got to be more than just, 'when is the next budget hearing?', or something like that.*" There is the notion of dependency on earning wages that is suggested from the responses of my participants.

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[44] *Skel* means to search for something or a person (Josephs and McManus 306) *Keruul* means to protect each other, do things with each other in mind, or be considerate of each other or make (something) for each other (Josephs and McManus 114). *Skel a keruul* then implies finding means to keep people in consideration and look after their interests.

[45] Traditional male title in Ulimang village.

Concerns with the economy all come down to living a good life in Palau and in other societies. In many ways, the *ulsemuul* acknowledge living within the standards of a western economy but indicate how living with both western and Palauan economies adds to more responsibilities. They were also aware of how they grew up would not necessarily apply to young Palauans growing up today. In addition, Sen. Kesolei's perception of a good life when she grew up is something that she noticed, is clearly different today. In keeping up with the global world and its standards as well as maintaining the practice of traditional economic standards, it is no wonder there is a dependency for earning wages. Moreover, using American money for use in indigenous practices, there is further reason for Palauans to feel that it is an added burden for them to make ends meet and participate in customs. The *ulsemuul* clearly value indigenous knowledge, and see the differences of the systems in which Palauans engage in. Their responses express a desire to maintain Palauan values.

The notion of earning wages has created a dependency on money. Palauans more often choose to work, earn money, and use their earnings to make a living on top of their traditional obligatory requirements rather than going out to the taro patch or hunt for fish to meet basic living needs, resources that are already present. At the end of the day, the basic question falls down to what it means to live a good life in Palau, as Sen. Kesolei suggested. If it means to have cars, more money, etc., then for what reason? One thing that could be observed for Palauans is to explore the values that they attach to indigenous economy, and if those values are still present today. For western economies, the values attached to them should also be understood to compare their needs over Palauan needs.

5.1.3 Values

The *ulsemuul* recognized how westernization has impacted Palauan values. The responses point out how westernization has come into conflict with leadership values, education and the context of learning, and Palauan knowledge. Joe addressed some of the conflicting values in leadership in Palauan culture and with the west:

> *"My job as a Palauan leader is when I get into a high position in society is that I must bring my family with me. That includes my brothers and sisters. But in a transparent, good governance model, that's called nepotism and corruption. Depending on what I do because it's my responsibility, my cultural value is to bring my family with me first. Your family in the Palauan context is always going to be there for you no matter what."*

Education and the context of learning have also become very problematic for Palau as well. Joe explained:

> "*My age and my clan lineage put me in a position in which I cannot just stand up and impose my opinion on Obak[46], who is of a high clan. But since I'm going to school and getting my degree, I can say this and that[47]. I am no longer representing my clan anymore… In America, a degree is important to them. It's what makes the man. But in Palau, it is very different.*"

Sen. Kesolei mentioned that ideas from other societies do not necessarily work in Palau. Palauans had their own system of knowledge prior to colonization and now, they are learning this new system, it has become problematic for the people:

> "*In today's world, people are beginning to reconsider these indigenous cultures. Plus, they now realize that this 'white' society that imposes some of their values to us is a kind of oppression… I'm not saying it in an antagonistic way but I'm saying to so that we can try to understand and know how to deal with it and know the constraints.*"

A few of my informants also voiced their concerns on how the context of learning and the education system does not fit Palauan values. Min. Emesiochl explained this about most outsider research:

> *"Most outside research is non-contextualized. Our staff in education, we try out many programs in which were made by outside researchers for Palau, made by Americans or Japanese, that were successful in their countries, but are not successful here because learning has to fall within the context of how a people learn in their own country."*

Dir. Gordon also said something similar in this framework as well:

> *"What we are doing at my work is applying evidence-based or model programs, which are western. And what we're saying is that these models are not necessarily applicable to us. We want to use something else, like cultural practices that have been used for generations that are proven to be effective…so what we're trying to do is to make it evidence-based so it can be replicated elsewhere. But it may only be applied in Palau, and that's the fallacy of western people. They think that if it's replicable in New York, it*

[46] A high ranking title in one of the villages in Pelileu.

[47] Meaning, he has the capability to say things in an authoritative demeanour.

can be replicable here. No, it cannot because the circumstances, the environment, the culture is totally different."

Sen. Mesebeluu also observed how "*the current system of education does not teach Palauan values properly.*" So even if there is a Palauan studies course in public schools in Palau, the manner in which it is taught does not fall within the context of Palauan values. Rather, the context of learning in the Palauan education system conditions young Palauans to place esteem on American values. "*We're moving towards consumerism as a need rather than thinking about our own survivability, self-reliance, pride, and independence*" said Joe.

The *ulsemuul* addressed how certain western and Palauan values are attached to their cultures. Leadership in the Palauan context, for example, values relationships with people. Although it might seem that western values such as egalitarianism and meritocracy are not present in Palauan epistemology, this is a flawed assumption. Palauans engage in different levels of contribution and participation that determine their position in society. "To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (Lave and Wenger 101). Thus, merit is determined by active participation because Palauans work as a collective rather than as single individuals. Merit and equality are defined by the relationships between families, lineages, and clans. For instance, in Palauan thinking, an individual that is older is considered to have more experience. That is why elders are given more respect than younger people because of the knowledge and experience they hold. As a single entity, a leader portrays attributes that hold merit in their lineages.

My participants also illustrated the context of learning Palauan knowledge. They expressed that the educational system found in Palau is non-contextualized to fit the needs of Palau. For example, consumerism as a need in western countries might not be necessarily in tandem with survivability in Palau. This also comes down to Palau as a physical environment that perhaps is not appropriate for consumerism. Emphasizing relationships that are prominent in Palauan values is an avenue that could be explored more to address the survivability of Palau and its need in education. Additionally, it was mentioned that assimilating into western culture is a form of oppression. Freire argues how education in the banking concept is a form of dehumanization which distorts people from becoming more fully human (26). In this sense, the education system that Palau has adopted is conditioning

Palauan youth to American values rather than developing an empowered generation of youth. The focus in Palauan education is assimilating them to value American goals rather than focusing on what Palauan society values.

5.2 *Deleuill* (relationships):

The second theme discusses the concept of relationships in Palau. This section is also divided into three parts: 1) building relationships starts at the home, 2) relationships carry on as people participate in the community, and 3) is continually cultivated in life. Addressing relationships in this thesis informs how this concept is a crucial part of identity development in Palau and how its continuity is highly important in Palauan society. The concept of relationships is the umbrella under which all Palauan values and knowledge fall.

5.2.1 Starting at the home

Meked is very supportive of relationships. She explained that there was an uncle who came from overseas to stay in Palau for a while. A nephew came home from school and asked his uncle if he could watch TV. The uncle wondered why his nephew kept asking him to watch TV and so he asked Meked why he kept doing that and he felt that he should not be the one giving permission. "*It's the relationship that's important.*" So the nephew acknowledged his uncle as being an elder even though he might not have been in Palau long. Sen. Mesebeluu explained that homes need to be strengthened to develop their relationships as parents. "*The quality time I spend with my children will instill the Palauan values that are critical to their learning about being a Palauan.*" Dir. Gordon also observed that families and institutions should make conscious efforts to consider how to teach Palauan values to children today. Teaching those Palauan values to youth at the home will continually help them develop their relationships when they get older.

A factor underlying the lack of developing the relationship between a parent and child is that children go away from home and attend school. Joe mentioned that what is normally the responsibility of parents to build their relationships and teach them Palauan knowledge is no longer the norm. "*I let others teach my kids. There is no connection.*" Min. Emesiochl emphasized that the involvement of the parents and the community seems to be weakening:

> "*The family connection is very critical. Education begins in the family. That is where knowledge begins but it is weakening because children are gone… It must be because*

of our lifestyle that is based on the economy… and most of the time we are now hiring foreign workers to do roles which, in the past, was the responsibility that family members did."

Min. Emesiochl also considered a cultural factor that should be considered in making Palauan values important in shaping the relationships of families and the communities. "*A family always has responsibilities. An older member and a child must always have responsibilities. But today, those responsibilities are weakening because we are entering a new way of doing things*."

It seems that relationships at the home are slowly weakening according to some of the *ulsemuul*. By home and family, my participants not only mean the nuclear family, but the entire extended family as well. Hezel and other Palauans discussed in a forum, that in Palauan families, raising children was shared by many adults and even older children in the family group, and grandparents took a strong hand in advising and supporting children ("Changes" par. 5). The building of relationships in Palauan families is critical in the development of Palauan youth. They develop trust, reliance, and responsibilities that become part of Palauan values that in turn develop their relationships to their families and other people. According to the Palauan Society of Historians, the following are the fundamental principles of education in Palau: 1) respect, 2) responsibility for duties, 3) work and occupations 4) obedience, kindness, and perseverance, 4) visiting amongst relatives, 5) humility and techniques of speech, 6) care, love, and compassion, and lastly, 7) concern for the needs and problems of *blai* (house) and *beluu* (village) (Rechuodel 69).

These ideals help to shape how Palauan youth interact with others and develop their relationships as they mature. Additionally, instilling responsibility was a factor that was suggested to shape Palauan youth to be positive participants in society. However, because children are now educated in formal schooling that does not emphasize these values, relationships between children and parents are weakening.

5.2.2 Participation and responsibility in the community

Siukang (customs) are also vital aspects in building relationships that involve participation and responsibilities to family and other people. Joe mentioned that he studies on what it means to be a leader because, "*I believe it's the leaders that help define and design*

their relationships with others." Sen. Mesebeluu stated how there are many Palauan values that are still very strong:

> "*For example, when a relative dies then all of us go to help with the kemeldiil*[48]*, pay off any debts, and then we leave. And when there is an ocheraol*[49]*, we also go to help build the house and pay off debts. Those kinds of things still have that strong sense of community and help, and it's still very strong in Palau.*"

Min. Emesiochl pointed out that the practice of *ocheraol* is very important because it connects the community. "*The reason why there is the practice of ocheraol, we help each other so we do not struggle. It is a good practice because we help each other back and forth in our struggles… The practice is a good concept.*" Additionally, Min. Rehuher-Marugg explained that part of being a Palauan is the desire to want to contribute to customs. "*We have such big egos that we want to contribute in all aspects of siukang*." Another example of participation was given by Sen. Kesolei. "*Oderuchel*[50] *is very important! When I was a young girl in Ngchesar I was always doing oderuchel to Melekeok. And when I do that I become familiar with my relatives and I also bring messages back to my father*". This is one method of learning given to children at the home so they develop their relationships with extended family members. Dir. Gordon mentioned how the aspect of cooperation helps achieve respect. "*This is a basic human value that can be applied anywhere. You can't go wrong. You can survive anywhere with these skills, when you look out for your family, when you respect people, when you melengmes*[51]*, these are valuable concepts*".

Today with the impact of outside influences, these practices are slowly weakening as well. The *ulsemuul* observed that people are placing more importance in the newer economic system and its values, becoming more prominent in Palau. "*It's still there but the rest of the world, people are getting busy with search for money today…*" expressed Sen. Mesebeluu. Joe also stated:

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[48] *Kemeldiil* is a funeral. See chapter 2, section 2.1.3.2

[49] *Ocheraol* is a customary practice in which a man builds his house in which his relatives contribute money to help him pay off the expenses of the construction of his house. See chapter 2, section 2.1.3.4

[50] *Oderuchel* is a cultural practice usually pertaining to doing errands. But more than errands, this practice is a method of building relationships and children's knowledge of who is related to them.

[51] *Melengmes* is similar to respect but also slightly different. For example, if I was hungry and I went to visit a friend who offers food at her house, I am obliged to refuse out of politeness. This Palauan act is a form of consideration and respect for refusing a kind offer.

"*We have to involve the people in Palau, the community. We have to be a community again. I think we're fragmented individuals in a geographical space…We're not even neighbors anymore, if I use the American definition of a neighbor… We don't help each other, respect each other, and we don't support each other… and we need to bring that back.*"

Min. Rehuher-Marugg additionally, told a story of how she approached a group of men and asked, "*So I asked them, 'Rubak*[52]*! What if you all can perhaps talk to the young men today? And they responded, 'We have retired so it's our turn to relax!' So you see, there is no longer that reng el buai*[53]*.*"

From the observations of my participants, relationships are strengthened when people are actively participating and connecting with each other. For example, the responsibility of being a leader in any culture is embodied with the values of being a part of the community. In the case of Palau, being a leader in Joe's observation is to bring the community together with what they value and what they learn as people growing up. From what has been said, it is clear that Palauan values are maintained as long as relationships between the people flourish and stay strong. "Engagement in practice gives us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participating"(Wenger 105). These practices that have been addressed perhaps should be strengthened further if Palauans indeed value their relationship towards each other. Meked for example pointed out that Palauan values are principles that Palauans believe in and that's why participation in *siukang* is important. Min. Emesiochl also continued with this observation by providing that *siukang* are ways of instilling cooperation between people.

On the other hand, the *ulsemuul* also addressed a sense of loss of Palauan customs that strain relationships between people. Although the practices are still present in Palauan society, the need to seek jobs and earn wages has disrupted the need to maintain relationships. Working for money does not necessarily value relationships. Rather, it emphasizes how individual needs could be met without being dependent on others. However, for Palau in the past, relationships were the most important asset for people. The ties that bind people require the need to look out for each other, rather than seeing it as dependence. Additionally, being responsible for each other seems to lessen as was seen from Min.

[52] *Rubak* is a respectful term for old men. "An elder, old man, chief" (Josephs and McManus 221).

[53] *Reng* can refer to the heart, or the seat of emotions. *Buai* means the public. So if they are put together it can mean concern for each other, communal concern.

Rehuher-Marugg's experience. The *ulsemuul* are right in both perspectives; *siukang* is very much still being practiced, although not as strong as it once was due to the western value of individual merit rather than cooperating as a collective.

5.2.3 Cultivating relationships or "Peace at any kind of price"

Cultivating relationships is an important aspect of Palauan identity that was emphasized by my participants. For example, Joe mentioned:

> "*Even though we talk about money and economy, sometimes relationships are still just as important… I don't go out of my way to criticize the government because half of them are my relatives. How am I going to stand in front of people and still have to see them at the funeral tomorrow?... Palau is so small that the relationships are more important than, you know, coming straight forward and saying, yeah…*"

Sen. Kesolei explained this Palauan perception. "*The reason being, we are a small society, so it is peace at any kind of price. We continually develop positive relationships because the person worries that he or she might have said something offensive that will affect someone else.*" Dir. Gordon stated that Palauans are a group-oriented people. "*We are born into a group which is very supportive and competitive at the same time*". Relationships are crucial in building trust between individuals and the community. Sen. Kesolei also emphasized:

> "*When you go talk to the elderly women, give them money, bread, or whatever; and don't go only once! You have to cultivate the relationship and understanding. I think that's the difference between the western concept of education and knowledge, as opposed to us, Palauans.*"

Even Min. Rehuher-Marugg questioned the goals of the educational system in Palau. "*What is the kind of education that people need? To function as a society? What do you have to study to become part of the community?*"

Additionally, Joe reflected on cultivating a relationship between two cultures with different epistemologies:

> "*There's this cultural thing about Palau that kind of bothers me and sometimes we're too nice. I don't know the name, I don't know the Palauan idea or name. But it's this hospitality thing. I don't think it is melengmes either… We go out of our way to please others, to the point where we become like them. So Americans, when they come to Palau, we bend over backwards to speak American… and we don't demand that they*

speak Palauan… But I know the culture well enough that when you talk about melengmes, you really try your best to develop that relationship."

Even when it comes down to research, there are conflicting expectations between Palauan ways of doing things and western perceptions of research. Sen. Kesolei explained, "*Palauans don't like the fact that you take their words and put it elsewhere. That's why research is hard, even asking people to put their names on paper. Although they agree, quoting is a must not.*" Furthermore, Sen. Kesolei highlighted that in developing a relationship with someone, you never ask them about who they are:

"*When I did research I took a tape recorder with me and placed it in front of my informant… 'Okay sir, can you tell me your name, today's date, and these are my questions, 1, 2, 3…'. So the rubak just stares at me and says, 'You don't know my name and yet you're here?' He just closed! These were unnecessary questions that scientists like to ask.*"

Min. Rehuher-Marugg also contemplated about outside researchers and how they rupture their already developing relationships. "*Here they are, they have come to Palau and obtained their doctoral degrees, but where is their contribution to Palau?*"

The *ulsemuul* addressed how positive relationships are important to continue and develop. In addition, Palau being a small country compared to larger countries, relationships are a more practical avenue of survival and sustainability rather than a system that values individuality. Consideration and respect are aspects that are found in establishing relationships in Palau which are evident in the cultural practices. Wenger argues that practice defines a community through three dimensions: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (107). In the case of cultivating relationships as a practice, Palauans have developed a way of interacting with each other that define who they are (mutual engagement). Palauans invest in these relationships, much more so than Americans for example, that defines how they look at their world (joint enterprise). Finally, in terms of a shared repertoire, Palauans continually sustain their relationships that are evident in Palauan lifestyle. "We recognize the history of a practice in the artifacts, actions, and language of the community" (Wenger 107). Relationships are then a valuable commodity in Palauan society that is also seen when Palauans interact with different cultures.

If the impact of westernization is weakening relationships, community and participation, then it will help to understand why this is so. Additionally, it may contribute to

addressing the values in how Palau shapes its educational system and what it reflects. Freire indeed points out that liberation from disempowerment is accomplished with an education that seeks ways to find people's relations with the world" (60). Because Palauan culture values relationships, it strives to always give people the benefit of the doubt. However, we seem to ignore the fact that a culture like America could not possibly understand how we cultivate that relationship and we continue accepting their premises without question. Perhaps the problem lies in how Palauans use cultural values to develop a relationship with America, when in the first place, they do not actually understand it epistemologically. This is also seen among outside researchers who expect answers from unprincipled questions in the Palauan viewpoint. Additionally, there is no understanding from outside researchers about maintaining their relationships and their participation in Palauan society. So in Palauan attitudes about relationships, it reflects the culture and vice versa. Perhaps because of our communal attitude, we tend to bring it with us to any form of relationships.

5.3 Palauan knowledge:

The previous theme addresses how relationships are an important factor in knowledge acquisition. This section looks at how knowledge also has an important part in developing identity and empowerment among Palauans. The following are addressed about knowledge to give an understanding of how Palauans perceive knowledge: 1) knowledge is alive, 2) knowledge is identity, and finally, 3) knowledge is power. What is also discussed is how knowledge informs values and practices, how it serves a purpose, and how knowledge is power in the Palauan context.

5.3.1 "Knowledge is alive!"

When I asked Joe about Palauan knowledge, he answered, "*How do I know that knowledge is knowledge? Because it works. How do I know that it works? I'm still alive aren't I? And my relationships with my family are still intact.*" Min. Rehuher-Marugg pointed out that Palau as an oral society has a different notion of knowledge. "*It's not alive if you just read it! Practice is important. Knowledge is to make sure it becomes alive; so that it is part of development, part of running a community*." Sen. Mesebeluu explained that to start doing,

to start putting knowledge into practice, then people would learn a whole lot more. Min. Emesiochl told a story about how he went to a hearing at the OEK[54]:

> "*One of the legislators came to me and said that his son cannot even husk open a coconut. So I jokingly say, 'Okay, I'll make sure we have coconut huskers at the school'. You see, the practice of husking the coconut can be explained at school, but the action must start from the family. Learning by doing! It becomes a dangerous thought when the community starts to feel that schools should be responsible to teach their kids about practical knowledge like that. They are giving schools that privilege. It becomes full learning when the family, community, and the school come together*."

Dir. Gordon also mentioned that the practices that are still used in Palau such as *kemeldiil*, *ocheraol*, and *cheldecheduch*[55] are important to continue strengthening "*because they are where we are really practicing being a Palauan… they still serve a purpose and we still see the value of them*." Min. Rehuher-Marugg supported this as well by telling me about intangible cultural heritage. "*Most of Palauan knowledge is intangible heritage. For example, a tangible heritage like the ongall*[56] *should not stay dormant in a museum. Its use is alive because of its practicality in Palau*." Sen. Mesebeluu emphasized, "*an ideal Palauan is a person that is a contributing member of society.*"

Knowledge that is alive is epistemology. From the responses of the *ulsemuul*, they indicated that knowledge is seen as a process in Palauan existence. This, in fact, is true in all cultures in the world. "Epistemology is neither especially complex nor divorced from the mundane concerns of everyday life" (Sackey 13). Palauan epistemology is therefore, an essential aspect of being a Palauan. A basic example like that of the *ongall* given by Min. Rehuher-Marugg is indicative of how its use informs the knowledge in which it was created from. Learning by doing, is then an important part of the nature of knowledge acquisition. The responses of my participants reveal that Palauan knowledge is important to continue because its accumulation has brought Palauans to the present day and still serves a purpose in Palauan life.

[54] Palau national congress.

[55] *Cheldecheduch* is also a cultural practice where after burying a relative, family members come together to discuss further debts after the funeral and his or her personal debts when he or she was still alive.

[56] *Ongall* is a platter (originally made of wood) that is used for *odiom* or fish (Josephs and McManus 171).

5.3.2 Knowledge is identity

Meked mentioned how Palauan knowledge should be maintained, not just for the uniqueness, but for values as human beings, for guidance and direction. "*It's easy, you know, to decide to let go of our culture and our values and follow the recommendations of the World Bank for example, saying economy should be so and so.*" Sen. Kesolei also mentioned that our values of being a Palauan are aspects that we do not want to lose. But sometimes, they get into conflict with what we know now from the outside. For example she said, "*I have a right as an individual to have freedom of speech, or my right is to vote for someone into the government… it gets into conflict with our Palauan values*". Joe expresses what human values aim for. "*When it comes to knowledge… the goal of knowledge, and the goal of identity, and the goal of culture is my interaction with the environment I live in. The end result is my survivability.*" Min. Rehuher-Marugg described Palauan knowledge as part of development. "*You will be able to be secure as a Palauan, to stand on your feet…. When you learn who you are, what your role is, and the knowledge of your beginnings, you know who you are*." Min. Emesiochl also stated that "*in the process of doing (knowledge), children learn and so when they grow older, they understand*."

Sen. Kesolei also mentioned how knowledge, relationships, and identity are being interplayed:

> "*When cheldecheduch*[57] *begins, you don't get to the point right away. Half of the cheldecheduch is acknowledgement, recognition of people. We do that because it's the relationship we want to establish. And sometimes, the rest of the cheldecheduch becomes immaterial. The substance of the cheldecheduch has finished because you've acknowledged people. That's the way*."

Joe explained a notion he calls, *erungel el chad*[58]. "*People in the family see you successful in taking care of yourself so they know that you can take care of others*." Joe explained the notion of identity in terms of responsibilities. "*The underlining is, everyone has a role, everyone has a place, and it's in that place where you show off your effort where people say, you can be a leader or not.*" Dir. Gordon also said, "*That's the thing about Palau you know. Everybody has a role.*" When roles and responsibility go hand in hand with knowledge and identity, people want to participate more, and become a community.

[57] *Cheldecheduch* is part of dialogue, but to understand it in terms of methodology, see chapter 3, section 3.1.2.1. In terms of custom, see chapter 2, section 2.1.3.3. In terms of dialogue, see chapter 2, section 2.1.3.6.

[58] Literally, a whole person

My participants indicate that knowledge is a fundamental element in Palauan identity. Humans conceptualize knowledge that informs how they interact with the world, how people have survived all these millennia. In terms of Palauan knowledge, it is easy at times to devalue Palauan knowledge. At the same time, when knowledge becomes threatened, it is much harder to let go of it because it is part of who we are as people. The key then is how to empower a person with what they learn about their knowledge, values, and cultures that informs their being. Lave and Wenger argue that conceiving of learning in terms of participation focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations. "This is of course consistent with a relational view, of persons, their actions, and the world…" (50). If Palau aims to empower its people, it must shape an education that seeks to empower people in all their roles and responsibilities. Palauan people will feel more empowered when they know that their participation contributes to the development of their society.

Cheldecheduch is an avenue where Palauans acknowledge peoples' relationships to others. Thus it is an important marker for Palauan identities by virtue of their relationships to people. Moreover, the use of *cheldecheduch* acknowledges a persons' depth of knowledge that reaffirms relationships and their place in Palauan society. As a practice, *cheldecheduch* is the core of Palauan epistemology. For example, the concept of '*erungel el chad'* that Joe talks about is determined by how knowledgeable that person is. In turn, the person is adept at the practice of *cheldecheduch*. Moreover, the notion of *erungel el chad* that Joe talks about is similar to that of Asanuma's ("Mera el Chad" par. 1) definition of *merang el chad as* an "authentic measurement… to describe those who possess social disciplines and principles… due to proper upbringing". Thus, Palauan knowledge is important in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of people and their role in continuity for society.

5.3.3 Knowledge is power

The idea of 'knowledge is power' is a different perspective in the Palauan context. Sen. Kesolei expressed that when outside researchers come to Palau to do research, they believe that knowledge is everywhere:

> *"…in libraries, in people, as long as you have the drive, energy to get knowledge, you'll get it. Most western knowledge is institutionalized in libraries…. Whereas, the concept of Palauans is not like that! Palauan knowledge as I grew to find out… is that Palauan knowledge is private! It is not universal nor is it public!*"

Min. Emesiochl elaborated this when he explained, "*there are those who sought for knowledge because there were certain, few people who knew it. So when it's like that, people then seek other families to help/contribute or get close to them and then they take it for their purpose*." Sen. Kesolei also pointed out that Palauan knowledge belongs to a clan, family, or group. "*The process of passing on the knowledge is highly guarded and protected. It wasn't just anyone who took this knowledge*." Min. Emesiochl again mentioned that a person who wants to learn a particular way of fishing, for example, must seek it and become close to the knowledgeable, "*by helping or contribution.*" "*You've got to win their confidence… and earn their trust so they can give it to you*", said Sen. Kesolei.

When outside researchers talk to Palauan elders about their knowledge, they are usually reserved; however, when Palauans ask other Palauans about what they know, they are more reserved to them than outsiders. Dir. Gordon pointed out the 'reserved-ness' of Palauan knowledge:

> "*… it is the protection of our own knowledge, our family secrets. But when there is a Palauan who comes and ask about things, they are more reserved to them. When a foreigner asks about their knowledge, they open up a little. But still, there is a lot lost and misinterpreted because of language barriers and the cultural conflicts*."

Min. Rehuher-Marugg also acknowledged this by telling a story of how she was talking to an elder who mentioned that even though he restricted some knowledge to the outside researchers, at the same time the elder hoped that the researchers wrote it well:

> "*They (the elders) also encouraged me to write about the culture because they were afraid that the foreign researchers would not do it well. So the knowledge was very sensitive but at the same time the elders realized the changes happening in Palau. So in many ways we have to take them, or else we will question them in the future*."

The privacy of Palauan knowledge, according to the *ulsemuul*, is looked at in several ways. First, knowledge is earned in Palau. The knowledge one has earned in society is reflected by the position they have. Men and women elders who have chiefly titles are often called *ulsemuul* by virtue of the knowledge they hold. This is perhaps the same in western cultures. For example, an individual with a doctorate degree is known as an expert in the field they are in. Thus, they are held in high regard in western society. However, the processes of earning knowledge in these two different cultures are embodied with different values. My participants indicate that the right to earn knowledge is determined by one's relationship to

others and their affiliation to a lineage. A Palauan will more often gain access to knowledge that is part of their lineage and clan. That is their right. If a person does not belong in the lineage, they earn the knowledge by additional services and contribution. In the west, access to knowledge is determined by capital, by paying for the right. For example, I pay $22,000 NZD to study and acquire knowledge by the right of purchase as opposed to a NZ citizen who pays much less by right of citizenship and of course payment, only less. If a student has no financial means, scholarships are available, just as contribution is a means to gain knowledge in Palau.

There are also reasons why Palauans are reserved when there are discourses of their knowledge. For example, my participants indicate that knowledge is not easily given because it might be used against them or taken advantage of. This idea is heightened between Palauan lineages. As Palauans, we want to protect the knowledge of our lineage from other lineages because knowledge can be used against each other. However, protection of knowledge has become a greater issue in today's world due to commercialization. Regenvanu illustrates the traditional land-diving ritual that has become a multi-billion dollar industry by New Zealander A.J Hackett and the commercialization of kava as issues that Ni-Vanuatu people have become more aware of ("Indigenous and Local"). As a result, many indigenous communities are wary of outside researchers who exploit their knowledge. Additionally, being reserved when people are questioned about their knowledge can also create another effect: some people do not want to appear that they are not knowledgeable. Between Palauans, they know those who are knowledgeable in society, so it would not be reasonable to seek knowledge to those who do not know. However, outside researchers have also been a cause for misinterpreting knowledge. For example, because indigenous people have become wary of researchers, they give them wrong information. Additionally, Min. Rehuher-Marugg and Dir. Gordon have indicated that culture and language barriers have also caused misinterpretation of knowledge. Different conceptions of knowledge can be found in many cultures.

5.4 Duch el reng[59]

The fourth theme addresses the concept of *duch el reng*. Generally, this phrase describes perseverance and determination. However, like many other Palauan words, it can mean various things. In relation to this study, there are two aspects that tie in to Palauan conceptions of *duch el reng*. The first is how the notion of empowerment informs *duch el reng* while the second is how pride interrelates with this concept.

5.4.1 Empowerment

Duch el reng is an important Palauan concept that is a component of empowerment. Joe also discussed the relevance of *duch el reng* for Palauan youth today:

> "*When I critique education, how do we make young men and women in Palau? To me, education means I'm giving you skills, experience, and abilities to be able to survive in the future, in whatever situation. And if we can't do that now, teaching math, English and science, what are we, what is it for? I think it's duch el reng, just the hard work, to keep going and never stop."*

Min. Rehuher-Marugg talked about the Palauan attitude in Palau today, "*We need to find ways to involve the community and develop the sense of responsibility… to strengthen our klechibelau*." Min. Emesiochl also discussed the accomplishment attitude among high school students:

> "*You know, us Palauans, we had that competitive attitude when we come together. We have to do things to the best of our abilities. But now, it's weakening. They (the youth) get a failing grade in school and they show each other, as if that's a good thing. It wasn't like that in the past. Nobody wanted to have that*."

Sen. Mesebeluu addressed that today, Palauan youth are neither fluent in Palauan nor in English. They become a "marginalized person" as Min. Emesiochl said. "*A marginal person is someone who has no focused direction*[60]*. It is very dangerous. A person is confused and has no clear focus. If you know the direction of your life you feel good, strong, and have a responsible character*". Sen. Mesebeluu answered:

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[59] *Duch el reng* usually means perseverance, determination, willpower, etc.. *duch* – know how, ability, skill or strong; *reng* – heart, seat of emotions; literally: "strong heart"

[60] In Palauan you say, *kam singd el mong el kam singd el mei* which translates to, "you neither go there nor here". Refers to a person with no clear direction or focus.

"*If we do not maintain our values as Palauans, we become extinct. Being a Palauan, we no longer have an identity and if that happens, we become human beings with no direction. So we must continue the language and continue practicing the culture*."

Min. Rehuher-Marugg also mentioned that youth today should know where they come from at the ages 3 to 14. "*It is those years where they better learn who they are! So they can stand on their feet*." She also told me an idiom that she has not forgotten. "*Telekangel a uchul meng beluu Ngersuul*[61] *"*. This proverb essentially means that persistence and perseverance are strengths that empower people

The *ulsemuul* addressed the notion of empowerment in terms of what should be instilled in the Palauan youth. The question that is critical to Palauan youth today is how to use education to address their identity needs. Joe, in the earlier part of our discussion, addressed how Palau is dependent on the CoFA[62] negotiations. This notion of dependence in Palau does not shape self-sufficiency. Indeed, this way of thinking affects Palauan attitudes of empowerment. Rather than relying on Palau's own strengths, Palau is relying on the monetary aid of the U.S. The challenge for Palau is to stop this reliance. Freire argues that this attitude, the 'culture of silence', was prominent in Latin America in the 1970s. Rather than being encouraged and prepared to know and respond to the existing realities of their world, they were kept submerged in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically out of their hands. Western education played a major role in maintaining this culture of silence (12). Palau is in need of a goal that aims to empower their people to become positive participants in the development of its society.

5.4.2 Pride

When I asked the question about maintaining Palauan values for what purpose, Min. Emesiochl believed that culture must be continued on to maintain identity:

"*We want to be a nation among the world… I went to a conference in Guam and someone had researched in the university the Chamorro way of making fire. They had asked me to bring some fish from Palau so I brought an ice chest full of fish for the*

[61] I would translate it as, Ngersuul remained because they were determined. According to McKnight, he translated it as, "with persistence, the village of Ngersuul was maintained" (McKnight, p. 14: 1968)

[62] The Compact of Free Association with the United States

opening of this fire ceremony that would be done. It showed me how people struggle to understand themselves… and we don't want to be like that."

Min. Rehuher-Marugg also stated how identity is important to maintain. "*If we want to be more colorful and more beautiful in the world, we should maintain our values and culture. Imagine if everybody in the world had the same colors? Wouldn't that be boring?*" To be proud of Palau as a culture and a nation, Palauan knowledge should be the focus. "*I prefer Palauan knowledge and Palauan practices because they work in the context of the place I live in*", said Joe. Min. Rehuher-Marugg also explained the idea of *olengamch*[63] as a term that is not very well-understood in Palau. "*Olengamch* is not just a sexual connotation but more than that. You are on your toes all the time. It also means when you are careful in taking care of yourself, the village, etc." Min. Rehuher-Marugg worried too, if the coming and next generation could continue maintaining their values, their identity. "*Will they have to put together pieces of their culture? Read books to learn about themselves? Is there a trend going on?*"

A challenge for *duch el reng* is to maintain what is Palauan. In this sense, maintaining Palauan identities that include the values and knowledge is something that my participants all agreed upon. Palau should be proud of where they are heading as a people with their values, and not the values of other cultures. Min. Emesiochel addressed how the Chamorro in Guam had to find their traditional ways of making fire to discover their identities. Min. Rehuher-Marugg also discussed the value of diversity in today's global world. *Duch el reng* is a good concept for Palauan youth to understand better. Additionally, Min. Rehuher-Marugg explored the idea of Palauan youth in the future of risking their culture to be 'second-hand knowledge', that is, reading about their own identity in books rather than through practice. In fact, many Pacific island countries are experiencing book-based learning in their education curriculum (Thaman, "Introduction" 15) that will potentially affect learning Palauan knowledge. She observes that this might be an issue in the near future. Her response suggests that Palau is perhaps at a period where the youth are no longer learning first-hand accounts of their personal histories due to schooling.

[63] According to Josephs and McManus, *olengamch* is an attempt to seduce (235). Min. Rehuher-Marugg explains the idea of *olengamch* as a sense of dignity and pride.

5.5 Development:

The last theme that was explored among the *ulsemuul* was the notion of what development means for Palau. This section looks at how my participants perceive the youth today and what should be done to maintain Palauan knowledge. Two aspects of development are discussed: 1) what kind of development is ideal for Palau and 2) the notion of *ungil besud* in the development of Palauans.

5.5.1 Development for what?

Meked explained that everything is so fast today that "*there is a lot of influence from the outside that the pace of change is dramatically different between generations.*" Sen. Kesolei also highlighted that there are two ways of life that are being emphasized today and with a greater force compared to how she grew up. Joe believed that targeting the youth at a young age will contribute to maintaining Palauan values. "*Kids who are still in elementary school and below are those we should look at to continue the culture*." Sen. Kesolei pointed out, "*But, we wish that if we change, we change for the better and accept the premise that we are Palauans, and not Americans. So what do we do*?"

Joe also expressed some of the values that he thought are important that need to be emphasized in Palau today, "*to be able to train young men and women to be independent, self-reliant, creative thinkers, so that when issues and problems arise, they can come up with creative issues of solving them rather than just, 'we need more money to take care of this'*." Min. Rehuher-Marugg also worried how Palau will be when her generation passes on. "*There is a worry where Palau's direction is heading in the future… My grandson won't be able to say he is Yapese or American or whatever else because he's not. So if he's Palauan, we need to make sure that he has the answer to that*."

There is an acknowledgement from my participants about the different cultures engaged in Palau today. When they talked about Palauan culture, the values, and the knowledge, there was a desire for those aspects to be part of the development of Palau. This does not only speak for economic development, but for social development as well. Thaman argues that several Pacific island schools in 1993 were largely Eurocentric in focus: donor/consultant driven, culturally undemocratic with little consideration for students' (and teachers') socio-cultural contexts, gender, and (dis)abilities, and almost no stakeholder participation in their development, that still continues today ("Introduction" 14). Moreover, there is tendency for Palauans to equate development with more money that has resulted in a

dependency on U.S. monetary aid. "South Pacific island countries do depend on developed countries in critically important ways that thwart their own independent development" (Gegeo, Kastom and Bisnis 5). If development in Palau is not focused on the needs of the people, then there is a need to analyze the education system in Palau. My argument, in which Palauan education should develop an educational system that addresses the identity needs of Palauan youth, is a relevant focus that informs the basis of what Palauans want to develop for.

5.5.2 Ungil besud[64]

Joe mentioned earlier self-reliance and survivability as his main concern for development. "*Every design is based on values. And once you identify what the values are, you can identify what the system is*". If it is Palauan knowledge, relationships and perseverance that Palauans value to be part of the design, then they must work to that goal as part of their development. "*It all comes down to, 'what is education for'?*" Joe said. Meked also expressed how people in Palau are struggling today with the money economy and the practice of Palauan custom. "*I think Palauan leaders should define what chelebuul[65] is*". She also recalled when she was in high school and a lecturer asked questions to the class about Palau and its future:

> "*The lecturer asked us about what we thought about Palau and its move to independence in 1994. She asked, 'We are learning all this for what reason? Think about where you fit in, not just as students, but your lives as Palauan people'. It made me think about Palau, and pushed me to study about Palau and our values that we had before democracy.*"

Sen. Kesolei also told me a story at the time she left to get an education;

> "*There was an emphasis that going to school is the answer, to be successful. 'Go to school so we can be ungil besud'. How do we say ungil besud? Western money? To have a good job at the office? To wear good clothes? That was the perception of people then, at what it meant to succeed. So you can come back home and get hired for a good job. But today, it does not carry the same meaning as it was when I grew up. Clothes,*

[64] *Ungil besud* means to live comfortably, to live a good life.

[65] *Chelebuul* is to live a life in poverty. *Chebuul* is to be poor, struggling or unfortunate. Josephs and McManus also describe a second definition of *chebuul* which is to have ashes put on it (38).

money, concrete houses, and cars are common now. You do not need to go to school for these anymore. Circumstances have changed."

Dir. Gordon expressed how she feels about education in Palau today. "*I think our educational aspirations, even though we are going through the motions, do not have any real quality...*" Min. Rehuher-Marugg also reflected, "*How is it going to be after us? I worry about where Palau's path is heading towards.*"

The *ulsemuul* perceive that development ideals in Palau today, are perhaps not in the best interests of Palau anymore. From their responses, there is a basic question that they seem to be pondering: what does a good life mean for Palauans? Gegeo emphasizes that if one takes development to mean simply economic growth, then the line of argumentation that Euro-American epistemology and knowledge offer the ultimate wisdom in bringing development about it is unchallenged (Kastom and Bisnis 7). However, this is not so in Palau and many Pacific island countries. It is then important for Palau to analyze the goal of education for Palau and what it aims to develop. I have already addressed that Palauan identities must be included in development as a result of the social problems that Palau is faced with. The need to integrate Palauan knowledge rigorously as part of securing Palauan identities, I argue, will contribute to the overall development of Palauan society.

This chapter introduces the organizational structure of the chapter that focuses on the perspectives of the *ulsemuul* on Palauan knowledge and how it relates to youth and identity development. Following this, the five different themes that where addressed in the dialogue of my seven participants, is analyzed and discussed.

Results from the data given by my informants reveal that Palauan knowledge should play a crucial role in the development of youth if Palau wants to continue its customs and maintain the culture. The impact of westernization has affected Palauan lifestyle, notions of economic value, as well as affecting Palauan values. The importance of relationships was also addressed. They were integral in the development of people and was emphasized that Palauan social structure is based on the relationships of people. Thaman agrees that the Pacific context values the development of relationships as the epistemic foundation in indigenous cultures ("Introduction" 14). Palauan knowledge should be maintained because many Palauan values are still being practiced. My participants believed that Palauan values are significant ideals that provide guidance and direction that can empower the youth in codes of respect, responsibility, having a place in Palauan society, and are important characteristics

in shaping Palauan identities to be positive, contributing members of society. “Participation is always based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world” (Lave and Wenger 51). Additionally, perseverance or *duch el reng* is an important part of empowering people and to further cultivate Palauan youths’ sense of belonging in a community. Lastly, the notion of development from the *ulsemuul* revealed what the quality of life means for Palau and what it is for.

The next chapter concludes this study. It summarizes the thesis and focuses on how the previous chapters have informed my research questions. It also addresses my final thoughts on the future implications of this study and recommendations.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

In the previous two chapters, the presentation and analysis of data have been reported which were followed by discussions of the overarching themes from the Ulimang youth and the *ulsemuul* participants. Chapter 6 consists of the summary of the study, recommendations for further research, and conclusions. The purpose of the latter sections is to expand upon the concepts that were studied in an effort to provide further understanding of the prospect of how western education is not only not addressing the identity needs of Palauan youth, but also how its impact devalues indigenous Palauan knowledge as a critical part of identity development in Palau. Additionally, this chapter presents suggestions for further research that focuses on the understanding of indigenous knowledge and epistemologies in Palauan education and further studies of identity development that situates the Palauan context in Palauan learning. Finally, the chapter concludes with a critique of education in Palau.

6.1 Summary of the Study

When I first considered studying, I knew I wanted to do research in Palau. As a measure to contribute back to my community, my desire to do research in social theory was due to my experiences growing up in Palau. My interest in this particular study stemmed from the experiences I had resulted from seeing a young family member disrespecting an older member. It was then that I began questioning if youth in Palau were not valuing Palauan knowledge and had no interest in their heritage.

A major social issue in Palau today is how the youth are enacting their lives in Palauan society. Many of the youths are turning to alcohol abuse, stealing, substance abuse, increased suicide, disrespecting elders, and many other social problems that, I argue, are a result of a disempowered identity. The primary objective of this study explores whether the education system currently in place in Palau is a cause for identity disempowerment for Palauan youth. In line with this, a critically important part of this research is to validate that the decrease of Palauan indigenous knowledge, that was once a major learning paradigm in education before colonization, is a contributing factor to the disempowerment affecting Palauan youth and what they experience in their identity development.

There were three main theoretical frameworks that were used to strengthen this study. The foundation of the thesis was employing an indigenous epistemological approach. Several Palauan scholars and my own experiences were drawn upon to explore the nature of Palauan knowledge and its context. Most social science research carried out in Palau is based on foreign perspectives (e.g. Force and Force; Parmentier; Wilson). The aim of this thesis is then, to also build on indigenous approaches as a legitimate perspective of research. Many Palauan scholars and elders informed the basis of Palauan knowledge and epistemology (e.g. Asang; Asanuma; Palau Society of Historians; Ysaol et al.).

A second framework that was used was provided by Freire in which he argues for a transformative pedagogy that aims to liberate people from their disempowerment in society. His work on disenfranchised Latin Americans in Brazil aimed to empower the local people from the oppressive notion of their non-contribution to their society. He argued that the education system that was in Brazil at the time was the reason why the people were dispossessed in their societies. He further critiqued that a contributing factor to the economic, political, and social positions of the low-class citizens of Brazil were a result of the educational situation. The arguments of Lave and Wenger informed the third theoretical approach of my thesis. They emphasize that "legitimate peripheral participation" underlines that learners inevitably participate in communities in different levels; the key is to acknowledge the context and situation in which people learn. They also acknowledge learning in the context of peoples' understanding of their world, and their place in it as a concept that encourages participation in their communities and societies.

Several methodologies were employed in this study, giving its own distinct essence. The use of narratives found in the study is based on my personal experiences throughout my life and my academic journey. Palau as an oral culture extensively uses narratives as a learning paradigm which I chose to utilize in my study. In terms of collecting field data, the methodology I used was an approach that did not necessitate any thought. As a Palauan, the methodology used was not necessarily a selection to choose from. Rather, the concern was cultural appropriateness of how my cultural upbringing informed the approach of collecting data. In effect, the methodology I used in 2009 when I went to Palau was *cheldecheduch*, a phrase that has numerous connotations and can only be defined depending on the context in which it is used in Palau. Methodologically, *cheldecheduch* is a discourse approach that was used with indigenous Palauan protocol that depended on the audience. Overall, this study included 16 participants. Two groups of people were chosen as participants of my study, the

youth of Ulimang village and the *ulsemuul* (Palauan elders or knowledgeable individuals). These people were selected to validate the following research questions:

1) *Does Palauan knowledge still hold value in Palauan society today as part of an educational paradigm?*
2) *Is the tension between western education and Palauan knowledge a contributing factor to identity disempowerment for Palauan youth today?*

The research findings are divided into two chapters in this thesis. The first part of the data was the youth questionnaire developed for the Ulimang youth. I chose the Ulimang youth to participate in this study because they were related to me. Moreover, their experience in the village prior to the Compact Road Project completion in 2009 drove my decision to ask them to participate, as I believed that their experiences were unique from those who live in urban Koror[66]. Nine youth participated in the study with five males and four females between the ages of 13 to 18. The questionnaire contained nine open-ended questions that inquired about the youths' perceptions on Palauan knowledge and its value as an educational paradigm. The data revealed that the youth did indeed value Palauan knowledge as part of their lives and their identities. They also acknowledged the difference between western education in schools and Palauan knowledge outside of the school environment as different bodies of knowledge and distinct from each other. Moreover, they were aware of the impact of change in their knowledge of Palauan culture due to modernization.

The second part of the data is the interviews conducted with the *ulsemuul*. I chose to interview this particular group of Palauans because they had experiences in Palauan education, research, and Palauan knowledge[67]. Moreover, they had a range of participation and experience in Palau in terms of their positions in society as well as their participation in Palauan customs. Seven members of the Palauan community participated that included five females and two males. Two of the participants were younger compared to the rest of the *ulsemuul* who had a depth of experience in Palauan knowledge. The data collected from the *ulsemuul* were divided according to themes that they stressed throughout each interview. They emphasized the value of Palauan knowledge throughout the interviews and how it should be implemented into education paradigms as part of shaping and developing young members of Palauan society. They addressed the fundamental basis of Palauan knowledge

[66] See chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1 for more information

[67] See chapter 3, section 3.2.2.2 for more details

which was relationships, and how relationships inform all aspects of Palauan knowledge such as values, identity, economy, *duch el reng* (perseverance), and development. Moreover, the *ulsemuul* contemplated about what a good life meant for Palauans in Palau today and where Palauan knowledge stands. Conclusively, Palauan youth identities are experiencing a tension due to the impact of modernization, western education, along with learning their Palauan knowledge and epistemology.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The goal of this study was never to find solutions to the educational issues in Palau. Rather, this study aims to acknowledge the social problems found among Palauan youth and to identify the values embedded in Palauan knowledge. By analyzing these, it is then possible to recognize those Palauan values and understand how different bodies of knowledge (western and Palauan) will come into conflict when its values are dynamically diverse. However, I will address some recommendations for further research that, in all probability, contributes to the well-being and development of Palau as a diverse culture among others.

The findings from the *ulsemuul* addressed the concept of relationships in the Palauan context. It was frequently mentioned and thus has convinced me that there is need for further study. My participants revealed how relationships are the most fundamental quality that informs the basis of Palauan social structure in the past as well as today. It has been pointed out in the literature review that western education places high esteem on individual merit[68] in comparison to other Pacific and indigenous cultures that value collectivity. As a result, it is highly recommended that the concept of relationships in Palauan education (and perhaps other cultures) be studied to reveal important characteristics on the reasoning behind conflicting values in differing pedagogies and how it affects people. In addition, a comparative analysis between these two bodies of knowledge might be useful for future reference.

The data collected in this research, in my judgment, was limited for time and participants. In effect, suggestions for further study include more time to conduct research and engage with the participants. Additionally, a suggestion would include more comprehensive interviews with a larger number of Palauan youth, especially those who live

[68] See chapter 2, section 2.2.5

in urban Koror[69], where most social problems such as those previously mentioned are more prominent. They can then reveal how they value Palauan knowledge and if its decline does indeed affect their identity development in profound ways.

In addition to this issue, it is recommended that a larger number of older members of Palauan society be interviewed to provide more depth in the study. Because most of the *ulsemuul* that were interviewed in this study are from a particular stratum (i.e. they have worked with Palauan knowledge in relation to education and research), they would perhaps have certain bodies of knowledge, participation, contribution, and experiences within Palauan society that differ from others. For example, most of my elder participants have experienced travelling overseas more so than others and have experiences with western academia and education. A larger number of elder participants will limit the variables within the aspect of social theory.

6.4 Conclusions

From the experiences that the Ulimang youth and the *ulsemuul* have provided in this study, they clearly distinguish between Palauan values over the values of their colonial predecessors. Conclusively, most Palauans would easily know the differences of these values when living daily and experiencing them. However, very little is done to address how these two dynamic epistemologies often conflict within Palau. As a result, Palauans become assimilated further without critically examining its impact. Freire argues that "the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped" (27). In fact Joe mentioned in our discussion in terms of assimilating into western culture, "*even if you don't believe in it, but just the fact that you are involved in it, overtime, you learn that the system is going to condition you to have certain values.*" Gegeo (Cultural Rupture) emphasizes this thought by using colonial frameworks to critique issues in Palau. The trend that is seen in Palau indicates that people have not thought thoroughly about the subtle changes in Palauan lifestyle that in fact, change how we think about our world. This train of thought then affects younger Palauan generations and the development of their identity.

[69] Former capital of Palau

6.4.1 Palauan knowledge and epistemology

Palau is still experiencing fast-paced change that is influenced by social factors from the outside. The educational paradigm adopted from America and programs such as the EFA's policies are examples of such outside influences[70]. Embedded within western education are the values that underpin its structure. However, this is not the only pedagogy found in Palau. Before the influence of western education, there was already in place, Palauan knowledge and epistemology. These are achieved through human senses, like all cultures, but are theorized in particular circumstances[71].The issues expressed in this study are not unfamiliar in Palau. They are experienced daily as people are always negotiating their identities in relation to their culture, and in the global world.

In addition to these experiences, people are struggling in maintaining Palauan values, and putting into practice a living standard based on western ideals. It is no wonder that older Palauans feel an added burden to make ends meet with economic needs and Palauan customs. The reality is the people are aware of what is happening, but there is little being done to understand why, because many Palauans are concerned with living life day by day. For example, in the story provided by Asanuma with parents ignoring the problem of sexual abuse in families, Palauans are conscious about the social issues present in the islands ("Nobody's Child"), but the social phenomena are not being understood and critiqued. As a result, nobody wants to take responsibility and the youth are learning from these actions. My argument emphasizes that these issues are a result of two epistemologically different bodies of knowledge that are simultaneously being encouraged in Palau, with very few people trying to address the implications of these experiences.

In the past, Palau had its own ontology of their world. They understood their universe in relation to the places that they maintained their relationships with (e.g. the traditional limestone money in the island of Yap in Micronesia was carved from Palau prior to colonization). It is not much different today, although, their understanding of their place in the world has expanded. In effect, it does not make sense to abandon western knowledge because it has become meaningful to Palauan lives. Nor do we abandon Palauan knowledge because it too is an important part of Palauan lives as well. The key then, is how to critique these changes in Palau using a pedagogy that informs Palauans why such things are

[70] See chapter 2, section 2.2.6 for more details

[71] See chapter 2, section 2.2.3 and 2.2.4

happening in Palauan society today. I believe that education in Palau should provide avenues of understanding their circumstances today.

6.4.2 Education in Palau

In this study, I argue that education should embrace a more holistic concept. The notion of formal and informal education has divided other cultures' epistemologies to fall under the informal context of learning. Lave and Wenger have emphasized that schooling and learning have seemed to become too deeply interrelated in western culture in general (40). There should not be a dividing line to how people learn and acquire knowledge, because knowledge itself does not constitute what is knowledge and what is not knowledge. However, from the responses of the Ulimang youth, they have clearly shown that Palauan knowledge is different from what they learn at schooling. This suggests that Palauan and western knowledge are indeed two distinct bodies of knowledge. Although the youth separated these dynamic forms of knowledge, they did not necessarily suggest that learning in general is a separate entity. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo. support this by emphasizing that knowledge construction is achieved through the senses, but the interpretations vary epistemologically across different cultures (How We Know 62).

It is already known that economy underpins western education. A determining factor to achieving a western education is to have monetary resources (e.g. wealth or scholarships). In Palau's past, education was underpinned by relationships. Thus, the determining factor to accessing education is by heritage or contribution. As a member of a particular lineage, it is my right to acquire that knowledge. Learning and knowledge is dictated by whatever form of participation the culture emphasizes[72]. "…cultural heritage gives me the hope that we as a people should rely on our traditions in helping each other as we have done so for thousands of years and not let the weak in our society sink deeper in this time of economic crisis" (Asanuma, "When the Grounds Fall" par. 7). For Palau particularly, perhaps an avenue that can be analyzed thoroughly are the traditional models of *oderuchel*[73] and *cheldebechel*[74] in which the overarching value found in them is the notion of relationships. Both these

[72] See chapter 2, section 2.2.2

[73] See chapter 5, section 5.2.2

[74] See chapter 2, section 2.2.1

paradigms and others can be emphasized as part of Palauan learning and knowledge acquisition.

Education should also inform the development goals in Palauan society and must be further critiqued by Palauan leaders. Sen. Kesolei mentioned that what success meant at the time she pursued an education, does not hold the same meaning in Palau today. The commonality of cars, clothes, and material goods today has affected notions of what the idea of a good life means, which is perhaps no longer the idea of ideal development. In a documentary film about Palau, Noah Idechong stated that in Palau, we are in constant conflict. We want to develop like western societies, but we also want to sustain and maintain our resources over the long term, for the future. The biggest challenge then, is how to find that balance (Islands on the Edge of Time). I argue that if the goal of Palauan development is independence and self-reliance, then seeking more overseas funding would not help.

We as Palauans have put ourselves in a position to believe that western policies will solve our problems. Instead of doing this, we must seek the answers in our own Palauan knowledge and how our ancestors were, in fact, very independent before colonialism. "True independence comes from *dehegemonization*, that is, undoing the already established hegemony…" (Gegeo, Cultural Rupture 493). A place to start in terms of development in Palau is to analyze the philosophical dynamics of Palauan relationships. If relationships in Palau is indeed important foundations of Palauan epistemology, then perhaps a look at Palauan practices must be initiated by both traditional and governmental leaders in Palau to address why we want to develop, for what, and not for whom.

6.4.3 Identity empowerment for Palauan youth

Identity development and empowerment go hand in hand and therefore, there must be a critical examination in how education is defined in Palau and how it shapes young Palauan identities. My argument in this thesis is that if Palau wants to develop strong, empowered youth, the country needs to assess what it is passing on to the next generation in terms of values and consider factors of an ideal Palauan society. A critical examination of the education system in Palau is imperative. "If anything the youth are mostly neglected today and cannot be important…Though it is politically popular to say that our youth are important for our future, police weekend crimes blotter is becoming like the who's who of teenagers bulletin"(Asanuma, "Meringel El Chad" par. 3).

When I initially thought that the Palauan youth were not interested in learning about their Palauan knowledge, it was a theory based on what I saw when I observed the behaviors and attitudes of my own family members. However, it has been shown in many situations in Palau, in which I have pointed out in previous chapters of this thesis, that the youth are undergoing circumstances in which they cannot be blamed entirely for. The social structure in Palau today is just as much a cause for their disempowerment and their negative behaviors. The *ulsemuul* have addressed that Palau needs to be a community again. That can be done if the emphasis of relationships is strengthened and becomes more prominent. In Palau, we must start with the youth and develop a positive identity in which they feel empowered in their lives, to make better and responsible choices and feel like active participants in Palauan society. "Believe it or not but having a sense of self worth is more important than having lots of money. Simply because this defines life values and direction one person or people as a nation know what needs should be pursued. This is necessary for a person, or a nation for that matter, to know what to do" (Asanuma, "Moral Crisis" par. 2). We must provide opportunities in the education of the youth to understand themselves, to understand their histories and their *tekoi er a Belau* as part of empowering their identities. It is clear from the Ulimang youth participants that they value their heritage.

In addition, the Palauan youth must be liberated from this idea of dependency upon the U.S. that has been frequently addressed from the *ulsemuul*. They must learn to trust their own knowledge and profound history that has taken them through millennia prior to westernization. "Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly" (Freire 29). In support of Freire's educational ideals, I emphasize that Palau must provide every opportunity for the youth to seek and yearn for an empowered identity. More importantly, to empower Palauan youth today is to instill them a sense of responsibility for each other, their communities and country. They will then have Palauan values such as *duch el reng* (perseverance) and determination that will encourage them to be full participants and contributors to Palauan society.

For the Palauan youth to feel a sense of worth, they must be encouraged in participation, but not in terms of participation in western criteria because they are not western people themselves. Palauan leaders and role models need to look for avenues in Palau in which the youth can participate and engage with the community. Handing out food at funerals as a participatory approach is simply not enough to engage them today. Because of

modernization, it is not enough for them or their identities. Innovation is needed to find out what the youth can do to participate. Lave and Wenger emphasize that learning also partly implies being able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, and to master new understandings (53). The crucial step then is for Palauan youth to understand their heritage, their culture, and their histories to empower their identities and learn to understand their place with the rest of the global world and where they fit in. Palauan leaders must provide that opportunity to criticize their situation and surroundings in relation to their identities.

The arguments of Freire and Lave and Wenger have argued for a pedagogy that drives its learners to become active participants and contributing members of their communities, cultures, and societies. They believe that education, because of its instrumentation to shape people, is the ultimate tool to empower people. Personally, I have been away from Palau and consequently, have not participated fully in Palauan society. However, this thesis is a reminder of the people that have helped me realize that I am contributing and participating in Palau by writing this story. "Such research is carried out for the good of the whole community and emanates from the community's Indigenous epistemology/ies and methodologies" (Gegeo, Cultural Rupture 492).

Moreover, it is not enough that I write about it. Although this study may exclude other people in the Palauan community (e.g. those that cannot read), my contribution and participation will be firm when I return back to Palau and engage fully with my community. I acknowledge I that have developed my own sense of identity by undertaking this journey and I also acknowledge that I have a responsibility that comes with being a Palauan. The relationships I have with my community have greatly informed this study and have strengthened my argument for a need to look at our own knowledge base to empower Palauan identities today.

ACRONYMS

B.C. – Before Christ e.g. 2900 B.C.

BNM – Belau National Museum

CoFA – Compact of Free Association; agreement between freely associated states and the United States of America (Palau, FSM, and RMI)

CNMI – Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; American territory in northern Micronesia

Dir. – Director

EFA – Education for All

FE – formal education

FSM – Federated States of Micronesia; Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae are the 4 states that make up this federation

GED – General Education Diploma

IE – informal education

Min. – Minister

MOE – Ministry of Education (Palau)

NA – Not available/not applicable

NZ – New Zealand

NZD – New Zealand dollar

NZPSA – New Zealand Post Graduate Study Award

OEK – Olbiil er a Kelulau (House of Whispers) is the Palau national congress

PCC – Palau Community College

ROP – Republic of Palau

RMI – Republic of Marshall Islands

Sen. - Senator

t – translated from Palauan to English

TTPI – Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands; former territory of the American administration prior to separation into Palau, FSM, CNMI, and RMI

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

U.S. – United States of America

WWII – World War Two

PLACE NAMES IN PALAU

Aimeliik – one of the 16 states of Palau

Babeldaob – biggest island and upper region in Palau; literally, upper ocean

Belau – also known as Palau located in western Micronesia

Beliliou – also known as Pelileu where the main battle between the U.S. and Japan took place; one of the 16 states of Palau

Dongosaro – also known as Sonsorol; one of the 16 states of Palau

Eouldaob – lower region in Palau; literally, lower ocean

Hatohobei – also known as Tobi; one of the 16 states of Palau

Irrai – also known as Airai; one of the 16 states of Palau

Melekeok – capital of Palau; one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngaraard – one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngarchelong – one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngardmau – one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngaremlengui – one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngatpang – one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngcheangel – also known as Kayangel; one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngchesar – one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngeaur – also known as Angaur; one of the 16 states of Palau

Ngebuked – village in Ngaraard

Ngermid – village in Koror

Ngerulmud – place name in Melekeok where the capital is located

Ngiwal – one of the 16 states of Palau

Oreor – also known as Koror; former capital of Palau and one of the 16 states

Ulimang – village in Ngaraard; primary location where youth research was conducted

Ulong – part of Koror; place where Captain Henry Wilson and his crew were shipwrecked in 1783

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Questionnaire for youth:

1) **Ng tela rekim?** (What is your age?):
2) **Bem chirsengii el kmo ke:** **Sechal** **Redil** (Please circle your sex: Male Female)
3) **Kau ke omdasu el kmo ke chad er Belau? E ngerang? Ngera bebil er a uldesuem el kmo ngera el chad a rulii el kmo ng chad er Belau?** (Do you identify yourself as a Belau person? Why or why not? What do you as a person from Belau/Ulimang identify yourself as?)
4) **Ngera uldesuem sel momes er kau el ngeasek er Belau ma tekoi er a Belau, klechibelau, me a klebelau?** (What do you, as a younger Belau person, think when you look at local/Belau knowledge, values, and beliefs?)
5) **Omomdasu el kmo, ng klou a belkul a dosuub a tekinged, teletelled, me a siukang er kid er Belau? E ngerang?** (Do you think it is important to learn about Belau values, ways, and beliefs? Why or why not?)
6) **Omomdasu el kmo, ng ungil a bai dosuub a siukang er kid er a** skuul? **E ngerang?** (Do you think schools in Belau should apply this in the education curriculum? Why or why not?)
7) **Omomdasu el kmo ke mesa tial teletael el ngara skuul?** (Do you see it working in your school?)
8) **Ngera bebil ra ikal teletael el om ues er Belau (a blim, a resechelim, a rebebil er kau)? Omomdasu eng ngungil?** (What are some of these methods do you see in Palau (at home, with friends, your relatives)? Do you think it helps?)
9) **Omomdasu el kmo, kid el ngeasek er Belau a locha mesang el kmong mochu remiid a siukang er kid? E ngerang?** (Do you think you that we as younger Belau people are experiencing a loss on Belau values, ways, and beliefs? Why or why not?)

10) **Omomdasu el kmo, ng ngungil a bo dodengei aikal siukang er kid el mor medad el taem? E ngerang?** (Do you think that our culture is worth maintaining to the future? Why or why not?)
11) **Ngarngii a dirrek el bebil ra uldesuem el kirel tial tekoi?** (Do you have any additional thoughts in relation to this?)

A le ngarngii a kerim el kirel tial tekoi, e ng sebechem el lomekedong er ngak er a 488-3012 malechub eng 779-5324.

Appendix 2

Semi-structured interview questions for elders and educators:

1) Ngera belkul a tekoi sel de dul kmo, klechibelau? (*What does it mean when we say, klechibelau?*)
2) Ngera belkul a tekoi sel de dul kmo, klebelau? (*What does it mean when we say, klebelau?*)
3) Ngera bebil ra tekoi el blam ues sel domes er a klechibelau ma klebelau rekid er chelechal taem, a rechad, ma rengeaseak er a beluu? (*What are some examples that you have seen when looking at our klechibelau and klebelau today, among the people, and the youths of Palau?*)
4) Omomdasu el kmo ng ngarngii aikel tekoi er Belau el dirke klou a ututelel ma ikel kuk mla mo diak a ututelel el de omtebechel ere chelechal taem? Ngera kora bebil ra uldesuem? (*Do you think that there are Palauan practices that are still important to maintain and others are not needed today? What are some examples of both?*)
5) Ng kmal betok a rechad el dirrek el omdasu el kmo, "Ng mla mo merek a temel a bebil ra klechibelau rekid. Merko de kuk choit leng mla mo diak a belkul er kid er chelechang leng mla mo ngodech a temel a beluulechad." Ngera uldesuem el kirel sel uldasu? (*So many people also think that, "Some of our Palauan ways, their time is up. Let us just leave them be because it is not important to us anymore because the world is also changing." What do you think of that statement?*)
6) Aleskum kede melemolem el melisiich er a klechibelau re kid, ngera uchul mekede meruul er ngii? (*If maintaining our Palauan ways is a good thing, for what purpose are we maintaining it for?*)
7) Omomdasu el kmo a rengeasek er chelechang a mesa sei? (*Do you think that the younger generation today see what it means?*)
8) Ngera teletael el loruul a remeklou el melemolem el lolsisechakl era rengeasek el kirel a klungiolel a tekoi er a Belau er chelechang? (*What ways and means are the elders and educator doing in teaching the value of Belau knowledge?*)
9) A teletael el melemolem a klaumedengei era rengeasek er a tekoi er Belau eng ngungil merael? (*Is the current situation of their learning and education in Belau knowledge helpful?*)

Appendix 3

Unstructured interview questions for local scholars/researchers:

1) What are the questions you look for in researching Belau knowledge (e.g. what do you want to know or why do you conduct research)?
2) Is there a difference to a Western approach to research and an indigenous/local approach to research?
3) What are some of the reasons Belau scholars conduct research in Belau knowledge? Why do you teach or write about Belau values and beliefs?
4) What ways and means are the older generations doing in teaching the value of Belau knowledge and education?
5) What is the current situation of local/indigenous knowledge in the education and learning among young Belau people?
6) What are the challenges in bringing local/indigenous knowledge to younger generations?

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