

Attitudes and Opinions of Navajo Students toward Navajo Language and
Culture Programs in Schools Making AYP and Those Not Making AYP

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and opinions of Navajo students toward the Navajo language and culture programs within the schools they were attending. Although in the final year of the No Child Left Behind, a majority of the 265 schools on and near the Navajo reservation have not been making Adequate Yearly Progress, a concern for the parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and the Navajo Nation. The study entailed conducting a survey at five schools; three of which were not meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind. The purpose of the survey instrument (27 questions) administered to the students at the five schools was to examine their attitudes and opinions as to participating in Navajo language and culture programs, to determine if the programs assisted them in their academic achievements, and to examine whether these programs actually made a difference for schools in their Adequate Yearly Progress requirement. Approximately 87% of 99 Navajo students, 55 boys and 58 girls, ages 9 through 14, Grades 3 through 8, who lived off the reservation in Flagstaff, Arizona and Gallup, New Mexico, and took the survey knew and spoke Navajo, but less fluently and not to a great extent. However, the students endorsed learning Navajo and strongly agreed that the Navajo language and culture should be part of the curriculum. Historically there have been schools such as the Rock Point Community School, Rough Rock Demonstration School, Borrego Pass Community School, and Ramah Community School that have been successful in their implementation of bilingual programs. The question presently facing Navajo educators is what type of programs would be successful within the context of the No Child Left Behind federal

legislation. Can there be replications of successful Navajo language and culture programs into schools that are not making Adequate Yearly Progress?

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents Frank and Elsie Shorthair. Their teachings and guidance set me on a path to many discoveries. Although they have departed into the spirit world, their advices still resonate with great compassion. They advised, “How far you go in life will depend on you, and the commitment to accomplish your goals should be made to yourself and not to anyone else.” It is also dedicated to my spiritual guardians, the late Honorable Hanson Ashley and my surviving sister Flora Ashley and my Uncle Dr. Wilson Aronilth and Aunt Marie Aronilth. These wonderful relatives showed me that all journeys in life require prayers and songs to reach a destination. These people have given me the energy to achieve what some people may have only dreamt about.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Navajo Language and Culture Programs	2
Statement of the Problem	6
Statement of the Purpose	7
Research Questions	8
Significance of the Study	8
Delimitations	9
Definition of Terms	10
Organization of Study	11
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	12
The Navajo Nation	12
Navajo Educational Systems	13
Churches and Federal Boarding Schools	14
Day Schools	17
Public Schools	18
Community Controlled Schools	19
Historical Reflection of Anti-Indian Policies	21

CHAPTER	Page
Bilingual Education Initiatives	29
Navajo Bilingual Education Initiatives	37
National Indian Education Legislations	42
No Child Left Behind	46
The Language Shift	47
3 METHODOLOGY	52
Research Design	52
Site Selection	53
Population and Sample	56
Instrumentation	57
Data Collection Procedures	58
Data Analysis	58
Limitations	59
4 FINDINGS	60
Demographic Characteristics of the Students	60
The Importance of Learning Navajo Language and Culture	61
Students and Parents Speaking Navajo and Knowing the Culture	63
Students' Belief that Navajo Language and Culture Helped Them Learn Better	64
Relationship of Taking Navajo Language and Culture and Self-confidence	66

CHAPTER	Page
Students’ Interest in Navajo Language and Culture by Gender	67
Comparison of the Boys’ and Girls’ Level of Self-Confidence	70
Comparison of Students’ Confidence level from High and Low Graded Schools	74
5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	77
Summary of the Study.....	77
Overview of the Problem	77
Purpose Statement and Research Questions.....	78
Review of the Methodology	79
Summary of Major Findings	79
Discussion	81
Surprises	85
Conclusions	87
Implications for Action	88
Recommendations for Further Research	89
Concluding Remarks	91
REFERENCES	92
 APPENDIX	
A APPROVAL LETTER FROM FLAGSTAFF SCHOOL DISTRICT	97

APPENDIX

Page

B	APPROVAL LETTERS FROM GALLUP, NEW MEXICO	
	SCHOOL DISTRICTS.....	99
C	PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION	102
D	STUDENT SURVEY.....	105
E	IRB APPROVAL	109

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Grade Level and Gender by School Performance	61
2. Question 2.....	62
3. Questions 7, 8, & 9	63
4. Questions 2, 3, 4, & 5	64
5. Questions 8 &9	65
6. Questions 11 and 12	65
7. Questions 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, & 24.....	67
8. Do You Believe That Navajo Language And Culture Are Important?	69
9. Questions 3, 5, 10, 11, & 12.....	69
10. Questions 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, & 24	72
11. Likelihood of Completing Four Years of College	73
12. How Would Use What You Learn in The Navajo Language and Culture Class?	74
13. Comparison of Students' Level of Self-confidence from High- and Low-Graded Schools	76

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Percentages of fourth-grade AI/AN students participating in Native instructional programs	33
2. Percentages of eighth-grade AI/AN students participating in Native instructional programs	34
3. Percentage of AI/AN students by grade, type of school, and school students participating in Native instructional programs	34
4. Percentage of AI/AN students, by type school, grade, and teachers' responses to a questions about the integration of AI/AN culture and history in their curriculum.....	36
5. A higher percentage of BIE schools to public school more sensitive to the Native language and culture than the public schools	37

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I grew up under the care of my parents and grandparents, all of whom have never spent a day of their lives in classroom learning about the White man's education. However, they could forecast the weather just by looking at the shape of the moon, what kind of winter it would be just by looking at the clouds in late fall, and when to start planting seeds for a good crop and a good harvest. This they were able to do because they could read the signs presented by nature and its surroundings. They were very intelligent in their own ways and they shared with me many of our ceremonial stories about the origin of our people, our relationship to nature, and communicating with it.

I first saw the inside of a classroom in the early 50s at Belmont, Arizona, which is located 15 miles west of Flagstaff, Arizona. My father was one of those few Navajos who were employed to load ammunitions on to trains headed for the west or east coast. I do not remember much other than getting vaccinated against some of the diseases that plagued many on the Indian reservation at that time and the nursery songs that we were taught. We eventually moved back to the Navajo reservation, and I remember my second exposure to the White man's educational system at the age of 8. I was herding sheep during the summer of 1956 and a green jeep came to our summer camp. A person working for the federal government came and told my parents that it was the law of the federal government to pick up all school-aged children for enrollment into the nearest Bureau of Indian Affairs School. I remember he brought some alcohol and intoxicated my parents and got them to agree to take me to school. I was taken to a school in Steamboat, Arizona where I was enrolled with several other children.

Navajo Language and Culture Programs

I did not feel comfortable with my new environment, did not like the sleeping arrangement as I was used to sleeping on a sheepskin, and the food was terrible. I spent the next four months in a classroom where I did not understand what the teacher was talking about. I was picked up for a Christmas break and never went back.

The following school year I was enrolled in a different boarding school in Keams Canyon, Arizona. From 1957 to 1964, I spent my winters in that boarding school. During these years, I was made to talk English and was often punished for speaking Navajo by having my mouth washed out with a yellow soap or scrubbing the floors in our dormitory. During my stay at the boarding school, I ran away several times and almost froze on one occasion; each time I was punished. In the classroom, I did not completely understand what the teacher was talking about and was disciplined many times for reasons I did not fully understand. By the time I reached the fourth grade, I slowly began to improve in my understanding of the English language. What I really missed about the winters was spending time with my family and the winter stories told by my parents and grandparents. Although I did not like going to school, my parents always impressed on me the importance of getting an education. They told me that the White people have come and taken our land, our children, and our way of life. They told me that the White people were beginning to dominate our way of life and that I needed to learn their ways if I was to succeed in life. They told me that their life of ranching has been difficult and that I should learn the White man's ways to make my life easier.

It was with this thought resonating in my mind that I pursued my education for the next several years. I graduated from high school in Phoenix, Arizona, got my

Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Brigham Young University, and my Master of Educational Administration from Pennsylvania State University. I taught for several years in a public and a BIA school setting. Although I wanted to seek an administrative position in one of the schools on the reservation, I was persuaded to seek a Council Delegate position from my home chapters of Jeddito and Low Mountain.

For the next several years, I served on the Navajo Nation Council and was appointed as the Chairman of the Education Committee. As the Chairman of the Committee, I was instrumental in the passage of the Navajo Education Law that brought seven different education entities (public schools of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah; Bureau of Indian Affairs; contracted schools; mission schools, and the Navajo Nation Head Start Program) together. This gave them the opportunity to cooperate in addressing the development of an accountable education system for our Navajo students. One of our main areas of concentration was the implementation of Navajo language and culture into the curriculum.

The schools, however, did not fully follow our directive of implementing the language and culture into their curriculum. There were various reasons why this did not materialize. The departments of education of the three states made it specifically clear that if we wanted to incorporate Navajo language and culture the Navajo Nation would have to fund the initiative. Consequently, the funding of this initiative became unreachable. The other reason was the absence of parental support for the initiative. In my communication with many of the parents who preferred to teach their children only the English language have often stated that they did not want their children suffering the way that they did by not knowing how to speak English. Thus, many of these children

have grown up today without any knowledge of the Navajo language and culture. They not only are unable to relate to many of our elders who cannot speak English, but they also miss out on many of our traditional stories and ceremonies. There is also the unfortunate consequence that some of the young people have not been successful enough to fit comfortably in the dominant society, thus having to return to the Navajo reservation. These young people have not been able to fit into the Navajo society or the White man's society, thus becoming marginal Navajos. Marginal meaning they cannot successfully exhibit behaviors to make them fit it either cultures.

The Navajo people realize the importance of language and culture maintenance. They believe that the preservation of our language and culture is important for the survival of our people. My mother and father told me that our elders warned us of a cataclysmic event that would follow if we ever reach a time when we all spoke just one language (*nilei saad ala 'i sili 'ji hats 'iis nihonit 'i*). I have often thought about what they meant by that. Will the world end and will a new civilization start? The more I thought about this and my experiences as a teacher and practitioner of the traditional ways of our people, I began to understand what they might have meant.

Our elders believed that we were given traditional ceremonies to communicate with the Holy People (*Diyin Dine 'ah*) and our environment. They told us stories about how the *nihookaa 'altse hazli 'i* (the first earth people) came into this world. They told of how the *Diyin Dine 'ah* were created, how they came through three worlds before coming into the Glittering World, and how certain ceremonies were created. In the Glittering World other ceremonies, prayers, songs, and deities were also brought into the world. These were all instrumental in the formation of a way of life and the preparation for the

coming of the *nihookaa'altse hazli'i*. After many years of peaceful coexistence, the deities went west to seek out the advices from their mother, the Changing Woman. After counseling them and creating the four sacred clans, they journeyed back to the four sacred mountains to give guidance to the coming of the First Earth People. At or near the sacred mountain Dook'o'oosliid, a Beauty Way ceremony was performed, and the language of the *Diyin Dine'ah* was given to the four clans (*Todich'iinii*, *Kiya'aanii*, *Totsonii*, and *Honaghaahnii*), who were the four original clans of the Navajo people.

Our elders believed that we were given our language to maintain communication with the *Diyin Dine'ah* and our natural environment. We were taught that they are all related to us. As an example, the earth is our mother, the sun and sky are our fathers, and the *Diyin Dineah*, whom we address as our grandparents, are all instrumental in putting us in touch with the animals, the plant people, the bird people, and the water people. In time of sickness, we use our traditional ceremonies and our language to seek restoration of our physical, mental, and spiritual health from the *Diyin Dine'ah* and the Great Spirit. With the diminishing use of the Navajo language among our youth, they can no longer recite many of the traditional prayers needed to restore their health and maintain balance and harmony in their lives. At the creation of the four clans, our mother, the White Shell Woman, told us to never forget our language and our ceremonial ways. If we did, we would be afflicted by the many sicknesses that will eventual come among us. I believe this has begun to happen to many of our people who no longer know the Navajo language and do not continue to practice the traditional ceremonies given to us by the *Diyin Dineah*. Many Native American tribes share similar beliefs. It is the land, the language,

and the culture that makes them unique. The tie that they have with the land, their language, and their culture is what constitutes their future.

Statement of the Problem

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2001, schools on and near the Navajo reservation have been struggling with its requirement of making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of a 10% increase proficiency rate per year. Of the 248 schools that are required to abide by the NCLB, 170 are not making AYP, others are designated as restructuring, and a few have retroceded back to their original status. The schools are expected to achieve AYP in

- testing 95% of all students and those designated groups enrolled in their school,
- meeting the 93% attendance rate for elementary and middle schools,
- meeting the 90% graduation rate for high school, and
- meeting the performance benchmark in math and reading /language arts for all students and each subgroup, or make sufficient progress towards reaching the benchmark (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

As of 2012, the states of Arizona and New Mexico changed their accountability assessment from AYP to a school grading system of A-F. Many of the schools with enrolled Navajo students are not performing well academically; thus, the parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and the Navajo Nation are concerned about the quality of education that is being provided for their children. In an attempt to address this problem, the schools are exploring different types of alternative pedagogical approaches to remedy this hindrance. Some of these approaches are the Sheltered English

Immersion (SEI) program, Dual Language (DI) bilingual education, and a Full Immersion (FI) bilingual education program.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain data to better understand the students' attitude and opinion towards Navajo language and culture. The assumption is that Navajo students would be more likely to succeed academically if taught Navajo language and culture. However, it appears that some schools that have Navajo language and culture programs are not as successful. By examining the attitudes and opinions of students, an assessment on the role of the bilingual-bicultural programs in the five schools was made. The assessment examined the students' interest in the Navajo language and culture programs and its relationship to their school achievements. The confidence level of the boys and girls were also examined to determine which gender had a higher self-confidence level. In addition, the study examined the confidence level of students from the low and high performing schools to determine if there were any differences.

This was helpful in understanding the differences in the type of Navajo language and culture programs offered in each school. The results assisted in understanding how students living off the Navajo reservation viewed the preservation of their language and culture and how it assisted them in their schoolwork. This was useful in understanding the role of Navajo language and culture in schools off the Navajo reservation and how it helped students attain educational proficiency.

Research Questions

Below are questions that guided the research to examine the type of programs being implemented in five schools adjacent to the Navajo Nation: two that have been

making AYP for the last few years and three that have not been successfully passing AYP in that same time period (Office of Educational Research and Statistics, 2010a, *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Summary, 2010*, 2010). The AYP designation was in effect up until 2012 for both states, but the New Mexico and Arizona state legislators requested a waiver and they both enacted legislations to introduce the A-F school grading model.

1. To what extent do students believe learning the Navajo language and culture are important?
2. To what extent do the students and parents speak the Navajo language and know the Navajo culture?
3. Do students believe that the Navajo language and culture program helps them learn better in their other classes?
4. Is there a relationship between students taking Navajo language and culture and their self-confidence?
5. Does students' interest in Navajo language and culture vary by their gender?
6. Do self-confidence levels vary between boys and girls?
7. Do self-confidence levels vary between high-graded and low-graded schools?

Significance of the Study

The Navajo Nation has been interested in the incorporation of Navajo language and culture programs into the schools serving the Navajo students since the early 1970s. This was strongly stated in the enactment of the Navajo Nation Education Policy of 1984, which mandated that schools operating on and near the Navajo reservation would implement Navajo language and culture into their school curriculum. Although some of

the schools have implemented language and culture programs, they are far from having a significant impact on the overall academic performance of the students. This study was designed to achieve two purposes: (a) thoroughly examine the role of Navajo language and culture programs offered at the designated schools and (b) to determine the impact on the Navajo students enrolled in these programs. More importantly, the survey provided data on personal attitudes and opinions of the students as it related to the Navajo language and culture program and its contribution to their learning experiences. The literature review also allowed for an examination of the different types of literature on bilingual education programs.

Delimitations

The study examined only schools that have Navajo Language and Culture programs that were located off the Navajo Reservation in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Gallup, New Mexico. These schools were divided into those receiving a grade of C or better (Arizona) and those making a grade of D or F (New Mexico). At the onset of the study, the schools were using the AYP as a means of measuring the success of the school in meeting the requirements under the No Child Left Behind federal legislation act. However, this was changed since both Arizona and Mexico were given authorization by the United State Department of Education and their respective state legislators to change to a grading system. Thus, the change of using the grading system of A-F was used throughout the study. The study only chose to work with students living off the Navajo reservation in nearby border towns of Gallup, New Mexico, and Flagstaff, Arizona.

Definition of Terms

1. *Languages*: means of communication for the full range of human experiences and are critical to the survival of cultural and political integrity of any people.
2. *Native American language*: means the historical, traditional languages spoken by Native Americans.
3. *English language learners*: students who have not attained sufficient English to succeed academically in an English-only classroom setting.
4. *Language shift*: refers to the process whereby an entire speech community of a language shifts to speaking another language.
5. *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*: refers to a test-driven indicator of school performance under the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
6. *No Child Left Behind*: refers to a United State Act of Congress that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and supported standard-based education reform based on the belief that setting high standards can improve individual outcomes in education.
7. *Accommodation schools*: public schools established in the early 1950s to accommodate the more acculturated Navajo students in Navajo communities where there were not enough Anglo students.
8. *Progressive Education*: refers to alternative method of educating the youth based on learning by doing and incorporating the local pedagogical methods.
9. *Bilingual Education*: refers to the use of two languages in an instructional setting.
10. *High-graded schools*: schools that have been given a grade of C or better by the State Department of Education.

11. Low-graded schools: schools that have been given a grade of D or lower by the State Department of Education.
12. *Navajo language*: the language spoken by the Navajo people and is a member of the Athabaskan language family.
13. *Holy People*: refers to the ceremonial deities who are the guardians of the traditional Navajo way of life.

Organization of Study

This study consists of five chapters that entailed a review of the Navajo language and culture programs and the attitudes and perceptions of Navajo students. Chapter 1 outlines an introduction, background, and purpose of this study. Chapter 2 consists of a review of literatures on the parameters of Native American language and culture erosion and policies related to its preservation. Chapter 3 concentrates on the methodology employed in studying the problem at hand and the process used to analyze the data. Chapter 4 presents the data reflecting the survey gathered on the Navajo language and culture and the students' thoughts. The final chapter depicts an interpretative portrayal of the current stages of Navajo language and culture loss and possible initiatives for its preservation, its role in an academic setting, and recommendations for further studies regarding the incorporation of methods for preventing total loss of the Navajo language and culture among the youths.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Navajo Nation

The Navajo Reservation is composed of 25,000 square miles and situated in the four corners area (New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado) in the southwestern part of the United States. The reservation was originally set aside under the Treaty of 1868 between the Navajo people and the federal government. The Navajo people returned to this land from Bosque Redondo (Ft. Sumner) after their four-year incarceration. The reservation has expanded over the years through Executive Orders enacted by the United States government. The Navajo people have also experience a growth in its population from approximately 4,000 that survived the four-year captivity to an approximate population of 225,305 as reported by the 2000 Census Report. The number of Navajos living off the Navajo reservation has been estimated at 76,322 and a total of 148,983 are still living on the reservation (Choudhary, 2010).

The economic profile of the Navajo people according to the 2009-2010 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the Navajo Nation, prepared by the Division of Economic Development, does not paint a healthy picture. In 2009, the report stated that the unemployment rate on the Navajo reservation was at 50.52% and the median household income level was \$24,354 (Choudhary, 2010). This estimate varies among the 110 Navajo Nation Chapters that are scattered throughout the Navajo reservation. The seven Navajo Chapter growth centers are progressing and developing more when compared to other smaller growth centers or chapters. These rapidly growing communities or major growth centers (Ft. Defiance, St. Michaels, Crownpoint, Tuba

City, Kayenta, Chinle, and Shiprock) are more progressive due to their designations as BIA agency Offices. Their designations are because the Indian Health Services have established hospitals, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has set up their agency offices; public schools of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah started their schools; and the Navajo Nation has established many programs and services to address the needs of its people. There were many other businesses, such as gas stations, restaurants, convenient stores, and other business outlets that were established; however, this has not been the case with the smaller Chapters that were not growing because they are isolated and away from major highways, having only a limited number of businesses and governmental offices and programs operating in the communities.

Navajo Educational Systems

There are 260 schools on and near the Navajo Indian reservation educating approximately 98,281 students. About 67% are Native Americans with the vast majority being Navajo. These schools are classified by the various entities that are involved in the provision of education to our children: 178 public schools, 35 Bureau of Indian Education schools, 3 contracted, 9 charter schools, 24 grant schools, and 12 private schools (Galvin, Hopkins, & White, 2005). These schools have operated under their own perspective policies and procedures independent of one another. Along with this operative process, there is a lack of sharing of test results and other information needed to assess the status of each school. This information is important to determine the overall operation of the schools and to pinpoint areas of deficiencies so that assistance can be provided. This is especially important under the requirement of the No Child Left Behind legislation implemented by Congress in 2001.

The No Child Left Behind legislation requires that schools nationwide must make a 10% proficiency improvement each year and must attain a 100% proficiency status by 2013-2014. However, many schools on and near the Navajo Indian Reservation have not be able to attain this requirement. Looking at all of the 260 schools on and near the Navajo reservation, 170 or 68.54% did not make AYP for 2009 -2010, and this has become a major concern for the parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, and the Navajo Nation (Office of Educational Research and Statistics, 2010b). The Navajo Nation has taken a position of exploring the possible reasons as to why this may be happening.

Churches and Federal Boarding Schools

When the Treaty of 1868 was entered into between the Navajo people and the federal government, certain conditions were stipulated for the return of the Navajo people to their homeland. Among the most important assurance relating to the future of the Navajo people was "a school-house and chapel, so soon as a sufficient number of children can be induced to attend school, which shall not cost to exceed five thousand dollars" (*Treaty Between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribes of Indians, 1868, n.d.*). The American government continued its policy of determining how the Indians should be treated. The continued expansion to the western states saw an influx of missionaries sent out to Christianize the Indian people. The Navajo people were affected as all Native Americans were who were conquered by the Euro-Americans. The responsibility of the Bureau of Indian Affairs was to continue dealing with the Navajo people especially as it related to executing the provision stipulated in the Treaty of 1868: education of the Navajo children. To implement this stipulation, the federal government

established a boarding school, managed by missionaries, in Fort Defiance. This set the parameters for the education of Navajo children for the next 140 years. The early aim of education was to turn the Navajo people as well as other Indian tribes into farmers and eventually acculturate them into mainstream White American society. The church groups were the first to establish schools in some of the communities on the Navajo Reservation. During the late 19th century, the federal government contracted with many church groups to go to the Indian reservations to provide schooling. One such group was the Presbyterians, whose Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church sent Reverend James Roberts and his wife to Fort Defiance to establish a school for the Navajo in July 1869 (Iverson, 1981). They were the first to come to Navajo country under the Division of Indian Country of the Grant Administration. They set up a church, school and a hospital in Ganado, Arizona and eventually trained many Navajos who later became influential leaders of the Navajo people. Several years later the St. Michael's Catholic Mission School was established in St. Michael, Arizona. The Franciscans also educated many Navajos who also became prominent leaders among the Navajo people. Interestingly they were the first mission school to incorporate Navajo language and culture into their curriculum (Iverson, 1981). Other schools that followed were the Navajo Methodist Mission School at Farmington and Gallup, New Mexico, Christian Reformed Church in Rehoboth, and other church-affiliated schools located on different parts of the Navajo Reservation. The federal government historically subsidized many of these schools, but due to the mounting pressure toward the "separation of church and state," the federal government ceased all appropriation after 1897 (Thompson, 1975).

As part of the obligation set out in the Treaty of 1868 to provide a school house and a teacher for every 30 Navajo students, the federal government built several boarding schools (Young, 1978): Fort Defiance (1883), Tuba City (1901), Shiprock (1903), Tohatchi (1904), Leupp (1909), Crownpoint (1909), Chinle (1910), Toadlena (1913), and Fort Wingate (1925) The Navajo parents and leaders who did not believe that their children should be taken away at such an early age slowly accepted these federally operated boarding schools. At first, it was easier to recruit students because many of the families lived around Ft. Defiance and because of the distribution of food and other commodities, but as more families acquired livestock they moved away in search of better pasture.

There were many other boarding schools established to accommodate Indian students in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. One such school was Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania where three Navajo students attended. The two children who died were the children of Chief Manuelito. Chief Manuelito, who suffered this loss and who believed in the provision of sending his children to attain a White man's education, was one of the signers of the Treaty of 1868. Another boarding school was established in Grand Junction, Colorado and recruited Navajo students as well as other students from the southwest. Many of the parents who were apprehensive of the school refused to enroll their children. For some who did, they enrolled their youngest child who could not help with tasks at home. Regardless of the opposition to assimilation, there were Navajo leaders like J.C. Morgan who believed that total assimilation was the future of the Navajo people. The Navajo-Hopi Rehabilitation Act, signed into law on April 19, 1950, recognized education as an important component to be included in the Navajo Tribe's

planning process. Included in this act was the tribal government's authority to lease restricted tribal lands for public, religious, educational, or business purposes, which became important in the leasing of lands to educational organizations coming onto the reservation to establish schools (Young, 1978).

Day Schools

The availability of federal schools and church-affiliated schools as the only two options concerned many of the parents with respect to having their children leave home at an early age and indoctrinated into a foreign religious establishment. The Meriam Report of 1928 did an extensive study on the conditions of Indian education throughout the country, which reported many inferiorities of the educational system. To minimize the inadequacy, a recommendation was made for the construction of day schools to be made an integral part of the early educational programs for the young children. The report (Meriam, 1928) stated that the child should be close to his/her family because the parents and the home environment (the family) are the major influences as to the early educational development of a child.

A direct result of the Meriam Report (1928) was the proliferation of day schools on the Navajo reservation. Dr. Carson Ryan, one of the authors of the report, stated that "the chief advantage of a day school system for Indians is that it leaves the child in his home environment where he belongs" (Thompson, 1975, p. 47). This statement compliments what the Navajo parents and leaders have advocated for many years. From 1930 to 1940, 50 day schools were constructed in areas identified based on adequate water supply, population density, and road conditions. Many of these schools were built by local people and reflected the culture and the natural surrounding as much as possible.

The education curriculum reflected the progressive education concept that was the pedagogical approach embraced by Commissioner Collier and the country at that period of-time. With the teachers following this new concept of the Commissioner, they eventually bridged a form of respect and cooperation with the community.

Public Schools

The establishment of the federal government boarding schools, community day schools, and church-affiliated schools brought many non-Navajo teachers into the communities. These teachers brought their families and there became a need for the education of these children. The non-Navajo children could not attend federal schools so accommodation schools were instituted for their education. In communities where there were not enough non-Navajo students, provisions were made for the enrollment of more acculturated Navajo students. This created a path for the enrollment of Navajo students into a school other than the federal and church-affiliated schools. The noticeable result was that the children enrolled in accommodation schools were moving much faster through the elementary school and spoke better English than their counterparts who attended federal schools (Thompson, 1975). This assessment got the parents interested in the public schools and began to pressure for the enrollment of their children.

The Navajo students residing in school districts on the periphery of the reservation began enrolling in public schools. The non-Indian population became concerned with the increasing enrollment of Navajo children in the public schools due to the lack of tax dollars to cover their education costs, the involvement of the Navajo in the educational system, and possible exposure of their children to tuberculosis and trachoma, which was on the rampage at many of the boarding schools. Despite these obstacles, the

funding concern was covered by the Johnson-O'Malley Act that provided funds for the education costs of students living on non-taxable Indian lands (Iverson, 1981). As more and more Navajo parents became convinced of the success of the public school system and the increased enrollment of Navajo children, there became an increased demand for public schools on the Navajo reservation.

Initially, the demand was met with the establishment of public school facilities in Fort Defiance and Ganado, Arizona. However, the construction of other facilities came to a standstill when the Arizona state statute was interpreted to say that the reservation land was not individually owned but was held in trust by the federal government (Thompson, 1975). With the reservation land being held in trust by the federal government, it did not meet the requirement that the property owner's approval was necessary before school facility construction could commence. In time, this obstacle was also overcome with a change in the Arizona statute and the construction of public school facilities continued in several communities on the Navajo reservation. It is interesting to note that the federal legislations (Public Law 815 & Public Law 874) that provided the impetus for school facility construction and school operation were originally enacted to ease the financial burden of school districts educating children of parents who were living on and working at federal installations related to military efforts. After the changes in the Arizona state statutes that slowed the construction of day schools, there were many other schools built.

Community Controlled Schools

Other legislative changes that positively impacted the Navajo education system was the passage of P. L. 93-638 (The Indian Self-Determination and Education

Assistance Act of 1972). This congressional law has been cited as the most progressive law as relating to the opportunities that determined what would be the future of the Indian people. Prior to this law, the federal government had decided on all administrative matters relating to the operation of the schools and many other activities relating to Indian matters. The thought has always been paternalistic, and policies were developed and implemented with the belief that it would help the Indians. Surprisingly, there were certain things that the Navajo people did that portrayed their abilities to conceptualize what would be important for their survival. Thinking about the future of their children and the survival of Navajo culture, many Navajo educational leaders contracted for the operation of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

The continuous growth and neglect of the Navajo language and culture in many of the boarding schools, public schools, and the church-affiliated schools, concerned many of the Navajo leaders. These were probably the thoughts of the founders of Rough Rock Demonstration School when they opened the doors to the integration of western education and Navajo language and cultural teachings. With the funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Office of Economic Opportunity, Rough Rock Demonstration School became the first contract school with an all-Navajo board membership who incorporated Navajo language and culture programs into the school curriculum. Raymond Nakai stated in his address to the community that “Rough Rock Demonstration School is the nation’s most unique and exciting experiment in the field of Indian education” (Reyhner, 2004, p. 260). He further commented that he was thrilled to witness the participation of the parents in all aspects of the school and its program. Over the next several years, other community-controlled schools were established throughout the

Navajo Reservation. The preservation of the Navajo way of life has always been paramount in the minds of our elders and have constantly reminded us that this is the path we must follow.

This reminds me of the traditional ceremonial story of the creation of the four clans by the White Shell Woman. At the creation of the four original clans (*Todich'iiinii*, *Totsohnii*, *Kiya'aanii*, and *Honaghaahnii*), White Shell Woman expressed her concern about the future of her children and their future generation when she told them:

I will give you five medicine bundles that contain spiritual elements that I want you to carry and preserve. The first medicine bundle contains the spiritual element of the Dine language. She told them to never forget their Dine language because that is what makes them unique and they can always communicate with the Holy People and their surroundings. The second medicine bundle contains the traditional ceremonies created by the Holy People. She told them to never lose these ceremonies and to continue to use them so they will not be affected by unknown sicknesses. The third medicine bundle was the corn and natural food. She said always eat corn and natural food to ensure a healthy life. If you abandon the use of the natural food and start using foreign foods, diseases and other illnesses will inflict you. The fourth medicine bundle was the use of the natural water. She told them not to substitute the water with other forms of liquid. If they do, it will affect their respiratory system. The fifth bundle contained the spiritual element of traditional clothing of the holy people. She told them to keep these traditional clothing and they will never experience poverty. She told them to take care of these medicine bundles and impress upon their children the importance of passing on these teachings to the future generations. (Aronilth, personal interview)

Historical Reflection of Anti-Indian Policies

There are many indigenous people of this country who have lost their language and culture. At the time of the coming of the Western European people, there were approximately 300 different cultures and 200 different languages spoken (Nabokov & Deloria, 2000). Throughout the years many of these Indian tribes lost their language and culture. The loss of language can be credited to the policy of the different countries that moved onto the Western Hemisphere. The Spanish brought their language and religion

into what is now Mexico and moved into the current states of California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The first prohibition on native language and culture in the southwest was perhaps the enactment of Spanish law in 1520 (Stewart, 1908). Denial of culture and language was a repeated practice followed by other invaders in the eastern and northern part of the country. Each of these implemented their own belief system and language to be learned by the indigenous people of this country. After 340 years of conflict, the newly formed United States of America won out and eventually spread its influence from coast to coast and north to present-day Canada and south to the Mexican border.

The early educational system of the Native American people was fashioned according to their immediate surrounding (the land and people), the tradition, and the customs honored by their tribes and their relationship with other tribes. The youth were taught to hunt and live off the land. The western expansion of the new country and the removal of Indian people to the reservation lands that no one wanted, the Indian people were forced to accept the educational system of the Euro-Americans. The guiding emphasis espoused by Captain Richard Pratt to “kill the savage and save the Indian” was followed. The transformation of old military installations and forts into boarding schools became the less expensive means of eradicating the language and cultural ways of Native people. During this era, many religious missions were funded by the Department of War to carry out the initiatives over the objection of parents and leaders. It was also during this early period of the Indian and White men’s relationships that many treaties were entered into to ensure funding for the education of the Native children in exchange for land and peaceful coexistence with White settlers.

The continued expansion from the east coast to the west coast caused many Indian tribes to move onto reservations designated by the federal government. The greatest factor that undermined and eroded the Native people's language and culture was perhaps the enactment of federal policies. The Indian Removal Act and the Dawes Act or the General Allotment Act of 1887 were the impetus for other legislations. The latter act stipulated that the Native American Indians be allotted 160 acres of land for purposes of becoming farmers and learning how to be productive caretakers and thus eventually assimilate into mainstreamed society. This initiative did not work because many of the Indian tribes were not farmers, but hunters. The lands that they were given, in many cases, were not conducive for farming because of poor soil conditions; thus, when they became discouraged by unsuccessful farming efforts they usually leased their land and returned to camp life (Berthrong, 1978).

The General Allotment Act or the Dawes Act of 1887 was just the beginning of the erosion of the Indian way of life. The hidden agenda of the act was to abrogate the Indian tribal organization, to abolish the reservation system, and to place the Indian on an equal footing with other citizens of the country (Tyler, 1973). The strength of the Indian people has always been the multi-interconnectedness that they had with members of their own tribe as well as other tribes. It was not solely an individual effort to educate their children, but the efforts of the whole tribe or community. The educational system of many tribes was predicated on the survival of an individual out in the wilderness and not what was required to function as an individual Indian in an environment that was foreign. One of the central themes of this movement was to eventually replace the Indian culture with White civilization. This meant assimilating the Native people into White culture.

The Burke Act of 1906 took a step further toward total assimilation by declaring that the 160-acre allotment given under the Dawes Act of 1887 to individuals could be disposed of in any way he saw fit, thus eventually becoming landless and moving into White communities. The act provided the means for land-grabbers, business enterprises, and politicians to attain land held by individual families and Indian tribes. This forced many tribal members who sold their land to move into White communities without proper preparation of assimilating into the White culture. Without the close knitted relationships, the children were left without guidance and opportunities to learn their language and culture. The education of Native children was closely associated with the land since the stories handed down throughout the generations were about the land that was familiar to them. The knowledge of the plants, animals, and survival was also tied in with the land that was familiar to them. The relocation to lands and societies foreign to them was a complete disassociation from an educational system that worked for centuries. Over the next several decades, numerous Indian policies were enacted to address the many problems confronting Indian nations. The lingering Indian problems and the ineffectiveness of the Indian policies made room for alternative means.

The environment created by many of the Indian policies, especially the Dawes Act, were detrimental to the Indian people. They were moved into an environment that was not familiar to them and undermined everything that they had known before they were forced from their land. In the midst of this devastating new way of life, many problems proliferated that affected their health, education, employment, and the ability to assimilate into the Western European society. The Institute for Government Research commissioned a study to examine the condition of the American Indian. The Institute

hired Lewis Meriam with several other individuals, who were all highly qualified as specialists in their respective fields, to lead a research to compile information. Over the span of approximately one and a half year, the survey team visited 95 reservation, agencies, hospitals, and schools (Meriam, 1928).

The overall assessment unveiled a true depiction of the terrible conditions in Indian communities across the country. In addition to analyzing the conditions related to the health, economic, and social conditions, the education provided to the Indian children was also examined. There were many boarding schools provided as a means of addressing the education of the Native children. However, many of these schools were not adequately funded and as a result became havens for unsanitary conditions, free child labor for the maintenance of school facilities, and over crowdedness. I remember this to be very true from my experiences with the boarding schools. At the second school I attended in Keams Canyon Boarding School from 1957 through 1964, I witnessed many of these psychological impediments. I remember being isolated in a wing that was set aside for children inflicted with tuberculosis, working long hours cleaning dining halls and dormitory halls, and learning to eat foods that were foreign to me. The only recourse to this discomfoting environment was to run away, but the punishments were harsh. The following quote is an example of how the defiance was dealt with

Two girls run away but they were caught. They tied their legs up, tied their hands behind their back, put them in the middle of the hallway so that if they fell asleep or something, the matron would hear them and she'd get out there and whip them and make them get up again. (Marr, n.d.)

This scene was experienced in many boarding schools. Among one of the most humiliating and devastating punishment was to have your mouth washed with soap for speaking your Native language and practicing your Native culture. This probably did the

most damage to a person's self-confidence and self-esteem. I remember experiencing that punishment many times and my mouth did not feel clean. However, I had to constantly be on watch to make sure it did not happen again.

The Meriam Report (1928) brought about many important and significant changes that had to be made in Indian country. It was also an impetus for the Indian Reorganization Act or the Wheeler-Howard Bill, enacted in 1934, six years after the Meriam Report. Under the leadership of John Collier, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, many changes were eventually implemented during his 12-year administration. These changes became known as the Indian New Deal and included a halt to the land sale, development of social and economical programs, and the realignment of the BIA educational programs with Native American culture (Webb, 2006).

Commissioner Collier, a firm believer in the progressive movement and progressive education, introduced programs to address many of the deficiencies pointed out in the Meriam Report. Perhaps, the most far-reaching changes were the establishment of Day Schools to replace boarding schools and the introduction of curriculum reflective of the local cultures. He advocated for an ideology that was instrumental for bringing many Navajo children closer to their homes and incorporating the Navajo culture into the classroom setting. Although he did much to improve the educational system for the Indian people, including the Navajo people, he was unfortunately despised for the livestock reduction of the 1930s that the Navajos adamantly opposed. To this date, the elders still identify that event as a period in their lives that brought about poverty for many families because they depended on their livestock as a means of measuring their status within their communities.

Commissioner Collier was perhaps the only BIA Commissioner most sensitive to the needs of the Indian people and his plan, the Collier Bill, reflected many of the recommendations outlined in the Meriam Report and later in the Indian Reorganization Act. However, there were many oppositions that curtailed the implementation of these changes. His attempt to end the policy of assimilation and replacing it with his ideology of cultural pluralism failed before its implementation. Perhaps the contrasting values of the Euro-American and the Native American societies fostered much misunderstanding, some of which sparked fear that led to legislative changes or movements to undermine the situation. The Indian Reorganization Act saw the renewal of many cultural values, such as the belief that land is not owned by man, but rather he is the steward; the education of a youth is a communal responsibility; and the survival of the tribes takes precedent over the survival of an individual. These values were not those of the developing nation and other events, such as the World War II experience; the cold war between the United States and Russian, which fostered hostility towards anything that deviated from mainstream values. “In such an atmosphere, many found traditional Indian communal social structures offensive since they seemed too similar to the dreaded socialist systems that the United States was supposedly resisting” (Burt, 4).

With the end of Collier’s reign, there began a movement to reverse the New Deal programs and reinstitute the integration of Indians into the American life. The idea of assimilation and eventual acculturation of the Indian people that laid dormant was revived by conservative Republicans, mainly from the Western states. From 1953 to 1968, the Republicans working with the BIA started formulating plans, conducting hearings on Indian reservations, and lobbying with Congress to terminate many of the

Indian tribes. One hundred and nine Indian tribes were eventually terminated over the span of 15 years. The early experiences that some of the Indian tribes recalled were not pleasant. The land, culture, and language were the main cohesive elements that held many tribes together. Without these important components, they would wither and literally blow away. This has happened to many of the 109 Indian tribes who were terminated between 1945 to 1960 (Fixico, 1986). However, to reverse this trend and to meaningfully address the Indian problems, the United States Senate formed a Special Subcommittee on Indian Education pursuant to S. Res. 80 and produced a study (National Congress of American Indians, 2009) titled *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge* (Kennedy Report). One of the strong recommendations was the development of the Federal Indian School System into an exemplary system, which played an important role in improving the education for Indian children. It was specifically recommended that the federal schools develop exemplary programs in at least these three areas:

1. Outstanding innovative programs for the education of disadvantaged children,
2. Bilingual and bicultural education programs,
3. Therapeutic programs designed to deal with the emotional, social, and identity problems of Indian youth (Kennedy, 1969).

The Kennedy Report set the stage for other studies and legislations that followed for the next several years. One of the most important legislation was the Indian Education Act of 1972; its aim was to provide adequate and appropriate educational services for Native Americans. After centuries of not being involved in the formation of educational policies of their children, the act finally gave the Native Americans the latitude to be

involved in the particular education agenda that would be suitable for them. The legislators did not want to continue the practice of the government imposing the type of educational programs to be implemented for Native Americans.

Bilingual Education Initiatives

Bilingual education has always been an educational process of many discussions between opponents and advocates for its use. The opponents have argued that there is no substantial proof that it works and have challenged the bilingual community for research that support its effectiveness. Opponents have stated that the educational process is to teach the students so they can become English speakers and not to maintain an indigenous language and culture. They have seen monolingualism as an ideal, an emblem of national strength; whereas, bilingualism is seen as a curse, an oddity, a mark of low social status, or an expectation that invite foreign visitors to our shores (Crawford, 1992, p. 206). Opponents to bilingualism have indicated that the bilingual education proponents have argued that bilingual education is superior to other language acquisition models and can be proven by standardized achievement-test scores. However, opponents to bilingualism claim that bilingualism superiority has not happened and no such proof has been provided (Imhoff, 1990). The opponents of bilingual education have also noted the debates in the political arena. This is very evident in their citation of the 1985 statement made by the Secretary of Education William Bennett denouncing the Bilingual Education Act as a failed path, a bankrupt course, and a scandalous waste of the taxpayers' money (Crawford, 1992).

The advocates, on the other hand, have argued that attainment of a meaningful education is impeded by their children's inability to understand, speak, and read the

English language proficiently. They believe that bilingual education is the most responsive means of educating their children. The 1974 Civil Right supports this finding, which stated that early childhood educational instruction should be communicated in the child's native language: "When language is recognized as the means for representing thoughts, and as a vehicle for complex thinking, the importance of allowing children to use and develop the language they know best becomes obvious" (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974, p. 44). Proponents of bilingual education have also endorsed improving the chances of the children's academic success by acknowledging the legitimacy of their language, the power of the community whose language is used, and the self-esteem that can be heightened (McCroarty, 1992). Many studies have endorsed bilingual education for the children at an early age. They agree that children have the ability of learning two or more languages simultaneously. However, the pedagogical approaches vary between theories and one such positive theory is that the course of instruction is based on a particular educational theory that rests on four tenets:

1. that second languages are best introduced to children only after they are thoroughly fluent in their first languages—this is the transfer theory;
2. that intensive instruction in a second language should be postponed until after first-language fluency is achieved;
3. that achieving adequate academic fluency in a second language takes many years of schooling after conversational fluency is achieved six years of schooling at a minimum; and

4. that subject-matter courses should be taught in the first language for several years while English is introduced slowly, gradually, and in small amount (Imhoff, 1990, p. 51).

The attention to Native American children's educational needs has been lost in the battle between the Mexican Americans and the Anglo American population. The Hispanic minority, being the largest, have always been politically active in ensuring continuous attention for equal educational opportunities for their children. However, in the 60s and 70s, the Native American became more politically active and began to bring more attention to the educational needs of their children. Tribal leaders such as Stanley Smartlowit (Yakima), educators such as Annie Wauneka (Navajo) and Esther Burnett Horne (Shoshone), political activists such as Dennis Banks (Ojibwe) and Russell Means (Lakota), and scholars such as Vine Deloria (Lakota), Helen Sheirbeck (Lumbee), and Alonso Ortiz (Tewa) all took the lead in bringing attention to the needs of the Indian people (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002).

With the forefront established by these prominent Indian leaders, scholars, and activists, the federal government took notice and followed with many legislative changes. Some of those I have mentioned, but the more community-oriented changes that affected Indian communities were the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, Upward Bound, and Indian Community Action Program to address community-related activities, which paved the road for community controlled school movement. These legislative changes gave the Indian people an opportunity to get involved in community activities that affected their lives and the lives of their children and their education.

The active engagement to bring about recognition of the inclusion of Native language and culture has been slow and deliberate in many schools across the country. Many of these schools continued to espouse the belief that assimilation is a means of achieving academic success. However, there are many studies that have proven contrary to this belief. Dr. Bea Medicine, a cultural anthropologist, has often expressed radical views against the manner in which the country has continued to promote monolingualism. She has always asserted the importance of indigenous language rights and has viewed the “goal of schooling is to ‘whiten’ American Indian children and thereby transform and uplift a race” (Deyhle & McCarty, 2007, p. 211). She has always advocated for the involvement of Indian people in the education of their children.

The community interest in education became recognized with the incorporation of bilingual education into schools. Over the years, this has grown to a level of where many schools have native language and culture programs in their school curriculum. However, the incorporation of Native American language and culture in classroom has been diminishing within the last two or three decades. In a study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2007), data were gathered from approximately 21,000 students from 3,500 schools (Bureau of Indian Education Schools, public schools, and private schools) at Grades 4 and 8 levels from schools that participated in the survey. Although the National Center of Educational Statistics conducted the survey across the United States, the data reflecting the Mountain and South Central regions were specifically reviewed. This was the area with the highest concentration of Native American students. The study gathered data reflecting tribal traditions, languages, and cultures that might affect students’ educational attainment.

The study reaffirmed my belief that schools are moving away from or have not incorporated Indian language and culture into their school curriculum. Although some schools incorporated Indian language and culture into their school curriculum, it was at a low percentage. The study indicated, as indicated by administrators responding to the survey by the National Center of Educational Statistics, that 43% of high density schools with high enrollment of Indian students provided opportunities to fourth graders to have their families provide native culture and history three to five times a year; only 20% of the fourth graders in low density schools with low enrollment of Indian students provided the same opportunity (Figure 1).

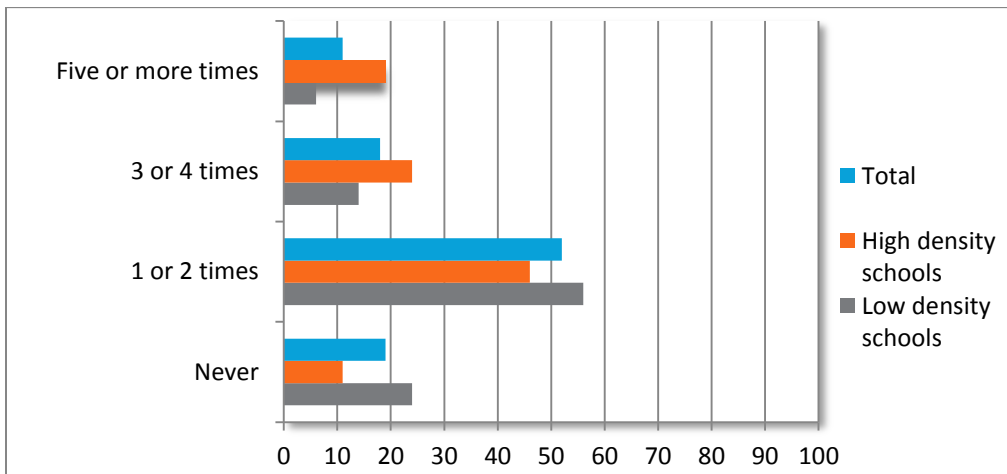


Figure 1. Percentages of fourth-grade AI/AN students participating in Native instructional programs.

The study further noted, as indicated by administrators responding to the survey by the National Center of Educational Statistics, that for eight-graders only 35% of high density schools and 12% of low density schools provided opportunities for families to share their native culture and history three to five times a year (Figure 2).

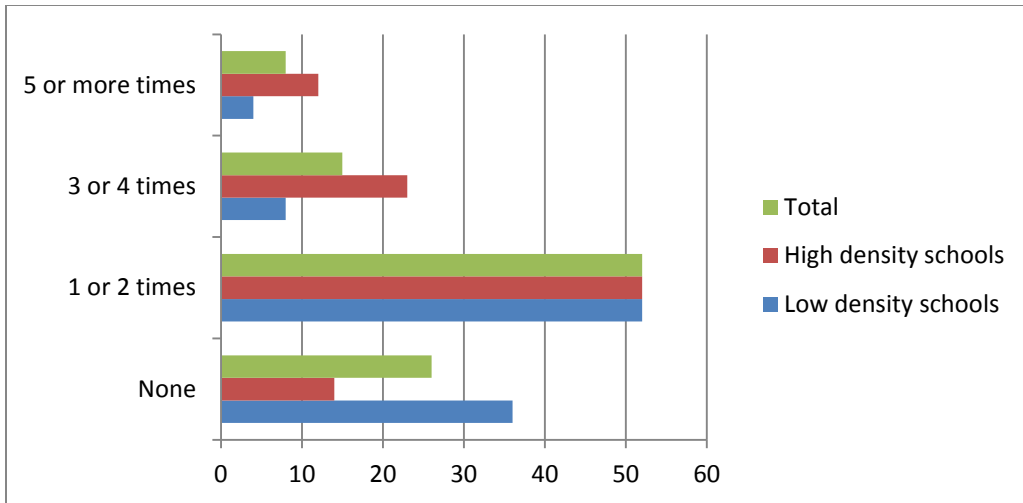


Figure 2. Percentages of eighth-grade AI/AN students participating in Native instructional programs.

In a comparison between public schools and BIE, the BIE had a higher percentage (59% and 63%) than public school (28% and 20%) when school administrators were asked if these opportunities occurred at least three times a year (Figure 3).

In a typical school year, how often does your school provide opportunities for students' families to share native or family histories and traditions as part of the instructional programs?	Grade 4		Grade 8	
	Type of school		Type of school	
	Public	BIE	Public	BIE
5 times or more	11	23	6	31
3 or 4 times	17	36	14	32
1 or 2 times	53	30	52	30
Never	19	10	28	7

Figure 3. Percentage of AI/AN students by grade, type of school, and school students participating in Native instructional programs

As for integrating culture and history into the curriculum, a comparison of public and BIE schools revealed a higher percentage of the BIE schools integrated culture and history into their curriculum (at least once a week) than the public schools for Grade 4 (Figure 4).

In a similar study, the National Indian Education Study (2011), conducted under the direction of the National Center for Education Statistic and authorized by the Executive Order 13592, the educational performances of the fourth and eighth grade American Indian and Alaska Native students in the area of reading, math, and their overall educational experiences were studied. One area of interest was the inclusion of native language and culture into the school classroom setting. A comparison of BIE and public schools reflected that a higher percentage of BIE schools were sensitive to the native language and culture than the public schools, both low and high densities (Figure 5)

To what extent do you integrate American Indian or Alaska Native culture and history into your curriculum?	Type of School	
	Public	BIE
Grade 4		
Almost every day	5	19
At least once a week	12	34
At least once a month	20	30
At least once a grading period	51	13
Never	12	4
Grade 8 reading/language arts		
Almost every day	4	31
At least once a week	5	30
At least once a month	14	31
At least once a grading period	49	8
Never	27	0
Grade 8 Mathematics		
Almost every day	1	10
At least once a week	5	33
At least once a month	5	20
At least once a grading period	16	24
Never	74	13

Figure 4. Percentage of AI/AN students, by type school, grade, and teachers' responses to a questions about the integration of AI/AN culture and history in their curriculum

Selected survey topics	Percentage of students	
	Grade 4	Grade 8
Students report knowing some or a lot about their AI/AN history		
Overall	56	63
Low density public schools	53	58
High density public schools	57	69
BIE schools	62	82
Schools' teachers report acquiring information about their AI/AN students to a least a small extent from living and working in an AI/AN community		
Overall	60	54
Low density public schools	29	28
High density public schools	84	85
BIE schools	97	97
Students attend school where administrators report members of the AI/AN community visit to discuss education issues one or more times a year		
Overall	63	58
Low density public schools	40	42
High density public schools	86	81
BIE schools	78	81

Figure 5. A higher percentage of BIE schools to public school more sensitive to the native language and culture than the public schools

Navajo Bilingual Education Initiatives

Many studies tailored bilingual education and its models of language acquisition to students who are immigrants to this country. They maintain that bi-national life and sustaining strong relationships allow them to rekindle their linguistic and cultural ties.

However, for the Native American youth, it is different in that they have no country to return to for re-immersion into their original culture. For them it is a matter of survival because once they lose their language and culture, it is lost forever. This manifestation has been the very reason why many battles were fought between the Natives and the encroaching foreigners. Despite the struggle, the Native Americans surrendered and accepted treaty terms that set the parameters and conditions for their future existence. The treaties promised many things; among them was the White man's education for an eventual assimilation into their society.

On June 1, 1868, the Navajo tribe and the federal government entered into a treaty (*Treaty Between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribes of Indians, 1869*, n.d.) in Bosque Redondo allowing the Navajos to return home. According to the treaty, ARTICLE 3 promised a school and a chapel for the children to attend. The treaty in ARTICLE 6 further stated that a school and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branch of an English education for children between the ages of 6 and 16 would be provided (Lapahie, 1997). As stated in the treaty, the provision of education was for a period of not less than 10 years. However, 145 years later, the Navajo Nation still has numerous complications with this provision. Part of the problem is that the federal government has never considered the type of education that honors the traditional teachings of our elders, which is to never lose your language and cultural ways. With the federal government imposing its educational agenda of assimilation and a struggle to maintain language and language proficiencies, many children forced to learn the English language did not gain academic proficiency to excel in school and in the process lost their language and culture. It was not uncommon to find young Native children returning home

and finding that they could not fit into either the Indian or White man's world. In his book *Education for Extinction*, David Adams describes a scene of a young student returning to his reservation. He wrote, "It was at homecoming that parents and children first realized the cultural chasm that now separated them" (Adam, 1995, p. 277).

Navajo people were among several linguistic families encapsulated into the process of discouraging the inclusion of bilingual education. However, the passage of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 provided federal legislative recognition of the inclusion of children of limited English-speaking ability into English development programs for language minority students throughout the United States (Garcia & Baker, 1995). Other federal legislations that gave credence to bilingual education for Native Americans were the Bilingual Education Acts of 1974, 1978, 1984, 1988, 1994, and the eventual changes incorporated into what became the English Language Acquisition Act of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Currently we have many schools on the Navajo reservation with bilingual education programs. The missionaries who came among the Navajo people were the first ones who developed the Navajo language as a written form to Christianize the Navajo people. Under the direction of Father Berard Haile, St. Michaels became the first center for the study of Navajo language followed by other missionaries. However, the Christians did not want to introduce the written language into the schools because of the serious gap between the Christian beliefs and the Navajo traditional beliefs (Spolsky, 2002). Despite the attempts to discourage the Native language in schools, the federal government under its policy of the New Deal for Native Americans emphasized a recognition of Indian self-determination.

This initiative conceived and implemented the Rough Rock Demonstration School. A newly constructed BIA facility was turned over to the Navajo Nation with funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1966. With funding from the OEO, they developed their own curriculum and materials, implemented community-related activities, developed Navajo language and culture programs, and employed community members as teachers, teacher assistants, and school maintenance personnel (Collier, 1988). The movement to bring the culture of the community into the classrooms was perhaps inspired by the progressive ideology advocated by John Collier and Willard Beatty. Both Collier and Beatty believed that “Indian policy should focus on the renewal of Indian Sovereignty, establish economic independence, and recognize and value Indian culture and language” (Webb, 2006, p. 253).

The Rough Rock Demonstration School was the first to take this approach and actually implemented it in their school. The late Dr. Robert Roessel commented that the school is there for the community. He saw the need to cultivate the local talents and foster community development enterprises to get them involved in the school. This followed the theory that “the closer the parent is to the education of the children, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement” (Fullan, 2007, p. 189). Being the first of its kind, the school concentrated on developing a curriculum to meet its special circumstances. It concentrated on developing a Navajo literacy program that eventually helped the students make the greatest gains on the local and national measures of achievements (McCarty, 2002).

The Rock Point Community School followed a similar path toward self-determination. It contracted for the operation of its school in 1972, six years after the establishment of the Rough Rock Demonstration School. The school ranked near the bottom of all Bureau schools in the Chinle Agency of the Navajo area on standardized achievement tests. To remedy the designation, the U.S. Office of Education under Title VII of the Bilingual Education Act funded the Rock Point School for the development of a comprehensive bilingual education program. The approach employed teaching reading readiness and literacy in the Navajo language. The assumption was if students were taught to read in the language they were familiar with, the skills would be transferred to a school language. The school concentrated on the important concept of standardized achievement tests administered to schools across the reservation.

In a study conducted by Rosier and Farella (1976), they looked at the test scores of students who participated in a bilingual-bi-literate program. The study looked at the Stanford Achievement Test taken by the fourth and fifth grade students in 1974 and 1975. In a comparison between the Rock Point fifth grade students' achievement and the fifth grade students' achievement of eight BIA schools, the Rock Point students scored higher than the BIA students. The national norm was 5.5 and the Rock Point students scored 5.0 (.5 below national norm) and the eight BIA school student scored 3.4 (2.1 below national norm; Rosier & Farella, 1978). The findings were astounding! It basically re-confirmed the argument that Native American children learn best when taught in their own language. Other schools, such as Borrego Pass, Ramah Community School, and many other tribes follow this road of self-determination.

National Indian Education Legislations

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was the impetus that set the stage for discussions and possible remedies to address discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin in programs or activities receiving federal funding. There were other judicial and legislative mandates tied into discrimination addressed in the Civil Rights Act. Two very important declarations that influenced the Bilingual Education Act were the *Lau v. Nichols* and the Equal Education Act of 1974. In the Lau case, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that just because the same textbooks, teachers, curricula, and facilities were being used does not mean that equal education is being provided. The Equal Education Opportunity Act effectively extended the Lau ruling by stating that language barriers had to be overcome by school instructional programs. Additionally, the means to provide equal educational opportunity has to extend to all students and school districts whether they are receiving federal funds or not (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was enacted initially to only address the equal education needs of the Spanish-speaking minorities and to serve as a guideline. It recognized the special needs of the limited English-speaking ability (LESA) students and the need to develop bilingual education programs for an equal education opportunity. It did not require bilingual education, but encouraged innovative educational pedagogies to teach English to students. There were not many recommendations—maybe because it was a fairly-new legislation (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

The debate for the re-authorization of the Bilingual Education Act of 1974 and 1978 was a different story. The argument over how to best educate language minority students continued to remain an area of debate between the oppositions and the

proponents of bilingual education. Those who supported the theory of multiculturalism debated the positive parameters that appeared to be working of teaching limited English-speaking ability students. Additionally, they noted that the 1974 Civil Rights Act, the *Lau v. Nichols*, and the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974 determined the unconstitutionality of not providing equal educational opportunity to students with limited English abilities. Those who opposed bilingual education argued the high cost of providing bilingual education and considered it a waste of monies and that the process was encouraging segregation of students and possibly schools. Furthermore, their position was “attending to the linguistic and cultural diversity in our schools thwarts efforts at social assimilation” (Wiese & Garcia, 1998, p. 2).

It was in the midst of this controversy that the Bilingual Education Acts of 1974 and 1978 were reauthorized. They received more attention than the 1968 Act and incorporated many amendments. It broadened the definition of eligible students from limited English-speaking ability to limited English proficiency and clarified the definition of bilingual education programs; program goals; regional support centers; and capacity-building efforts (Stewer-Manzanares, 1988). The major emphasis of the re-authorization was to continue the provision of equal educational opportunities by implementing transitional bilingual education programs to help students enter regular classroom as soon as possible. This was to be accomplished by having students participate in transitional bilingual education programs and exit into a regular classroom. The act did not exclude programs structured to maintain native languages despite the objections of the assimilationists. The interesting occurrence was the inclusion of American Indians and Alaska Native languages, which was not addressed in the 1968 Act. The equal

educational opportunity discussion was like an umbrella that covered all non-English speaking minorities.

For the next several years, the Bilingual Education Acts of 1984, 1988, and 1994 were reauthorized with various amendments. The federal government's active role was changing the guiding principles by shifting the actual implementation to the local school districts. It also stipulated that states set their own priorities and provide for more parental involvement in the implementation of the bilingual programs. The objection to the use of federal funds to preserve minority language and culture was still obvious. This led to the funding of English-only instructional programs and decreased funding for bilingual education (Webb, 2006).

The Indian Education Act of 1972 enacted by Congress on June 23, 1972, two years before the adoption of the 1974 Bilingual Education Act, specifically addressed the educational needs of the Indian people. It was more encompassing than the 1974 Bilingual Education Act by guaranteeing the present and future generation of American Indian and Eskimo languages equal educational opportunity without necessitating the abandonment of the native culture and practices. The most important section of the Act was Part A, which provided funds to local educational authorities and tribal schools for the development of curriculum addressing tribal cultures, training personnel, and devising activities to implement this section. This assisted many tribal schools in developing bilingual educational materials. The far-reaching promise of the provision of education was that the Indian people did not have to abandon their Native culture, language, and practices. This has been the very ideology that the Native American people were vehemently opposing for the last 400 years. As a distinct group of people with sovereign

rights, they saw the preservation of their language and culture as the survival of their people. Fairbanks (1995/1996) stated that the loss of Native language is the greatest threat to the sovereignty of the Indian people. The federal government has realized this and has made the eradication of Native language a top priority through the boarding school system. He further stated,

Other than cultural nostalgia, native languages are important because they provide cultural distinctiveness and identification of a “people.” As Ojibwe writer and artist Larry Cloud-Morgan has said, “The language is the people; the language is the people!” In other words, for a “people” to exist they must be distinguishable in some significant way. And, the important point here is that there is no “sovereignty” if there is no “people.” (p. 145)

The inclusion of language and culture into the educational system is a right by the very treaty that the Navajo people have entered into with the federal government. The Treaty of 1868 did not specify the type of process to be employed other than to teach the elementary branches of an English education. The historical events of providing education to the Navajo people have always been total immersion into the Euro-American education system. None of this has worked as evident by the high drop-out rates, high unemployment, and the current social-ills plighting the Navajo Nation.

However, the passage of the Indian Education Act has created the means of involving the Indian communities and members in developing and implementing bilingual education materials and programs, training bilingual education teachers and teacher assistants, establishing adult education programs, and promoting active participation of tribal communities and members in determining the type of education system most appropriate for their children.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind is a legislation that emanated from a perception of the neoliberals and neoconservatives policy that standardized testing and accountability would increase and ensure the American citizens participation in the global economy (Hursh, 2007). To remedy this dilemma, Congress reauthorized the Elementary Education Opportunity, which became the No Child Left Behind, with provisions to improving the educational achievement of minorities and closing the achievement gap. The vision of increasing the educational performances of students and closing the achievement gap appear to have eluded the education communities across the country for the last several years.

Hursh (2007) stated that the States of Texas and New York claimed to have successfully closed the achievement gap in some of their school districts; however, upon close examination of data, it was determined that certain questionable things were happening. Some of those were teachers teaching skills and knowledge that will be tested, thus avoiding other subject areas. Many of the parents felt their children were not being provided a well-rounded education, and the students complained that learning was no longer enjoyable. It was also determined that school districts were concentrating on students who were close to passing the tests and abandoning those who needed the most help. Many of these students were minorities with limited English-speaking abilities. Another method employed was retaining the ninth grade students and preparing them to test the following year when they got into the tenth grade, the grade level at which the testing was done. Many of the students not promoted into the next grade level were disappointed and dropped out. Another method used to help schools pass AYP was the

process of moving students to special education so their test scores were not counted (Hursh, 2007).

The Language Shift

In the state of California, which has more endangered languages than any other part of North American, there were approximately 100 Indian languages spoken at the time of the arrival of the Europeans; now only 50 Indian language are still spoken (Hornberger, 1998). In her opening remarks at the Santa Fe 1998 language conference, Voorhees (Executive Director of the Lannan Foundation) stated that at least 300 distinct Native American languages were spoken in North America at the time Columbus arrived in 1492. Today, there are only 190 languages remaining, but many of them are in imminent danger of being lost (Johansen, 2004). Michael Krauss, former president of the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages, was cited at the conference as having written that only 20 of 175 surviving Native American languages in the United States are still being learned as a first language by children from their parents in *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* (Krauss, 1996).

The above scenario has become all too familiar among many Indian tribes throughout the country. A language begins to shift anytime a foreign country or nation conquers another nation and begins to enforce its language and culture on the conquered nation. This has basically happened to many Native American tribes to a point of no longer speaking their language and practicing their cultural ways. The relocation and assimilation of Native Americans into an unfamiliar way of life unraveled century old patterns of life that have been passed from one generation to another. Joshua Fishman (1991) in his book *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of*

Assistance to Threaten Languages described the patterns of language shift and the eight stages that a society or nation goes through before being totally immersed into the encroaching nation. He describes the stages as follows:

1. Stages 3, 2, and 1: Work sphere, mass media, higher education, and government.
2. Stage 4a: Schools that are under Xish control and that can be amended in lieu of compulsory education. Type 4b schools: Schools for Xish pupils but under Yish control.
3. Stage 5: Literacy via community schools that do not aim at meeting the compulsory education requirements.
4. Stage 6: Creating the intergenerationally continuous Xish-speaking community via providing and stressing the line to family life, residential concentration, and neighborhood institutions.
5. Stage 7: The maintenance of a vibrant and natural adult Xish-speaking society.
6. Stage 8: Reassembling the languages under and/or acquiring them on an individual basis during adulthood.

The Navajo Nation, like many Indian tribes, has gone through the first five stages of language shift and language loss. This is evident in many of the schools on the Navajo reservation and the Navajo government offices and work environment. One can easily observe the use of the English language in Navajo workplaces, government offices, and media (radio) in communities across the Navajo Nation (Stages 1-3). Our schools have also embraced the use of the English language with only a limited time for Navajo language and cultural activities (Stages 4 and 5).

According to Fishman, Stage 6 is the most critical stage in the eventual loss of language and culture. This is the stage where the heritage language is natural and a viable part of family and community interaction. He stated, “Nothing can substitute for the rebuilding of society at the level of everyday, informal life” (1991, p. 112). Currently we still have the Navajo language spoken in many homes for social interactions and ceremonial activities. The need for intergenerational transfer of knowledge needs to happen at the hogan level. The Navajo people believe that all knowledge initiates from the fire that exists in the middle of a hogan. This is where the Navajo people need to concentrate its efforts in rekindling the transfer of the language and culture of its people. They need to negate the slow erosion of the language and culture that constitutes being a Navajo by communicating with the youth in Navajo at social and ceremonial settings.

Stage 7 is the maintenance of a vibrant and natural speaking society. The elders who remain dedicated to speaking the language and practicing the cultural ways is that society, and they are the most important group that still exists for the Navajo people. They are our last line of defense against the obliteration of our way of life. The Navajo people have a traditional, ceremonial winter game called *keshjee*’ (shoe game). Two opposing groups play this game, and each side has a set of four shoes. The objects used are 102 strands of yucca stems, a yucca root shaped like a ball, and a 7-inch wooden stick. The shoes are covered with dirt and a blanket is used to shield the process of hiding the round ball in one of the shoe. The other group then tries to guess the whereabouts of the ball. Each time the group does not guess the whereabouts of the ball, they lose a certain number of yucca stems. This continues until all of the yucca stems have been given to either side. There are two stems an inch longer than the other 100 stems and are

the last to be given away. They are called *bichoho* (grandparents/elders) and are more valuable and should be safeguarded. Once these *bichoho* are given away by either team, the game is over. This analogy is very representative of the language loss that we are facing. We do not ever want to reach Stage 8, which is to reassemble the Navajo language and share them with the adult members of our society. We see this happening to many Indian tribes across the country.

The loss of our language began to set in within the last 40 years among the Navajo people. In 1970, Paul Platero (1992) surveyed 882 pupils in 90 Navajo Nation preschools and found that only 17% coming to school could still speak Navajo; 27.9% were bilingual; and 54.3% spoke only English. Twenty years later (1990), the use of the Navajo language decreased to a point where six-year old Navajo children beginning pre-school or kindergarten had little or no knowledge of the Navajo language (Spolsky, 2002). According to the 2011/2012 Navajo Head Start survey of Navajo children language usages, the children spoke 1% to 2% in Navajo and 84% to 96% in English most often. This percentage was prevalent in playground, classroom, and home settings (Navajo Nation Department of Education [DODE], 2011/2012).

This percentage is attributed to many things. The Navajo language, once protected by its isolation from the western influence, has been encroached upon by the modern elements that have reached the Navajo borders. Most of the communities are accessible by paved roads; families with modern transportation can drive to border town communities; the availability of technology and other modern conveniences; and the schools scattered throughout the Navajo reservation have all made it possible for exposure to the western way of life. Furthermore, a study conducted by Parsons-Yazzie

in 1995 found that parents stated the following reasons for the attrition of the Navajo language:

1. They themselves use English,
2. Their children spend a large portion of their time in school,
3. The children are ashamed of Navajo,
4. It helps children if the parents speak English,
5. Knowing Navajo is not important, and
6. English guarantees success.

Over the years, this shift of speaking and practicing the cultural ways of the Navajo people has changed to embracing the English language and the culture of the Western European society. I believe the federal boarding schools have planted the seed to this change. As far back as the late 19th century with Captain Richard Henry Pratt's famous statement, "In Indian civilization I am a Baptist, because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked" (Fairbanks, 1996).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology employed to develop the specific process and procedures for the collection of data. It presents the research design, the population of the study, and the form of data collection and sample to better understand the attitudes and opinions of the students as to the role of Navajo language and culture in schools they were attending.

Research Design

A quantitative research design refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena by methods, such as statistical, mathematical or numerical data (Given, 2008). The data were gathered through 27 questions aimed at gathering and analyzing information about student knowledge of Navajo language and culture and whether it helped them in their learning experiences. The questionnaire was administered to the third through fifth grade students in schools making Cs or better and those making Ds or Fs, and similarly to students in the sixth through eighth grade in schools making Cs or better and those making Ds or Fs. At the onset of this study, the states of Arizona and New Mexico were still using the AYP accountability model to assess performance of schools and students. On August 2, 2012, the Arizona Department of Education, in accordance with ARS 15-241, changed from the AYP method to assigning letters A through F at its schools. The state of New Mexico also followed a similar path by requesting a waiver to and approved by the U.S. Department of Education to use its own school grading models to serve as its accountability method to replace the AYP.

Site Selection

The city of Flagstaff, Arizona is located in the northern part of Arizona and serves as the county seat of Coconino County. In 2011, Flagstaff had a population of 65,965, with 7,237 being designated as American Indian and 12,094 designated as Hispanic. The Navajo name for Flagstaff is *Kinlani* and the home of *Dook'o 'oosliid* (San Francisco Peaks), which is one of the sacred mountains of the Navajo people. Many of the Navajo and Hopi families who were affected by the relocation program moved into the city as a result of the Navajo-Hopi Indian Relocation Act (P. L. 93-531) enacted by Congress on December 22, 1974. Many of the families who were affected by the relocation program moved into the city of Flagstaff and enrolled their children into the 22 schools that were available, including Puente de Hozho Elementary School and Mount Elden Middle School.

The Town of Gallup, New Mexico is located in the western part of New Mexico and is the county seat of McKinley County. Gallup has a total population of 21,755 with 8,748 designated as American Indian and 6,864 designated as Hispanic. It is often referred to as the “Indian Capital of the World” because is it surrounded by the Zuni to the south and the Navajo to the east, west, and north. Because the reservation is close to the town, many Native Americans have moved to Gallup seeking employment. There are 35 schools within the Gallup-McKinley School District.

There were five schools selected to participate in the study. All of these schools are located off the Navajo reservation in border-town communities of Gallup, New Mexico and Flagstaff, Arizona. The Puente De Hozho of Flagstaff was established in 2001 with an enrollment of 58 students and, within four years, increased to 400 students

with a waiting list of 150 kindergarten students. On the 2012 Arizona's Instruments to Measure Standards (AIMS), the fourth grade students scored at the 75th percentile in math and 76th percentile in reading. This was 8% higher than the state average score of 67% in math and 1% higher than the state average of 75% in reading. The performance of the fifth grade students on the 2012 AIMS was lower than the fourth grade students. They scored 50% in math, 64% in reading, and 45% in writing. Compared with the state average in each subject, they were 13% lower in math, 14% lower in reading, and 12% lower in writing. For school year 2012, the Puente de Hozho received a grade of a "B."

The other Flagstaff school that participated in the study was Mount Elden Middle School with 130 American Indian students who were mostly Navajo. On the 2012 AIMS assessment, the sixth grade students scored 44% and the state average was 61% in math. On the 2012 AIMS assessment in reading, Mount Elden Middle School's score was 74% and the state score was 80%. In writing, the school was 40% and the state average was 56%. The seventh grade students scored 49% and the state average was 62% in math. In reading the seventh graders scored 71% and the state average was 84%. In writing, the seventh graders scored 38% and the state scored 52% (www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/aims-assesment-resul). The eighth grade students followed a similar path as the seventh grade students. For the school year 2012, the school received a grade of a "C." Many of the students at Mount Elden are those who have been promoted to the middle school from Puente de Hozho Elementary School.

The other schools that participated in the study were Jefferson Elementary School, Rocky View Elementary School, and Chief Manuelito Middle School; they were all located in Gallup, New Mexico. The Jefferson Elementary School had a total enrollment

of 261 students; 152 were American Indians. The 2012 New Mexico Standards-Based Assessment (NMSBA) indicated that the third grade students scored 52% on their math and the state average was 53%. Their score in reading was 41% compared to the state average of 52%, a noticeable higher percentage. For the fourth graders, their NMSBA score was 28% in math compared to the state average of 44%. In reading it was 28%, and the state average was 50%. It was not any better for the fifth grade students. The assessment test showed a score of 35% in math compared to the state average being 44%. The score for reading was 51%, and the state average was 55%.

The Rocky View Elementary School had a total enrollment of 391, and 293 were American Indians. This school did not do well on their NMSBA test scores. The third graders scored 32% on math, and the state average was 53%. The school scored 17% on their reading, and the state average was 52%. The fourth grade students scored 23% on their math, and the state average was 44%. The fifth grade students scored 16% on their math compared to the state average at 44%; reading was 23%, and the state average was 55%.

The third school was Chief Manuelito Middle School with a total enrollment of 642 students; 490 were American Indians. All of the grades performed below the NMSBA state average. The sixth graders scored 17% in math compared to the state average at 37%, and 23% in reading compared to the state average at 48%. The seventh graders scored 25% in math compared to the state average at 42%, and 22% in reading compared to the state average of 50%. The eighth grade students scored 29% in math with the state average at 42%, and 31% in reading with the state average was 54% (New Mexico Public Education Department, n.d.).

For school year 2012, all of these schools were given Ds on their report cards and designated as performing on average, but much worse than most other New Mexico schools on SBA state exams in math and reading.

Population and Sample

The number of Navajo students attending public schools both on and off the Navajo reservation has grown from a few children from the more acculturated Navajo families in the early 1930s to a current enrollment of over 80,000 students. Some of these public school districts located near the Navajo reservation are Gallup-McKinley County School District, Holbrook Unified School District, Winslow Unified School District, Flagstaff Unified School District, Page Unified School District, San Juan School District, and Farmington School District. Most of these school districts have a high enrollment of American Indians with a very high number of Navajo students.

The survey was administered at two of the school districts: Gallup-McKinley County School District and Flagstaff Unified School District. The students selected to participate in the study were in Grades 3 through 8 and between the ages of 9 through 14. The 109 students participating in the study were all members of the Navajo tribe, living off the Navajo reservation, and participating in bilingual education programs offered by their schools. Three of the schools were not doing so well and received low grades; the other two schools were doing well and received better grades. Below is list of demographic characteristics of the population sampled in the five schools.

	Low Grade			High Grade	
	Sch. A	Sch. B	Sch. C	Sch. D	Sch. E
Total # (all grades)	261	642	391	452	466
Per Cent Navajo	48%	79%	71%	30%	28%
Total who took surveys	29	30	13	14	23
Total receiving free lunches	82%	80%	99%	30%	38%

Instrumentation

The researcher wrote a letter to the superintendents of the Gallup-Mckinley County School District and Flagstaff Unified School District requesting permission to conduct the survey at their schools. The superintendent of the Flagstaff Unified School District approved the request to conduct the survey (see Appendix A). The Gallup-McKinley County School District Board of Education approved the request along with the three school administrators approving the request (see Appendix B). The researcher later met with the principals of all five schools through the months of January to March 2012. A parental consent form requesting authorization for the participation of the students were also send to the parents (see Appendix C). Many of the forms were not returned due to the spring break, state exams, and the end of school year. The following school year the researcher continued to meet with the principals to solicit their assistance. From the months of October to December of 2012, the parental consent forms were gathered and the survey commenced.

The survey instrument consisted of 27 questions that solicited the students' perceptions and attitudes about the Navajo language and culture in their schools (see Appendix D). The aim was to find the relationship between their participation in a

bilingual education program and their assessment of how it was helping them in their school and if it had any bearing on their self-confidence and self-esteem. It was also aimed at assessing the parents' knowledge of Navajo language and culture and the support that they gave to the students.

Data Collection Procedures

The surveys were administered to students who were granted permission to participate in the study. The survey was first explained to the teachers and the students. They were told that there were no right or wrong answers and that it was to be anonymous. Most of the surveys were conducted on a one-to-one basis in both Navajo and English. The students were encouraged to ask any questions on some of the questions they did not understand. Once the data were transferred into the computer, the hard copies of the survey were destroyed. The principal investigator had to make several trips to both Flagstaff, Arizona and Gallup, New Mexico to complete the surveys. One thing that the researcher realized is that the window of opportunity for collecting data was not March, April and May, but rather in October, November, and December.

Data Analysis

Survey Monkey analyzed the data and concentrated on the questions that reflected the intent of the study, which was the role of the Navajo language and culture programs as to the educational endeavors of the students. A few of those areas of interest were as follows:

- What is the relationship of the Navajo language and culture to the students' self-confidence and self-esteem?
- Does the Navajo language and culture help them in their school?

- Do they think that Navajo language and culture should be a continuing program?
- Is there support from their parents? and
- Are they interested in learning the Navajo language and culture?

Limitations

Although there were many other public schools operating off the reservation, the study only concentrated on five schools and assessed only 109 students. The study may also differ from public schools that are on the reservation because many of the parents living off the reservation are more acculturated. The time constraints became a factor that had to be dealt with as the survey had to be administered during the times that students were in school. Thus, it became difficult to reach students during the school breaks, and it had to be scheduled during the times they were in school.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to compare the attitudes and opinions of Navajo students towards the Navajo language and culture provided in schools with grades of “Ds” or lower and in schools with grades of “Cs” or better as assigned by the state departments of education. To gain an understanding of their perceptions, the following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do students believe learning the Navajo language and culture are important?
2. To what extent do the students and parents speak the Navajo language and know the Navajo culture?
3. Do students believe that the Navajo language and culture program help them learn better in their other classes?
4. Is there a relationship between students taking Navajo language and culture and their self-confidence?
5. Does students’ interest in Navajo language and culture vary by gender?
6. Do self-confidence levels vary between boys and girls?
7. Do self-confidence levels vary between high graded and low graded schools?

Demographic Characteristics of the Students

There were 109 students who responded to the survey (see Table 1). The students who participated in the survey were all Navajo students living off the Navajo reservation and enrolled in the elementary and middle schools in the towns of Gallup, New Mexico and Flagstaff, Arizona. Some of the students were members of families who had

relocated because of a federal law (Public Law 93-531) and others were members of families who had moved into the border town communities seeking employment—a scarcity on the Navajo reservation. These students were all between the ages of 9 through 14. Although the parents enrolled their children in a bilingual education program that was offered by the school, this study focused on the attitudes and perceptions of the children.

Table 1

Grade Level and Gender by School Performance

Grades	Lower performing schools		Higher performing schools	
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Third	9	9		
Fourth	8	12	5	5
Fifth	4	0	2	2
Sixth	2	4	2	3
Seventh	8	2	7	5
Eighth	4	9	4	3
Total	35	36	20	18

The Importance of Learning Navajo Language and Culture

The first research question, *To what extent do students believe learning the Navajo language and culture is important?* was answered through four survey questions which asked students their opinions about the importance of the Navajo language and culture (see Tables 2 and 3). Responses to the first survey question, *Do you believe that Navajo language and culture are important?* are shown in Table 2. Nearly all (93.6) agreed that Navajo language and culture were important.

Table 3 includes three other survey questions to answer Research Question 1. Question 7 asked, “*Do you believe school should teach Navajo language and culture?*” to which a majority (92%) answered that “yes” it should be taught in school.

Question 8 asked, “*Do you believe knowing the Navajo language and culture has helped you learn better in your class (es)?*” Again, the majority (84.4%) of the students answered that the Navajo language and culture had helped them learn better in their classes. The question of “*Does the Navajo language and culture help you understand the subjects you are being taught?*” was answered with a high percentage (80.4%) who thought it helped them understand the subjects that they were being taught. Overall, the percentage of students answering the four questions showed they were positive about their beliefs that the Navajo language and culture were important.

Table 2

Question 1

Question 1	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Do you believe that Navajo language and culture are important?	66.1 (72)	27.5 (30)	1.8 (2)	4.6 (5)	0 (0)

Table 3

Questions 7, 8, & 9

Questions 7, 8, & 9	Yes	No	Don't know
Q7: Do you believe school should teach Navajo language and culture?	91 (100)	9 (1)	7.3 (8)
Q8: Do you believe knowing the Navajo language and culture has helped you learn better in your class(es)?	84.4 (92)	15.6 (17)	0 (0)
Q9: Does the Navajo language and culture helped you understand the subjects you are being taught?	80.4 (86)	19.6 (21)	0 (0)

Students and Parents Speaking Navajo and Knowing the Culture

The second survey question, *To what extent do the students and parents speak the Navajo language and know the Navajo culture?* was examined through four survey questions displayed in Table 4. These survey questions asked how much their parents knew and spoke the Navajo language and how much they knew about the Navajo culture. Over half (55.2%) answered that their parents knew and spoke the Navajo language and knew Navajo culture “to a great extent.”

The children, however, presented a different scenario than their parents. The survey question that asked about their knowledge and their ability to speak the Navajo language “to a great extent” was less than 20%, and only a third of the students indicated they had some knowledge of the Navajo culture.

Table 4

Questions 2, 3, 4, & 5

Questions 2, 3, 4, & 5	Great extent	Some extent	Not at all
Q2: Do your parents know and speak the Navajo language?	55.2 (59)	35.5 (38)	9.3 (10)
Q3: Do you know and speak the Navajo language?	17.4 (19)	69.7 (76)	12.8 (14)
Q4: Do your parents know the Navajo culture?	55.0 (60)	35.8 (39)	9.2 (10)
Q5: Do you know the Navajo culture?	32.7 (35)	56.1 (60)	11.2 (12)

Students' Belief that Navajo Language and Culture Helped Them Learn Better

Tables 5 and 6 show the responses to the four questions that were asked related to the third research question, *Do students believe that the Navajo language and culture program help them learn better in their other classes?* As shown in Table 5, a majority (84.4%) of the students believed that knowing the Navajo language and culture helped them learn better in their classes; whereas, a few (15.6%) expressed that it did not help them. In a similar question, a majority (80.4%) of the students also stated that the Navajo language and culture helped them understand the subjects that they were being taught, whereas, a minority (19.6%) answered that it did not help them.

The next two survey questions (shown in Table 6) asked students whether they believed that learning the Navajo language and culture helped them perform better in reading and in mathematics. For reading, less than half (45%) answered that it did help

them “to a great extent” and less than half (41.3%) answered it did help them “to some extent.” Even fewer thought it helped them in mathematics with less than one-third responding “to a great extent” (32.7%), “to some extent” (36.5%), and “not at all” (30.8%).

Table 5

Questions 8 & 9

Questions 8 & 9	Yes	No
Q8: Do you believe knowing the Navajo language and culture has helped you learn better in your class(es)?	84.4 (92)	15.6 (17)
Q9: Does the Navajo language and culture help you understand the subjects you are being taught?	80.4 (86)	19.6 (21)

Table 6

Questions 11 & 12

Questions 11 & 12	Great extent	Some extent	Not at all
Q11: Do you believe that learning about Navajo language and culture help you perform better in reading?	45 (49)	41.3 (45)	14.7 (15)
Q12: Do you believe that learning about Navajo language and culture help you perform better in math?	32.7 (35)	36.5 (39)	30.8 (33)

Relationship of Taking Navajo Language and Culture and Self-confidence

The fourth research question, *Is there a relationship between students taking Navajo language and culture and their self-confidence?* was analyzed by examining seven questions that related to the Navajo language and culture and students' self-confidence. Table 7 shows responses to questions asking students to rank themselves on as the *best, above average, average, average or below average*. The last question in Table 7 reports responses to one question, asking students if they were capable of getting As, Bs, Cs, Ds or Fs.

On the survey question, *How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?* less than a fifth (19%) of the students answered that they were the *best* and the remainder answered they were *above average* (36.2%) and *average* (42.9%). The survey question of *How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?* a majority of the students answered that they were *average* (50.9%), less than a fifth of the students thought they were the *best* (17.6%), and less than a third thought they were above average (28.7%).

The next four questions (18, 20, 22 & 23) were all answered with a majority (70.4% to 77.3%) indicating they would either rank *above average* or *average* in their high school class, in their class in college, in their Navajo language and culture class, and thought their work was good. As shown in Table 7, 86.2% of the students indicated they were capable of getting either As or Bs.

Table 7

Questions 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, & 24

Questions 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 & 24	Best	Above average	Average	Below average
Q16: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?	19 (20)	36.2 (38)	42.9 (45)	1.9 (2)
Q17: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?	17.6 (19)	28.7 (3)	50.9 (55)	2.8 (3)
Q18: Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?	18.7 (20)	37.4 (40)	39.3 (42)	4.7 (5)
Q20: Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?	25.9 (28)	38.9 (42)	31.5 (34)	3.7 (4)
Q22: Where do you think you would rank in your Navajo language and culture class?	17.9 (19)	35.8 (38)	41.5 (44)	4.7 (5)
Q23: Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your opinion, how good do you think your work is?	22.9 (25)	40.4 (44)	33.9 (37)	2.8 (3)
What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?	48.6 (53)	37.6 (41)	11.0 (12)	2.7 (3)

Students' Interest in Navajo Language and Culture by Gender

The fifth research question, *Do students' interest in Navajo language and culture vary by gender?* compared the responses of males and females. Tables 8 and 9 present responses to the six questions that were asked as to both genders.

Table 8 dealt with the survey question, *Do you believe that Navajo language and culture are important?*” The combined responses of those who *strongly agreed* and *agreed* showed that nearly all boys and girls agreed that the Navajo language and culture were important.

Table 9 shows the responses to five questions asked of both genders. Two of the questions (3 and 5) asked about their knowledge of the Navajo language and culture and the other question (10) asked whether they enjoyed learning about the Navajo language and culture. The other two questions (11 and 12) asked about their thoughts on whether Navajo language and culture helped them perform better in reading and math.

When asked about their Navajo-speaking ability and their knowledge of the language, about 93% of both boys and girls indicated it was either to some extent or a great extent. The question asking about their knowledge of the Navajo culture showed that nearly all (96.3%) of the girls responded to some or a great extent; whereas, 81.2% of the boys chose these responses. The question of their enjoyment of learning the Navajo language and culture was ranked highly by both the boys (100%) and girls (98.1%).

Two questions (11 and 12) asked about their belief that learning the Navajo language and culture helped them performed better in reading and math. For reading, the boys ranked this somewhat higher (89.1%) than did the girls (83%). For Question 12, both boys and girls were far less certain that learning the Navajo language and culture helped them in math—70.9% of boys and 66.7% of girls.

Table 8

Do You Believe That Navajo Language And Culture Are Important?

Question 1	SA	A	UD	D	SD
<i>Do you believe that Navajo language and culture are important?</i>					
Boys:	61.8 (34)	30.9 (17)	3.6 (12)	3.6 (12)	0 (0)
Girls:	71.7 (38)	22.6 (12)	0 (0)	5.7 (3)	0 (0)

Table 9

Questions 3, 5, 10, 11, &12

	Great extent	Some extent	Not at all
<i>Q3: Do you know and speak the Navajo language?</i>			
Boys:	16.4 (9)	69.1 (38)	14.5 (8)
Girls:	17.0 (9)	71.7 (38)	11.3 (6)
<i>Q5: Do you know the Navajo culture?</i>			
Boys:	32.1 (17)	49.1 (26)	18.9 (10)
Girls:	34.0 (18)	62.3 (33)	3.8 (2)
<i>Q10: Do you enjoy learning about the Navajo language and culture?</i>			
Boys:	74.5 (41)	23.6 (13)	1.8 (1)
Girls:	86.5 (45)	13.5 (7)	0 (0)

Table 9 (continued)

Questions 3, 5, 10, 11, &12

	Great extent	Some extent	Not at all
<i>Q11: Do you believe that learning about Navajo language and culture helped you perform better in reading?</i>			
Boys:	47.3 (26)	41.8 (23)	12.7 (7)
Girls:	43.4 (23)	39.6 (21)	17.0 (9)
<i>Q12: Do you believe that learning about Navajo language and culture help you perform better in math?</i>			
Boys:	32.7 (18)	38.2 (21)	29.1 (16)
Girls:	31.4 (16)	35.3 (18)	33.3 (17)

Comparison of the Boys' and Girls' Level of Self-Confidence

The sixth research question, *Do self-confidence levels vary between boys and girls?* was examined to determine if the self-confidence level of boys and girls differed (see Tables 10 and 11). Considering the assumption that being the *best* and *above average* would indicate a higher degree of self-confidence than being *average* and *below average*, the researcher combined the percentages of the *best* and *above average* to portray the confidence level of students for the following questions:

- Question 16: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?
- Question 17: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?

- Question 18: Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?
- Question 20: Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?
- Question 22: Where do you think you would rank in your Navajo language and culture class?
- Question 23: Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your opinion, how good do you think your work is?
- Question 24: What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?

As shown in Table 10, for both boys and girls, few students (1 to 3) ranked themselves as *below average* on all the items, with the remainder ranking themselves *average*, *above average*, or the *best*. More girls ranked themselves as *above average* or the *best* on all the items with the exception of where they would rank themselves in their Navajo language and cultural class (Item 22). Fifty-eight percent of the boys, compared to 49% of the girls, chose *above average* or the *best*.

Table 11 shows responses to the question of what kind of grades the students thought they were capable of getting. Both girls and boys ranked themselves highly with 92.4% of the girls and 80% of the boys reporting they were capable of making either “A’s or Bs.” It is notable that only one girl and one boy chose “Ds” and Fs,” and all the rest chose “Cs.”

Table 10

Questions 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, & 24

Questions 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23 & 24	Best	Above average	Average	Below average
<i>Q16: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?</i>				
Boys	2.2 (12)	27.8 (15)	48.1 (26)	1.9 (1)
Girls	16.0 (8)	44.0 (22)	38.0 (19)	2.0 (1)
<i>Q17: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?</i>				
Boys	18.2 (10)	23.6 (13)	56.4 (31)	1.8 (1)
Girls	17.3 (9)	34.6 (18)	44.2 (23)	3.8 (2)
<i>Q18: Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?</i>				
Boys	20.0 (11)	34.5 (19)	40.0 (22)	5.5 (3)
Girls	17.6 (9)	39.2 (20)	39.2 (20)	3.9 (2)
<i>Q20: Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?</i>				
Boys	23.6 (13)	32.7 (18)	40.0 (22)	3.6 (2)
Girls	28.8 (15)	44.2 (23)	23.1 (12)	3.8 (2)
<i>Q22: Where do you think you would rank in your Navajo language and culture class?</i>				
Boys	17.3 (9)	40.4 (21)	38.5 (20)	3.8 (2)
Girls	18.9 (10)	30.2 (16)	45.3 (24)	5.7 (3)
<i>Q23: Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your opinion, how good do you think your work is?</i>				
Boys	23.6 (13)	34.5 (19)	38.2 (21)	3.6 (2)
Girls	20.8 (11)	47.2 (25)	30.2 (16)	1.9 (1)
<i>Q24: What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?</i>				
Boys	40.0 (22)	40.0 (22)	16.4 (9)	1.8 (1)
Girls	56.6 (30)	35.8 (10)	5.7 (3)	1.9 (1)

Students were also asked to rank themselves as to how likely they thought it would be for them to complete work beyond four year of college (see Table 11). Again,

both boys and girls were extremely positive with 87.3% of the boys and 98.1% of the girls indicating the possibility was either *somewhat likely* or *very likely*. Interestingly, 52% of the girls, compared to 40% of the boys, again showed higher levels of self-confidence on the survey item.

Table 11

Likelihood of Completing Four Years of College

	Boys	Girls
Very likely	40.0 (22)	51.9 (27)
Somewhat likely	47.3 (26)	46.2 (24)
Not at all	12.7 (7)	1.9 (1)

When asked how they would use what they had learned in their Navajo language class (Table 12), more boys indicated that it would allow them to talk with other students; whereas, more girls thought it would help them talk with their grandparents and others who did not know English. Nearly 20% of the girls felt it would help them become teachers (compared to only 7.3% of the boys); whereas, nearly 20% of the boys responded that they *didn't know* how they would use what they had learned in the Navajo language and culture class (compared to 11.5% of the girls).

Table 12

How Would Use What You Learn in The Navajo Language and Culture Class?

	Boys	Girls
To talk with other students	41.8 (23)	32.7 (17)
To know the Navajo language and culture	50.9 (28)	46.2 (24)
To talk with grandparents and others who do not know the English language	45.5 (25)	53.8 (28)
To become a Navajo language and culture teacher	7.3 (4)	19.2 (10)
Don't know	18.2 (10)	11.5 (6)

Comparison of Students' Confidence level from High and Low Graded Schools

The seventh research question, *Do self-confidence levels vary between high and low graded schools?* was analyzed to examine the levels of self-confidence of students attending the high- and low-graded schools. To achieve a representative sample of the different levels of self-confidence, the researcher again combined response categories explained in prior sections of Chapter 4. Table 13 shows the following seven questions and responses by students.

- Question 16: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?
- Question 17: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?
- Question 18: Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?
- Question 20: Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?
- Question 22: Where do you think you would rank in your Navajo language and culture class?

- Question 23: Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your opinion, how good do you think your work is?
- Question 24: What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?

The results presented in Table 13 show interesting patterns with respect to the five schools and the level of self-confidence of their students. The students from School A and School C, both elementary schools from low graded schools, showed the highest levels of self-confidence on questions on several items. For example, these students rated themselves much higher on their school ability when compared to their close friends (about 90% in both schools ranked themselves *best* or *above average*); whereas, only 57.1% in School D and 43.4% in School E ranked themselves this highly. This interesting pattern continued across all the items regarding self-confidence, with the exception of Item 20 (ranked themselves highly in their class in college), Item 24 to which students in four of the schools ranked themselves similarly, and Item 24 (thought they were capable of making As and Bs). The overall exception to these patterns was found in one low-graded school, School B, in which students ranked themselves extremely low across all items except on Item 24. The anomalies found in these results are discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 13

Comparison of Students' Level of Self-confidence from High- and Low-Graded Schools

Questions	<u>Low-graded schools</u>			<u>High-graded schools</u>	
	School A: Elementary	School B: Middle	School C: Elementary	School D: Elementary	School E: Middle
<i>Q16: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?</i>					
Best and above average	89.6 (26)	14.3 (4)	90.9 (10)	57.1 (8)	43.4 (10)
<i>Q17: How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?</i>					
Best and above average	82.8 (24)	24.1 (7)	69.2 (9)	28.6 (4)	26.1 (6)
<i>Q18: Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?</i>					
Best and above average	72.4 (21)	24.1 (7)	76.9 (10)	61.5 (8)	60.8 (14)
<i>Q20: Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?</i>					
Best and above average	72.4 (21)	34.5 (10)	84.6 (11)	78.6 (11)	73.9 (17)
<i>Question 22: Where do you think you would rank in your Navajo language and culture?</i>					
Best and above average	72.4 (21)	34.4 (10)	69.3 (9)	35.7 (5)	57.2 (12)
<i>Q23: Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your opinion, how good do you think your work is?</i>					
Best and above average	86.2 (25)	36.7 (11)	76.9 (10)	64.3 (9)	60.8 (14)
<i>Q24: What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?</i>					
As and Bs	86.2 (25)	76.7 (23)	100 (13)	92.9 (13)	87 (20)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary, discussion, and recommendations of the study that examined the attitudes and opinions of Navajo elementary and middle school students about Navajo language and culture programs implemented in their schools. The students were all living off the Navajo reservation in the towns of Gallup, New Mexico and Flagstaff, Arizona, but were all participating in a Navajo language and culture programs at their respective schools.

Summary of the Study

The Navajo Nation is facing a daunting possibility of losing its language and culture and the consequences that may follow. The study was conducted in light of this concern by examining the attitudes and opinions of students in schools offering Navajo language and culture programs. The total number of students who participated in the study were 109 students from the elementary and middle schools in the towns of Gallup, New Mexico and Flagstaff, Arizona. There were 56 students from the elementary school and 53 students from the middle school. The three schools in the state of New Mexico had not been making AYP, and the two schools from the state of Arizona had been making AYP for the last few years. It was important to examine the two categories of schools to see if there were differences of attitudes and opinions of students towards the Navajo language and culture programs offered in their schools.

Overview of the Problem

There are many schools on and near the Navajo reservation not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and some have been forced to undertake restructuring. This has

become a major concern for the parents, the Navajo Nation, school boards, teachers, and school administrators. The concern is how can this deficiency be corrected and the schools improve the quality of education to ensure the academic success of our students.

There are many reasons why schools may not be meeting the AYP. However, for the purposes of limiting the scope of this study, the researcher concentrated his study on the attitudes and opinions of students regarding Navajo language and culture. There have been many studies and research supporting the role of bilingual-bicultural education programs in the improvement of the academic performance of the students. These schools have implemented bilingual-bicultural education programs that have successfully incorporated community-related curriculum, parental involvement programs, contemporary indigenous literacy programs, and a strong professional component into their school curriculum. The students in this academic environment have performed exceedingly better than their English-only counterpart (Klug, 2012).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The survey questions were designed to determine to what extent learning the Navajo language and culture was important to the students, to what degree the students and their parents spoke and knew the Navajo language and culture, and if students believed it helped them learn better in their classes. It was felt that this would be important in determining the role of their parents, the belief that learning the language and culture helped them learn better in their classes, and their interest in preserving the language and culture. The other area of interest was the students' level of self-confidence acquired through their participation in Navajo language and culture classes. The

assumption was that their interest in the language and culture programs would improve their self-confidence and would be extended to their other classes.

Review of the Methodology

The study used a quantitative approach to gaining data by administering a survey to examine the attitudes and opinions of students toward the Navajo language and culture programs offered by their schools. Before administering the survey, permissions were obtained from the McKinley County School Board and the Superintendent of the McKinley School District. The Superintendent of the Flagstaff School District and the school administrators also gave their approval. Authorizations were also obtained from the parents of students who participated in the study. The researcher met with the teachers and students to explain the purpose of the survey and assured them of the confidentiality of the survey. Data were gained from participating students who had parental permission, were coded, and then analyzed using Survey Monkey.

Summary of Major Findings

A majority of the students believed it was important to learn and know the Navajo language and culture. Approximately 87% of the students knew and spoke the Navajo language, but a majority of that group (about 70%) knew and spoke the language less fluently and not to a great extent. Only 13% indicated that they did not know the language. This trend of the young people losing their language and culture has been the focus of many studies. Walsh (2005) and many other researchers have noted the slow erosion of the language-base of many indigenous communities throughout the world. Despite this trend, the young people surveyed in this study were extremely interested in preserving their language and culture. All the students surveyed believed that the

language and culture should be taught in school. A majority of the students also believed that the Navajo language and culture has helped them understand the subjects taught by the translations of concepts and the meaning of subjects studied. However, it was interesting to note that although their belief that the Navajo language and culture has helped them specifically with reading and math, their responses were evenly distributed between *to a great extent*, *to some extent*, and *not at all*.

The parents also played an important role by authorizing the participation of the children in the bilingual-bicultural program. Many of these parents had relocated to off-reservation communities in search of employment securities, and consequently a majority of these parents knew the culture and spoke the Navajo language. Their authorization to have their children participate in the study verified their desire to have their children learn and know the language and culture of the Navajo people.

The girls were more interested in the Navajo language and culture and wanted to use the language and culture to communicate with their grandparents and others who did not understand the English language. They also wanted to eventually become Navajo language and culture teachers. The boys, on the other hand, wanted to learn the language so they could communicate with other Navajo students who knew the language and culture. This is understandable because traditionally Navajo cultural activities and events rely more on the men to take the role of orchestrating the events.

The self-confidence of students by gender was also examined to determine if their exposure to the language and culture had any influence on them. Of the eight questions posed regarding their self-confidence, the girls had a high percentage on seven of the questions and the boys had a high percentage on only one question. Thus, the girls had a

higher level of self-confidence in school abilities, academic grades, school ranking, and going beyond a four-year college.

A comparative analysis was also conducted to examine the self-confidence levels of the elementary and middle school students. The elementary students showed a higher level of self-confidence than the middle school students. What was unexpected was a higher level of self-confidence among students in the low-graded schools than those in the high-graded schools. At the start of the study, the researcher assumed that the students for the high-graded schools would be more confident in their abilities because of attending schools that were meeting AYP. However, this assumption was not true. The reasons for their opinions may be several, that is, students who scored higher on the self-confidence level were from schools near the Navajo reservation and in the elementary schools. Their parents knew and spoke the Navajo language and practiced the Navajo culture. The fact that the students were near the reservation may allow them to go home more frequently than those further away and also allowed them to participate in many of the traditional cultural events held during the winter months.

Discussion

Fairbank (1996) aptly wrote that the survival of the Native American people, their land, and their way of life depends on the preservation of their language. For the last 400 years, the indigenous people of this land have been battling the abrogation of a way of life first through battles on the frontier and later in the Halls of Congress. The battles have been lost and the Native people have reluctantly moved to reservations across this country. The transition of living carefree and on lands of their choosing to reservation

land assigned by the federal government has been devastating for many of the Native people.

Over the years, there have been many studies conducted to examine the atrocities eventually affecting the Native people and their demise of living on reservations. Some of these studies such as the *Meriam Report, Indian Education: A National Tragedy; A National Challenge*, and many others, have all contributed to addressing the plight of the Native people. These studies have all been important in the formation and implementation of policies to bring about social changes that benefited the Native people.

The area of importance to this study is the adversity facing the language and cultural maintenance and preservation endeavors. The language shift has undeniably embraced the Navajo people as well as many Indian tribes across this country. When I started school back in the late 1950s, all the students spoke only the Navajo language. In the early 1970s, Platero (1992) pointed out that approximately 45% of the children coming to schools were either monolingual or bilingual in the Navajo language and 54% were monolingual in English. Twenty years later the percentage again changed to the point that Navajo children coming to preschool/Head Start have little or no knowledge of the Navajo language. Within the last two years, the Navajo Nation's Department of Dine Education's Head Start program has estimated that only 1 to 2% still use the language at home and playground settings; 10 to 15% are bilingual; and 90% are monolingual in the English language.

The preservation of the Navajo language and culture is the survival of the Navajo people as a distinct group of people. Their land, language, and health system, which is predicated on the cultural ceremonies, are all jeopardized by the language shift currently

in progress. Many of the Native American Indian tribes throughout the country have lost their language and culture and can no longer claim to be part of a distinct group of people. It is even sadder to know that certain cultural knowledge and traditional history of these people are lost forever. As part of its initiative to curtail this shift, the Navajo Nation Council enacted a law in 1984, later amended as the Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005, which recognized the necessity of incorporating the study of Navajo language into schools on the Navajo reservation. It further enacted that the culture, Navajo social studies, civics, and history be included in curriculum of every school serving the Navajo Nation. Because of this law, many schools have implemented language and culture into their school curriculum.

The preservation of a way of life is an important endeavor that rests with the parents, caretakers of language maintenance, and the Navajo Nation Council. It is a sacred responsibility to be seriously embraced. The linguists and anthropologists have all agreed that many indigenous communities are losing their language and culture. At the coming of the western Europeans, there were 300 to 500 Native languages and cultures. Consequently, this diminished to approximately 200 languages still being spoken. Over the years, the different national legislations have provided the avenues to incorporate bilingual-bicultural curriculum into schools. These successful programs are in schools on the Navajo reservation as well as other parts of Indian country. However, to make it more meaningful and ensure the survival of the language, parents and the Navajo Nation have to take full responsibility. The schools are doing whatever they can but the parents need to advocate for longer periods of time for language and culture studies and designation of the bilingual-bicultural program as a main subject area in school curriculum. Researchers

like McCarty, Walsh, and many others all agree that parents cannot entrust the revitalization of our language and culture to the schools; they have to take an active role in the process. Fishman (1991) proposed a vital process that he referred to as “intergenerational communication” in the language that needs to be geographically and demographically concentrated and reinforced by institutions. Thus, there has to be cooperation between schools and the Navajo people in the revitalization of the Navajo language and culture.

In the survey of the five schools, a majority (94%) of the students were interested in the preservation of the language and culture. They strongly believed that it be taught in schools because it helped them understand the subjects they were being taught. This is a very powerful statement made by the students. Native American students across the country have echoed the same sentiments regarding the revitalization and preservation of their language and culture. McCarty, Romero, and Zeped (2006) pointed out this reflective statement made by students who participated in a Native Language Shift and Retention Project. One boy commented that you have to know your own language to succeed. Another stated that his language was an integral part of his identify and it was central to bringing about positive change in this world. A young lady commented that learning her language was a thing of the past. She felt that it was dying out because students did not care to relearn the language. She had also observed her parents and that she did not want to turn out like them.

The latter statement appears to be the belief of some of the younger people. In my survey of the students at the five schools, only 5% espoused this belief. However, it is continually increasing as indicated by studies of the decline of the Navajo language.

Parsons-Yazzie (1995) outlined several reasons. Some of those reasons as to why students are not learning the Navajo language were that the children were ashamed of their language, did not think it was not important to know the language, and that English guaranteed success.

With the interest of language and culture preservation apparent, it has to be the responsibility of the parents and the home environment. The belief by the parents that it should be the responsibility of someone else has been predicted by the traditional story of the creation of the little people or the children. At the time of creation, the Holy People created the children. The process of this creation involved the Holy People and the use of certain ceremonial procedures and the end-result were children. After much discussion, the *Nihookaa' Dineh* (Dine people) decided to let the Holy People raise their children since they were all wise and knowledgeable. After a period of time, the Dine people went back to see how their children were being raised, but they realized their children were not taught in a manner suitable to their expectations. They realized that prayers, songs, and the belief that someone all knowledgeable and wise cannot nurture their children in the manner they wanted; it had to be up to them to provide that guidance on a daily basis (Wilson Aronilth,). This has been the historical pattern of the Western European and its government since their first contact with the Native American people.

Surprises

In the process of examining the attitudes and opinions of Navajo students at five schools enrolled in Navajo language and culture programs offered by their schools, one surprising result was the self-confidence level of the students in the elementary and middle schools. The prediction was that the students in the middle school would have a

higher level of self-confidence level, but the study showed that the students in the elementary school had a higher self-confidence level. What was more surprising was that these students were from the schools designated as low-performing schools. That data seemed to show that the confidence level of students diminished as they progressed into higher grade levels. There also appeared to be a positive relationship between students taking Navajo language and culture classes and their self-confidence levels. Many studies have examined the parents' desire to have their children learn the White man's ways to adequately prepare them for life in that society. However, historical studies have not adequately examined what the children want for themselves. There is beginning to be more interest on the part of youth to relearn the language and culture of the Navajo people. This is especially true of those raised not knowing their language and culture and those living off the reservation.

One other surprise was the format for the type of curriculum used in the schools surveyed in the study. Three of the schools were using the format developed by the Department of Dine Education with some variations reflecting the local community environment. There did not appear to be any curriculum developed by the school specifically for the school other than those developed and employed by the teachers. There are arguments for both approaches. The argument for the use of Department of Dine Education is to establish uniformity in the type of curriculum to be used by all schools on and near the Navajo reservation. This may be positive in a sense that the Navajo Nation government may evaluate the effectiveness of the programs in all schools serving the Navajo children and establish consistency. On the other hand, the development and implementation of locally formulated curriculum would be more

responsive to the local needs and expectations. With the schools developing and implementing their own curriculum there may be more responsiveness from the local people, parents would have ownership, and the community support would be more noticeable.

Conclusions

The Navajo way of life is predicated on the language and culture that have been an integral part of the people since the beginning of time. It is a way of life that is intertwined with their natural surrounding that maintains harmony and balance in a Navajo person's life. We are witnessing the slow erosion of our language and culture that was at one time very important to our elders. So important that they even warned us of a cataclysmic event if we ever forget our language and culture. We are slowly moving in that direction and it is alarming.

If we are to hinder this language and culture shift, the Navajo people need to take initiatives to make the necessary changes. The format for making these changes is already provided by the Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005 enacted by the Navajo Nation Council. The responsibilities of effecting initiatives and activities rest with the parents. This has to be a two-level approach: implement policies through the local school boards and initiate activities for the youth. The parents have to realize that they are the ones who put the school board members into offices. By their constant reminders and electing responsive leaders, they can bring about necessary changes within the schools and its curriculum. However, the parents should not totally depend on the schools for fear of them embracing the belief that it is the school's responsibility to teach language and culture. They should become more involved in implementing activities that would

involve the youth in cultural events that would give them opportunities to use their language and understand its cultural significance. The parents must be reminded of the traditional teaching that they are the ones to set the stage for the use of the Navajo language rather than the youth determining the language to be used.

The common misnomer is that Navajo people migrate to towns and cities to provide a better way of life by exposing their children to the Western European culture. This means getting their children to speak only English and embracing the Western European value system. However, the incorporation of bilingual-bicultural programs in public schools in off-reservation contradicts this assertion. More children are expressing an interest in learning the Navajo language and culture and some have blamed the parents for not teaching them the language and culture. Thus, the impetus for language and cultural preservation is there but the means to making this happen is slow and an uphill battle. In a 2011/2012 survey conducted by the Navajo Department of Dine Education Head Start Program, the parents were asked, "If you had a choice, what language would you prefer your child to speak?" Approximately 75% answered both English and Navajo, 23% answered English, and 2% answered Navajo. Thus, there is an interest on the part of parents to have their children learn Navajo as well as the English language.

Implications for Action

The role of language and culture was determined as being important and vital to the youth's academic achievement. The students noted that it helped them in their classroom and subject matters. They understood what they were being taught and felt more relaxed in their classroom environment. They also agreed that there should be longer periods for the teaching of language and culture in their schools. The school

boards, administrators, and teachers need to realize this interest of the students and give more time for the instruction of the subject. Additionally, the administrators and policy makers need to advocate for longer instruction time and the inclusion of the bilingual-bicultural class as a regular academic course in their schools.

The development of the self-confidence of students is also important. The teachers need to realize this and formulate the means to emphasize this endeavor. This includes pursuing more community and parental involvement that offers student participation. The study revealed that the elementary students were more confident in their abilities, but it diminished as they progressed to a higher grade. Teachers need to be cognizant of this dilemma and do whatever is necessary to continue the self-confidence level of their students as they progress in their grade levels.

The Navajo Nation government has to take the initiative of communicating with the federal and state governments for legislative changes that would incorporate the laws of the Navajo Nation. Federal legislations have provided the means, but the state does not always provide the process for these mandates. As a truly sovereign Nation, we have every right to make this happen. The Navajo Nation also needs to endorse this movement by partially funding the incorporation of Navajo language and culture programs in schools on and near the Navajo reservation.

Recommendations for Further Research

The federal and state governments should follow the Navajo Sovereignty Education Act of 2005 serving as the law of the Navajo Nation. Subsections 111 and 112 address the incorporation of Navajo language, culture, and social studies into curriculum of every school serving the Navajo Nation. This Navajo Nation law needs to be analyzed

to determine its sovereign strength as it relates to its implementation in every school across the Navajo reservation as well as schools off the reservation that enroll Navajo students.

Another recommendation would be a thorough review of all schools not making AYP and those making AYP, to assess the type of bilingual-bicultural programs in use. This can be used to compare and identify successful programs that can be replicated in all schools serving the Navajo Nation. The approach would be to review the involvement of parents and communities and, if absent, they can incorporate how they should be involved. As part of this research, the limited immersion programs currently in operation on the Navajo reservation could also be reviewed and made a Navajo Nation government-supported program.

The final recommendation would be to research the impact of embracing the Western European value system and abandoning the Navajo value system. We are all too familiar with the many social ills currently eroding the very fiber that has held our people together for centuries. This has become more apparent within the last 40 years among our youth. Is it because we have not taught them the traditional teachings of *K'ei*? The very foundation of the growth of our Navajo social order is founded on the concept of *K'ei* and how it governs the many positive behaviors of the Navajo people. How do we reinstitute the traditional teachings that are most important to the survival of our people for the next several centuries?

Concluding Remarks

The Navajo Nation is a growing nation that made a significant contribution to this country. During one of the darkest hours of our country's history, a group of young

Navajo boys sent coded messages that helped win the war in the Pacific Theater and that were never broken by the Japanese . These young boys were members of the Navajo Code Talkers who were honored 47 years after World War II on September 17, 1992. Today we are trying to save the language that saved many lives during those five days of fighting for the Island of Iwo Jima in 1945. If the Great Spirit meant for only one language and culture to exist, he/she would have made only one language and culture. As it is, there are many cultures within this country and they all have beautiful attributes to offer this country and its people. For the Navajo Nation, it is a survival of a people who have lived in the southwest for thousands of years.

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APPENDIX A

APPROVAL LETTER FROM FLAGSTAFF SCHOOL DISTRICT

Flagstaff Unified School District

3285 East Sparrow Avenue

Flagstaff, AZ 86004

928-527-6002

Flagstaff Unified School District Statement of Research

Date: April 2, 2012

This letter serves as an indication that the research described below has been reviewed by the office of the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and the Department of Research & Assessment and has been **APPROVED** to be conducted in the following schools during the dates specified. Any participation by the school is completely **VOLUNTARY**.

Dates research must occur in: April 2, 2012 - April 1, 2013

Schools where research may occur: Puente de Hozho

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Navajo Language and Culture Programs in schools that are making Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and those that are not making AYP. One of the biggest problems confronting many of the schools on the Navajo reservation is that they are not meeting the requirement of making 10% annual proficiency improvement. This has become a major concern for teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, and the Navajo Nation. The latest assessment on the progress of schools on the Navajo reservation in fulfilling the legislative mandate of achieving 10% proficiency per year for the last nine years is at 35% rather than 70% as legislatively projected. With many of the schools stilled at a low percent progression over long periods of time, there is a legitimate concern and question as to why these schools are not achieving and more importantly what recourse do schools have to improve the performance of schools so they can meet their AYP. This study will examine the types of language and culture programs of schools who are making AYP and those who are not making AYP. If the success of the Navajo Language and Culture Programs in schools making AYP are noticeable, I hope to examine the programs in schools not making AYP.

I have chosen two schools and will administer surveys at both schools to students and teachers on the role of the language and

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL LETTERS FROM GALLUP, NEW MEXICO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Administrative staff

KENNEDY MID SCHOOL

600 S. BOARDMAN AVE.

GALLUP NEW MEXICO, 87301 Kathleen Wood - Stil,6th

Thomas Ray _ 7th, 6th

Counseling Staff

Jack McFarland

Principal

Rachel Rodriguez

Assistant Principal

April 30, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to verify that Kennedy Mid is willing to participate in the dissertation student of Mr. David Tsosie, pending approval from our District's Central Office. The dissertation study is titled "A Study of Navajo Language and Culture Program", to which Mr. Tsosie has explained the parameters of the project.

We are happy to support the graduate students from ASU.

Rachel A. Rodriguez

Assistant Principal

SCHOOL PHONE - (505) 721-3100

SCHOOL FAX - (505) 721-3199

Jefferson Elementary School

300 Mollica Drive

Gallup, NM 87301

(505) 721-3000 Fax (505) 721-3099

To Whom It May Concern:

February 16, 2012

This letter serves to verify that Jefferson Elementary will be participating in the dissertation study of David Tsosie, *A Study of Navajo Language and Culture Program*. He has explained the parameters of the project and provided me with all relevant documents, including a copy of the survey tools and letters of permission. We are glad to support ASU and its graduate students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kim Orr
Principal

APPENDIX C

PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX D
STUDENT SURVEY

This survey will ask you questions about the Navajo Language and Culture program at this school and about your abilities as a student. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses on this survey will be anonymous and will not affect your grade in this course in any way. Thank you for your feedback.

1. Do you believe that Navajo language and culture are important?
a. Strongly agree ___ b. Agree ___ c. undecided ___ d. disagree ___ e. Strongly disagree ___
2. Do your parents know and speak the Navajo language?
a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
3. Do you know and speak the Navajo language?
a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
4. Do your parents know the Navajo culture?
a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
5. Do you know the Navajo culture?
a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
6. How many hours of the Navajo language do you speak a day?
a. 0 hour ___ b. 1 to 2 hours ___ c. 3 to 4 hours ___ d. More than 4 hours ___
7. Do you believe schools should teach Navajo language and culture?
a. Yes ___ b. No ___ c. Don't know ___
8. Do you believe knowing the Navajo language and culture has helped you learn better in your class (es)?
a. Yes ___ b. No ___
9. Does the Navajo language and culture help you understand the subjects you are being taught?
a. Yes ___ b. No ___
10. Do you enjoy learning about the Navajo language and culture?
a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
11. Do you believe that learning about Navajo language and culture helped you perform better in reading?
a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___

12. Do you believe that learning about Navajo language and culture helped you perform better in math?
 a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
13. Does having a Navajo teacher help you understand your schoolwork?
 a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
14. Does having a Navajo teacher help you enjoy school more?
 a. To a great extent ___ b. To some extent ___ c. Not at all ___
15. How would you use what you learn in the Navajo language and culture class?
 a. To talk with other Navajo students ___
 b. To know the language and culture ___
 c. To talk with my grandparents or others who do not know the English language ___
 d. To become a Navajo language and culture teacher ___
 e. I don't know ___
16. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with your close friends?
 a. I am the best ___ c. I am average ___
 b. I am above average ___ d. I am below average ___
17. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class at school?
 a. I am the best ___ c. I am average ___
 b. I am above average ___ d. I am below average ___
18. Where do you think you would rank in your class in high school?
 a. I am the best ___ c. I am average ___
 b. I am above average ___ d. I am below average ___
19. Do you think you have the ability to complete college?
 a. Yes ___
 b. No ___
20. Where do you think you would rank in your class in college?
 a. I would be the best ___ c. I would be average ___
 b. I would be above average ___ d. I would be below average ___
21. In order to become a doctor, lawyer, or university professor, work beyond four years of college is necessary. How likely do you think it is that you could complete such advance work?
 a. Very likely ___ c. Not at all ___
 b. Somewhat likely ___

22. Where do you think you would rank in your Navajo language and culture class?
- a. I am the best ____
 - b. I am above average ____
 - c. I am average ____
 - d. I am below average ____
23. Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your opinion, how good do you think your work is?
- a. I am the best ____
 - b. I am above average ____
 - c. I am average ____
 - d. I am below average ____
24. What kind of grades do you think you are capable of getting?
- a. Mostly As ____
 - b. Mostly Bs ____
 - c. Mostly Cs ____
 - d. Mostly Ds ____
 - e. Mostly Fs ____
25. I am a:
- a. Boy ____
 - b. Girl ____
26. What grade are you in?
- 3rd ____
 - 4th ____
 - 5th ____
 - 6th ____
 - 7th ____
 - 8th ____
27. Which school do you attend?
- a. Jefferson Elementary ____
 - b. Chief Manuelito Middle School ____
 - c. Rocky View Elementary ____
 - d. Puente de Hozho Elementary ____
 - e. Mount Elden Middle School ____

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL



To: Dee Spencer
ED

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 05/21/2012

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 05/21/2012

IRB Protocol #: 1204007736

Study Title: The Role of Navajo Language and Culture Programs in Schools Making AYP and those Not

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.