Collaborative Marine Governance with Indigenous Nations: The case of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

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Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

- First National Marine Sanctuary in the United States to be nominated by an Indigenous Nation with Indigenous collaborative governance as core part of proposal[1,2]

- Sanctuaries are federally-managed protected areas established through the legislative branch of the government[2]

- Collaborative governance structure to incorporate federally and non-federally recognized tribes and other marine resource users[2]

Indigenous Collaborative Governance

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Ecological Significance
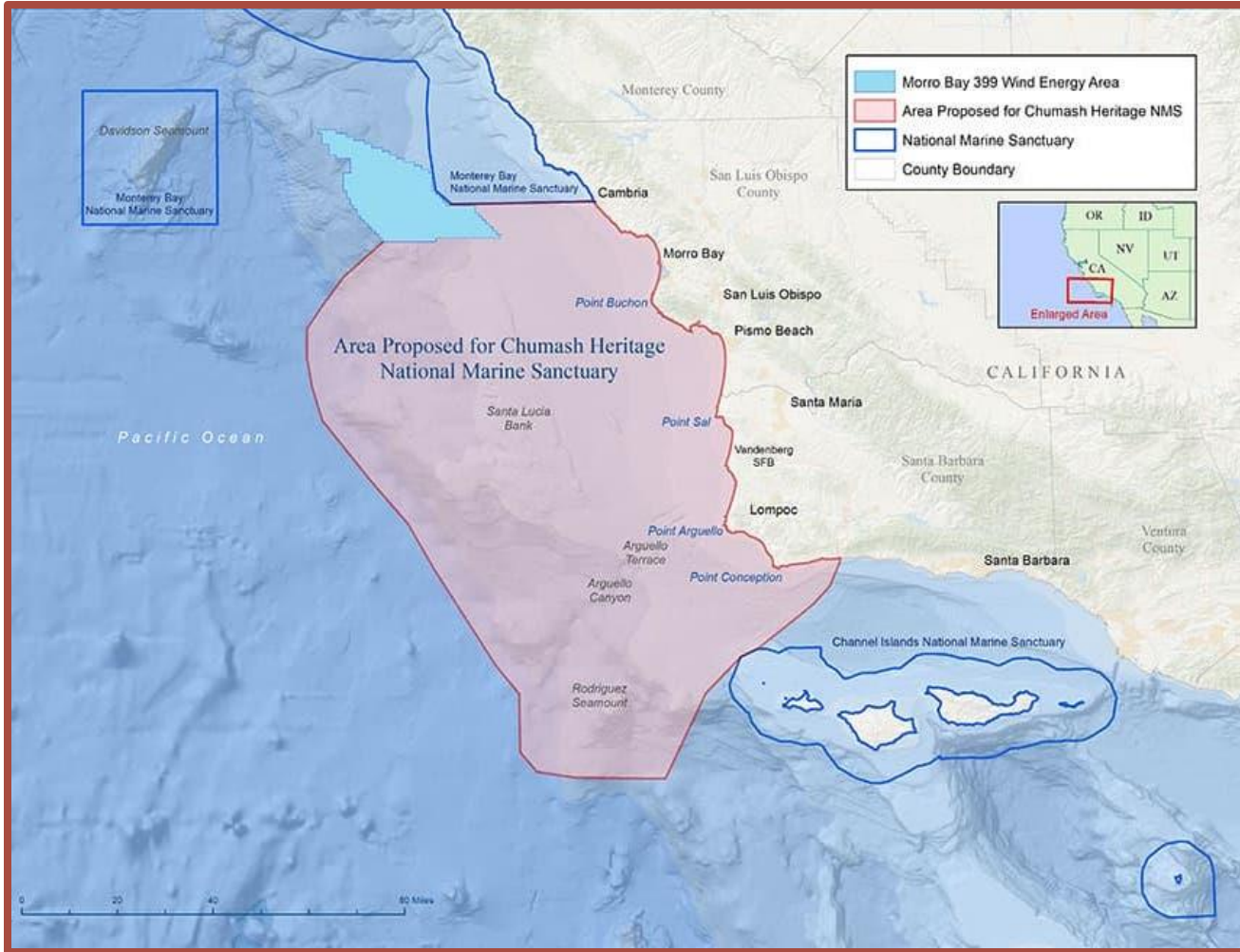
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Socio-Cultural Significance

- Interlinking histories
- Indigenous connections and ceremonies
- Spanish missions
- Agriculture
- US military
- Scientific interests
- Diverse fishing communities
- Federal and state facilitated offshore wind development

Collaborative Governance: Governance Environment

Historical

Genocide, Mission System, Rancherias/Reservations

Historical

Collaboration between activists, NGOS, and Indigenous Nations

Political

Geo-political relationships among Indigenous Nations, State-Federal politics

Environmental

Oceans as commons, spiritual places and resources

Legal

Federal recognition status, State-Federal relationships

Economic

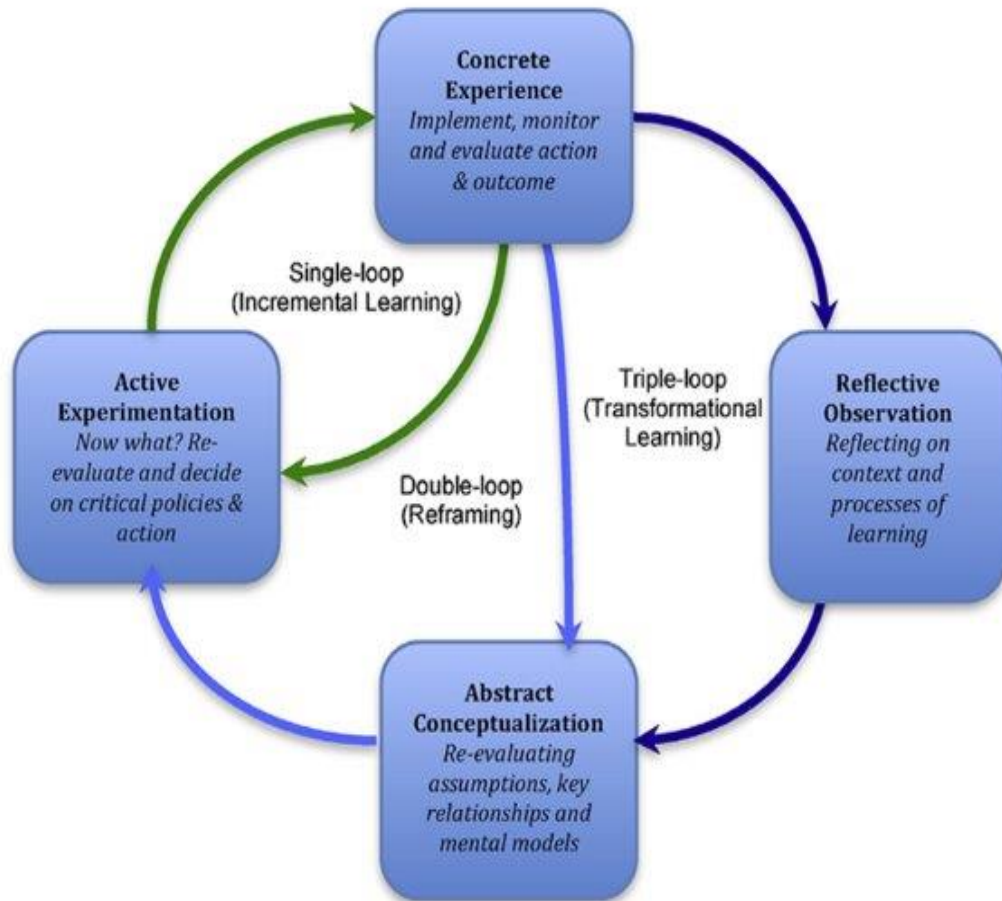Limited tribal capacity, industry shareholders, philanthropy

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Collaborative Governance: Indigenous Nationhood

Approaching Indigenous Nations as self-determining nations rather than one of many stakeholders [5,6,7]

Consent through mutual cultivated respect between Indigenous Nations and nation-states [7,8]

Engaging with Indigenous Nations in relationship-forming processes prior to any formal collaborations on governance schemes [5,6,7]

5. Ban and Frid 2018, 6. Von Der Porten, De Loë and Mcgregor 2016, 7. Reo et al 2017, 8. Von Der Porten and De Loë 2013,

Collaborative Governance: Social Learning

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- **Single-loop learning:** The identification of alternative actions to address specific problems and reach measurable outcomes.[9]

- **Double-loop learning:** When existing norms and underpinning values are challenged, producing fundamental changes in stakeholder behavior.[10]

- **Triple-loop learning:** Challenging the norms, values and paradigms that guide learning and decision-making processes leading to transformation of the governance system.[9,10]

9. Medema, Wals, and Adamowski 2014, 10. Armitage et al 2008

Research Questions

- To what extent is social learning present in the governance process?

- How is social learning influenced by Indigenous initiation of the process?

Methodology and Preliminary Analysis

Fieldwork: Fall 2023-Spring 2025

**Data collection & analysis:**

- **Public comment analysis:** Mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis of public comments submitted by significant governance actors
  - n=249 comments

- **Semi-structured interviews:** Qualitative analysis of interviews of governance actors.
  - n=60 interviews (target)

- **Participant observation:** Qualitative analysis of public meetings related to the governance process
  - n=30 events (target)

Data synthesis: Complex time series analysis of case study[11]

Preliminary Findings: Public comment analysis

Indigenous Nations and Indigenous NGOs exhibit double- and triple-looping learning in the public comments more than non-Indigenous actors.

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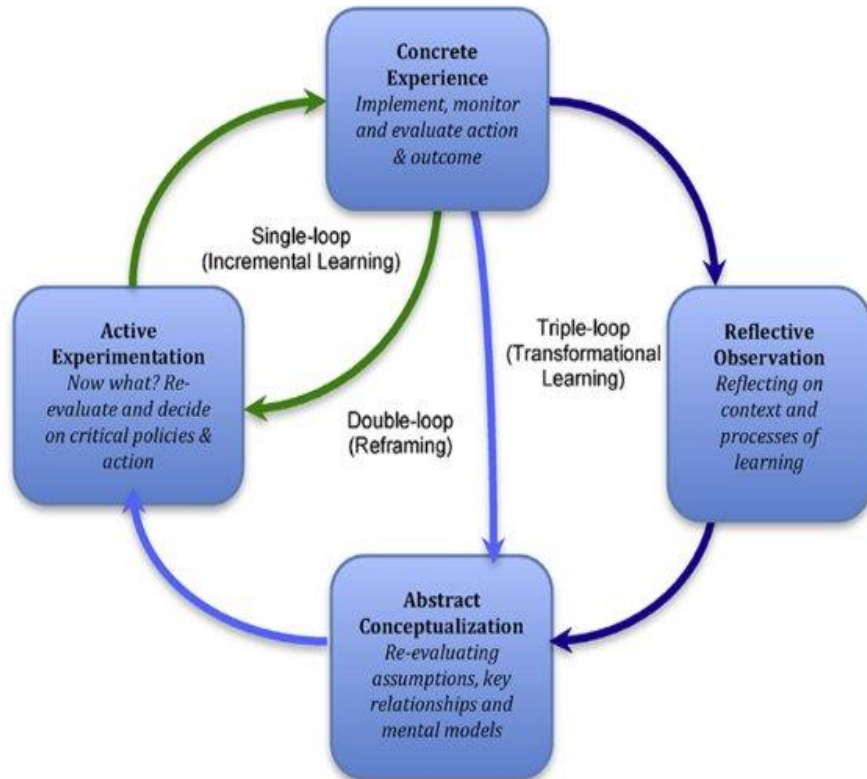
Double-loop learning

"**Equitable collaborative management must be open to all Tribal groups interested in participating.** This can best be accomplished with a Tribal Sanctuary Advisory Council made up of interested Tribal Groups. **NOAA's Tribal collaboration should be facilitated by a qualified Tribal Liaison.**"

Triple-loop learning

"**When acknowledging and recognizing Indigenous cultural presence becomes socially accepted by our Settler-colonial society, it can also become co-opted towards maintaining anti-Indigenous status-quo by appearing to support Indigenous peoples while refusing to treat us as equal partners** in the management of our home waters. We are simply not interested in being...**used as a symbolic figurehead for a non-Indigenous, non-Chumash conservation agenda.**"
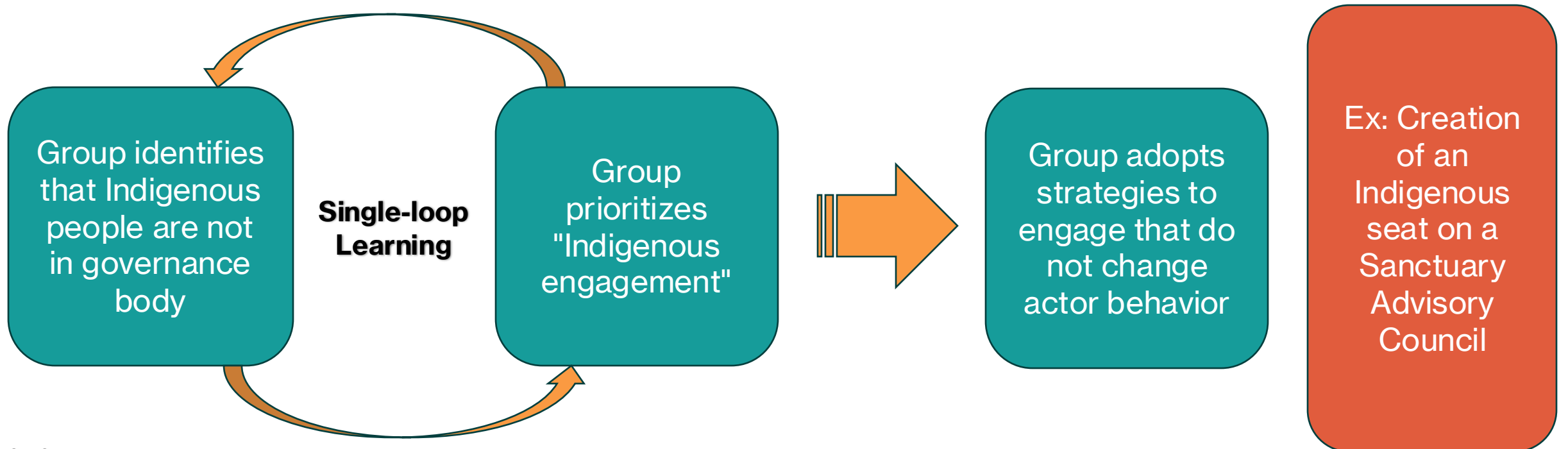
Preliminary Findings: Semi-structured interviews

- Preliminary coding of eight semi-structured interviews

- Tension with the language of "collaborative management" in comparison to "co-management", facilitating possible triple-loop learning

- Either defined as synonymous or as an avenue to dissect the role of power in governance relationships

> **"I have heard people say that co-management is better** because then it's like two parties**. It's like the federal government and the tribes coming to the table,** but then with the federally recognized, it would be **the federally recognized, the federal government NOAA, and then all the tribes and what would that look like?"**

Preliminary Findings: Participant observation

- Preliminary findings based on six participant observation events

- Governance actors, predominantly non-Indigenous and affiliated with federal and state agencies and academic institutions, demonstrate single-loop learning in public meetings

- The "Indigenous Engagement" issue:

Group identifies that Indigenous people are not in governance body

Single-loop Learning

Group prioritizes "Indigenous engagement"

Group adopts strategies to engage that do not change actor behavior

Ex: Creation of an Indigenous seat on a Sanctuary Advisory Council

Next Steps & Guidance

- Continue to collect, analyze, and integrate data

- Synthesize data using time series design[11]

- Share findings with participants

- Create outreach items to share findings with Indigenous Nations and marine resource managers navigating governance issues

- Suggestions on measuring social learning welcome!

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