

Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present:
A Qualitative Study of Navajo Parent School Placement Decisions

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the contemporary school placement decisions of Navajo parents in the reservation community of Piñon, Arizona. School placement decisions are defined as the school where the parent chooses to enroll his/her child for schooling. Twelve Navajo parents participated in this qualitative study, which explored their past educational experiences in order to garner insight into the current school placement choices they have made for their children. Navajo parents who live within the community of Piñon, AZ who currently have school-aged children living in their household were recruited to participate in this study. Participants took part in 60- to 90-minute interviews that included questions related to their prior educational experiences and current school placement choices for their children. Parents were given an opportunity to reflect about the school placement decisions they have made for their children.

The variety of schools Navajo parents are able to choose from were illuminated. These findings have implications for education decision makers by providing insight into which schools parents are choosing and why. The study will assist Navajo Nation policy makers in future educational planning, and may have more general implications for American Indian/Alaskan Native education. This may assist Diné (Navajo) Education policy makers in making future decisions regarding the newly developed Diné Department of Education and its education planning. Participants will also benefit from the study by being able to understand how the past has impacted the school placement choices they have made. In doing so parents may be better able to articulate the impetus behind the

choices they make for their children, thereby becoming better advocates for themselves and their children.

The results of this study impacts scholarly literature as a new viewpoint in the area of school choice. Navajo parents represent a distinct group who make educational choices within a specific context. This study is unique as the impact of historical Indian education policies is considered. Future studies can further expand on the topic creating a unique area of research in the field of Indian education.

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To my grandparents who instilled in me the teachings of the Beauty Way.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study examines the school placement decisions of Navajo parents who reside in the reservation community of Piñon, Arizona. For the purposes of this study, school placement decisions will be defined as the school where the parent chooses to enroll his/her child for schooling. The impact that past educational experiences have had on the school placement decisions of Navajo parents were explored. In this chapter I will address the purpose of this study, research questions, and background information including information about the study site. Finally, I will share the methodology and conceptual framework employed for this study.

Purpose of the Study

Families who reside within the Navajo Nation currently have several school enrollment options for their children. This is a result of the array of schools that were introduced throughout history as a means to meet the educational needs of the Navajo school aged population. In the past providing access to schools proved to be a challenge for Navajo education officials. The vast landscape of the Navajo reservation and its lack of infrastructure made providing educational access a challenge. Many Navajo communities did not possess the complete array of K-12 services required in order to receive a complete education. As families exhausted their educational resources locally, they were forced to choose the next schooling option for their children. It was not uncommon for students to attend the local elementary school until he/she was

promoted and therefore needed to enroll in a middle school and/or high school programs outside of the community. Students would be bussed to outside communities to continue their educational programs. Other times parents enrolled their children in boarding school programs outside of the community. In recognition of the gap in educational services locally, a variety of school options and programs were made available to Navajo students. As a consequence, many Navajo families eventually became accustomed to sending their children outside of the community to attend school.

Although time has passed and educational access has improved greatly, the variety of school programs still exist. They include the following: Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools, formerly called Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, which include tribal community and grant schools that are funded by the BIE but are sanctioned by tribes to operate under the authority of Public Law 93-638 and Public Law 100-297. The BIE also continues to support a variety of off-reservation schools and dormitory programs, which are still available to Navajo students. In addition, there are many public schools, charter schools and parochial schools that continue to operate throughout the reservation.

Many Navajo parents still maintain the practice of sending their children outside of their home community for schooling despite the fact that local school districts are available to service students of the community. This is often the case in the community of Piñon, Arizona.

In the past, Piñon community members were not able to attend school in Piñon beyond the primary grades due to a lack of educational services. For many

years only one BIA dormitory school was available to Piñon students. In order to continue their education Piñon students were bussed outside the community to attend school elsewhere. This included busing to public schools and attending bordertown dormitory programs as well as BIA boarding schools outside of Piñon. As a result many Navajo parents in Piñon have experienced a wide variety of school programs as a part of their personal histories. This was often a consequence of the rural nature Piñon and other Navajo communities as well as the BIA's unwillingness or ability to provide educational services locally. Experiencing a variety of schools has often impacted the manner in which parents make school placement decisions for their own children.

Parents were often placed in the predicament of choosing from a variety of schooling options due to the lack of services in Piñon. Since then the Piñon Unified School District has been established and now provides an array of services from pre K through 12. Although a full array of services is available, many parents still continue the practice of enrolling their children outside of the community for schooling. This phenomenon is not uncommon throughout the reservation as illustrated in a statement made by Ed Parisienne, a BIA administrator who commented on the matter in a Gallup Independent Newspaper interview (2005):

...many of the Navajo students who attend public school in the county transfer in and out of BIA schools during the year. There are even a number of cases annually where a Navajo student may start the school

year in a BIA school, transfer to one of the public schools in the winter and then finish out the year in a BIA school.

As Navajo parents in Piñon and other Navajo communities continue to exercise their educational right to choose where to enroll their students, educational leaders throughout the system continue to bear the consequences of their choices. The educational histories of parents in Piñon, AZ have no doubt included attendance in a variety of schools outside of their home communities. The extent to which the prior educational experiences of Navajo parents have influenced current school placement decisions have not been explored prior to this study.

Research Questions

In order to gain further insight into the impact of past educational experiences on school placement behaviors of Navajo parents in Piñon, AZ the following research questions will be addressed:

1. *What are the educational experiences of Navajo parents with regard to the type of schools (public, BIA, Community Controlled) available on the reservation?*
2. *How do their prior educational experiences influence school placement decisions for their own children?*
3. *Are there other extraneous factors involved in parental decision making about school placement? If so, what are these factors?*

The findings of this study are especially important to local school officials in Piñon as well as Navajo educational and tribal leaders who strive to meet the educational needs of the families they serve. Study findings would also be of great use to many Navajo communities. It provides a knowledge base for policy makers to better understand the school placement behaviors of Navajo parents. By better understanding the school placement behaviors and the impetus behind parental choices, Navajo educational leaders can create increasingly responsive school programs. As the Navajo Nation continues to exert their sovereignty through the enactment of policies that guide enrollment and the sharing of academic information, it is important for policy makers to understand the school placement behaviors of Navajo parents. The completion of this study will impact scholarly literature as a new viewpoint in the area of school choice. Navajo parents represent a distinct group who make educational choices within a specific context. Future studies can further expand on the topic creating a unique area of research in the field of Indian education.

Foreshadowed Problem

Throughout my life I have experienced several defining moments which have developed my personal interest in Indian education. Eventually these epiphanies evolved into research interests. Each epiphany, powerful in its own right, moved me to generate questions that I would eventually work to resolve through research. In retrospect, I can remember each significant moment and its impact on my thinking. The following is a description of several defining moments and how they eventually evolved into this research project.

A few days after my father's passing my sister, my brother and I were charged with the duty of rummaging through my father's belongings and making the painstaking decision about what to do with the piles of paper, books and letters my father kept in his possession. We sat together laughing and crying at times remembering and discovering all the parts that made the man we knew as our dad. It was at this time that I came across a piece of notebook paper nestled between copies of resumes that described my father's extensive technical schooling and employment as a structural draftsman and steel fabrication designer. It was a description my father had hand written on a piece of notebook paper. This is what it said:

One early autumn morning I ventured out for a small mountain town in southwestern Colorado before returning to my away from home school in northern Utah. Because we never had any quick exit transportation like a vehicle, I began my long walk to the roadside store. It was a very exhausting walk because I had to climb a valley between a mesa and another with a river to cross. It was about a good five miles walk along the side of Mc Elmo Creek. It was not considered a river because it dries up from time to time when the snow melts away. By the time the water reaches our area there would be little or none to use for farming or for animals to drink. It was bad salty tasting water for a human to drink or cook with. It is still good for farming and the animals love it. After collecting my senses and energy I had to wait to hitch hike a ride at the roadside store.

After I read the passage I realized that it was a description of my father's return journey to the Intermountain Boarding School in Brigham City, Utah. I appreciated the deep descriptions that must have resulted from my father's years as a sheep herder in the landscape near McElmo Creek, Utah. It was obvious to me that my father had benefited from a great deal of informal education while at home. I wondered how his parents must have felt when he was sent away to school so far from home, so far from the benefits of the education he might receive in the outdoor landscapes while tending sheep.

On that same day I came across my father's high school transcripts from the Intermountain Boarding School. I discovered that he had first attended Shiprock Boarding School in Shiprock, New Mexico and was then transferred to the Intermountain Boarding School in Brigham City, Utah. I remember calculating the distance between Shiprock Boarding School and my father's home in Aneth, Utah. Today it is a two hour trip by car. Intermountain Indian School would have been over four hundred and eleven miles away. Did his parents decide and understand where their son would be sent to? Did they approve of sending their son so far away from home? How much of a choice were his parents able to execute? My father was never able to answer these questions for me. He very rarely spoke of his past educational experiences, almost as if they didn't exist. This made me wonder about the ramifications of sending a child so far from home during his formative years. What was the impact of this parental choice or lack thereof? These questions continued to plague me as I realized that my father was not the only child to make this long journey away from home.

In contrast, my mother was very open about her own school experiences. She had begun her schooling at the Piñon Boarding School in Piñon, Arizona where she remembers being in kindergarten for several years. She speculated that this was probably due to her lack of English language abilities. Later on she was transported four hours away to the bordertown dormitory in Winslow, Arizona along with several other extended family members. She attended the Winslow Public Schools and returned each night to the dormitory where she stayed for months on end with other Navajo and Hopi children. Her stories were bittersweet. She told tales about the strict dorm attendants and their sometimes harsh discipline. I made mind movies about her long sad trips back to the dormitory, wrapped in blankets in the back of pick-up trucks. My mother also spoke of the positive experiences she had. She had made many friends and even worked as a maid during the weekends.

As the eldest daughter, my mother was responsible for caring for her younger siblings. To do so she accepted employment at the make-shift school enrollment office for BIA schools which was housed at the Piñon Boarding School each summer. She worked there every summer as a teenager where she processed enrollment applications for community youth. Students from Piñon were enrolled to attend the various Indian boarding schools across the southwest. She enjoyed this and often told stories about how students would walk into the office and enroll themselves to far away places they had never seen and knew very little about. At the end of the summer several Greyhound busses would arrive to take the students on their journeys to boarding schools in Oregon, Utah,

California, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. According to my mother, parents rarely accompanied their sons and daughters for enrollment. Many students frequently changed their enrollment from year to year.

My mother's stories of her own school experiences and those of community members intrigued me from the time I was a little girl. It all seemed so dramatic and fascinating. I enjoyed listening to my mother recount the stories of her educational experiences and often found myself amazed at her unique experiences which were so vastly different from my own. Her experience like many Navajo youth was nothing like my typical public school experience within the Albuquerque Public Schools. I had simply attended one school district throughout my entire educational experience. I attended an elementary school which was a feeder school to my middle school from which students were sent to the local high school. At no time did I ever have a voice in which school I would attend. How must it have felt to leave home to attend school? Again, I wondered how my grandparents felt sending their children so far away from home.

As I became increasingly aware of the personal educational histories of my parents, I became greatly captivated with the history of Indian education, for I began to realize that these personal stories constituted a story "writ large" for countless Native students. I enjoyed reading books that recounted the experiences of individuals who had experienced the early systems of Indian education throughout the United States. I found that I was able to make sense of how my parents viewed education and the impact it had on their adult lives. One parent remembered bittersweet memories and became a supporter of our formal

education as well as the traditional education we received from our grandparents. The other parent spoke very little about his education but sternly believed in gaining academic knowledge as the priority. Examining Indian education has given me great insight into the impact its systems have had on the lives of my parents and then how they in turn shaped my own life and interests.

Eventually both of my parents graduated and were then sent to large metropolitan cities far from their homes on the Navajo reservation. As a part of the relocation programs they were sent away to gain technical vocational training in order to assimilate into the American way of life. They both eventually completed their training programs and became employed. My father would continue his education throughout his life.

At the age of five I remember moving from Piñon, Arizona to Albuquerque, New Mexico to attend kindergarten. There I began my schooling but maintained close ties to my maternal grandparents in accordance with Navajo tradition. My maternal grandparents lovingly accepted me into their home each summer where I became immersed into Navajo life and culture. My cousins became my brothers and sisters and our grandparents our care takers. It was at this time that I began to realize the differences in our schooling. The boarding schools intrigued me. I often fantasized about staying at the dormitories with my brothers and sisters. However, my parents would not hear of it and always picked me up a few weeks before school began. My mother would always tell me that we moved away from Piñon so that I wouldn't have to attend a boarding school. At one point I presented the idea of possibly staying with my grandparents in

order to attend boarding school with my cousins. My father absolutely wouldn't entertain the idea and sternly said no. He firmly stated that he would never send me away to a boarding school. Consequently, I attended public schooling in Albuquerque, New Mexico where I eventually graduated high school. My cousins attended a variety of schools both within and outside the local community. They often moved from one school to the next at their own request and their parents obliged them. Some attended the local Piñon public schools but others attended local community schools or stayed in dormitories far away from their homes in Winslow, Arizona, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. I wondered why my parents never included me in decision making or solicited my opinion regarding where I might attend school.

Years later my love for rural community life carried forth to my career decisions. I vowed to dedicate my career to reservation communities. I became an elementary school teacher and began my first teaching position at a rural Navajo community school in the Eastern Navajo Agency. At last I would become a part of a reservation school community even if it was as a teacher.

Almost immediately I couldn't help but notice that although the school that I worked at was situated right in the community, many community members chose to send their children elsewhere. Our school was often compared to the local public school district whose buses drove past our school each morning taking away students from the community. Students endured the long ride to attend an elementary school miles away from their homes. I often wondered why parents chose not to send their children to our school. Several staff members who

had school aged children of their own even sent their children to the public school. When I would ask them why they would not give clear answers but merely indicated that they didn't want their children attending our community school.

I had hoped that these sentiments were simply characteristic of the first community I worked at. Unfortunately, I observed this same phenomenon at every school I became employed with. I vowed to continue to devote my career to BIE and tribal community schools in order to improve the conditions of Indian education so that one day community schools would be the first choice for parents. Consequently my career has included employment at two Navajo community schools, one BIE school located within a Pueblo Indian village, and a tribal community school located on a reservation adjacent to Phoenix, Arizona. Each community has buses from both public and BIE community schools that pass one another each morning picking up students. In one community the BIE school was located directly across the highway from the local public school. Some employees dropped their children off at the public school and then drove across the street to work at our school. School board members even sent their own children to public schools. At each school we struggled to elevate our status with community members in hopes of recruiting students from the respective community.

Certain parents simply had their preferences and executed them through school placement. I continued to witness this phenomenon throughout my career. I have continued to ponder why parents make the decisions they do. The

preferences of my own parents would echo in my head as I remembered the choices my parents made for our family. They were adamant about leaving Piñon so that I could attend a “good school.” To my parents a “good school” meant a public school.

As I witnessed the first hand placement decisions of my parents, I began to realize that they had chosen to move to an urban setting with my education specifically in mind. Their own experiences with education left them no choice. They understood the impact a good education would have on my future. I would also see the parents within the communities I worked make the same choices. They made educational choices that were constrained by their own experiences. Their own experiences shaped the choices they felt were accessible to them. As I began to realize this phenomenon I realized how important it is to understand the impetus behind parental choice in the school placement of Navajo children. I could see how the past experiences of my own parents shaped their decisions about the schools my sister and I would attend.

Each school site at which I have been employed has worked at maintaining their student population always cognizant of the ability of parents to choose another school in close proximity. With school funding dependent upon student counts, maintaining the student population is of great importance. Administrators diligently work together with school staff to meet the needs of their parents in order to maintain their student population with the hope of increasing student enrollment.

Background

The United States began to include provisions for Navajo education beginning in 1794 and extended these policies throughout the treaty making period (1778-1871) (Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Indian Education Programs [BIA OIEP], 2005). Following the treaty period Congress formalized provisions for educational services on Indian reservations by passing the Snyder Act in 1921, which allowed the BIA to direct congressional funds to aid American Indian tribes in many areas including health and education (BIA OIEP, 2005). Thus the education of American Indian children was primarily viewed as a federal responsibility. Since then the BIA has struggled to meet the educational needs of Navajo children. Their efforts have proven disorganized and insufficient (McCarty, 2002; see also Connell Szasz, 1999; Thompson, 1975). Their disorganized efforts throughout the years resulted in a variety of programming that eventually included contracting with public schools. The BIA still maintains various programs to serve Navajo students. Recently, both the BIA and Navajo Nation educational officials have begun to communicate and establish a working relationship.

Currently, the BIE oversees a total of 183 three elementary, secondary, residential and peripheral dormitories in 23 states (BIE, 2010). These schools are located on 64 Indian reservations. The BIE also supports off-reservation boarding schools and peripheral dormitories near reservations for students attending public schools. These schools are often deemed bordertown dormitories. One hundred twenty-four schools are tribally controlled under P.L. 93-638 Indian Self

Determination Contracts or P.L. 100-297 Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act. Fifty-nine schools are operated by the BIE (BIE, 2010). The BIE also oversees two post-secondary schools. In school year 2010-2011 the BIE provided education for approximately 42,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children at 164 elementary and secondary schools on 64 reservations throughout the United States (BIE, 2010).

In 2005, the Navajo Nation elevated the status of the Division of Diné Education to the Department of Diné Education (DODE) by amending titles ten and two of the Navajo Nation Code. The amendments, encoded in the Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005, enable the former division to operate more like a state department of education with a superintendent and a Navajo Nation-wide elected board of education. Within section 3 of the new amendments, the tribe commits itself to creating cooperative relationships with all education providers serving Navajo students in hopes of achieving educational goals via policies and Navajo Nation laws. Within the amendments it is specified that Navajo Nation policies and laws are to be applied to the highest extent with regard to the operation of schools. The amendments recognize the existence and jurisdiction over public and charter schools receiving Impact Aid (P.L.874.) funds for Navajo students as well as local community schools. The Navajo Nation defines the term local community schools as inclusive of all K-12 schools serving the tribe and funded by the BIA. This includes both BIA operated schools and community controlled schools as well as border-town residential facilities.

The Navajo Nation has exerted its sovereignty by recognizing the various school choice options available to its students and taking action to coordinate resources to oversee each type of educational provider. As the Navajo Nation seeks to oversee all school systems serving Navajo students, it is of great interest to discern school preference and placement behaviors of parents. These placement behaviors and the impetus behind them may shed light on the needs of Navajo parents. Understanding the placement behaviors and the motives behind them would enable the tribe to better meet the needs of Navajo families. The tribe may then make future decisions regarding which schools and programs are able to meet the specific needs and wants of Navajo parents.

The increase in educational accountability and efforts to align schools with tribal priorities further illuminates the issue of school placement. As Navajo education leaders work to create a more cohesive educational system for Navajo students, student placement decisions are of great importance and may impact future policy decisions. In order to make informed policy and laws, understanding placement behaviors and motives of Navajo parents is of great significance.

Research Site

Piñon is located in the northeast corner of the state of Arizona 42 miles west of Chinle, Arizona and is home to 2, 943 Indian residents (Piñon Chapter, 2004). The small community is located on the Navajo reservation and is situated off of Indian Route 4. Piñon is part of the Central Navajo Agency. Navajo speakers know the community as Be'ak'id Baa Ahoodzani. This can be translated

to mean a body of water in a sunken area (Piñon Chapter, 2004). It was also reported that the Navajo name might also be in reference to a drilled well in the area (Wilson, 1995, p. 43).

The community sits adjacent to the Hopi reservation and was hard hit by Navajo Hopi land dispute. At one point Piñon was deemed a part of the Joint Use Area (JUA) and was home to the JUA police department. Many refugees from the relocation aftermath continue to reside in Piñon to date (Piñon Chapter, 2004).

Figure 1. illustrates the location of the research site.



Figure 1 Diagram of the community of Pinon as it is situated within the Navajo reservation.

The 2000 census data reports Piñon's total population as 3,066, which includes an Indian population of 2, 943 individuals (Piñon Chapter, 2004).

Piñon's per capita income is \$5,478. Seventy-seven percent of the population five years and older speak Navajo and English in the home. Piñon, an interior community of the reservation, is unique in the percentage of community members who speak Navajo. Communities on the periphery of the reservation often have fared worse in terms of language retention.

Schools that service the area include the Piñon Unified School District with an enrollment of over 1,500 students. The district includes Piñon Elementary School, Piñon Middle School, and Piñon High School. Piñon Head Start also services the community with an enrollment of 30 students. The Piñon Community School also has a kindergarten program for community members. In addition, the Piñon Community School also has dormitory program. The Piñon Community School rests on the site of the original Piñon Boarding School grounds.

As a child I spent my summers in Piñon, Arizona at the home of my maternal grandparents who lived three and a half miles northeast of Piñon in an area called Burnt Forest. Our family home is situated at the end of a dirt road that winds through a landscape of clumpy sagebrush skimming the edge of a cedar tree forest. My maternal great grandfather had made his home there and it was there that my grandmother and her siblings grew up. Eventually her brothers married and followed the Navajo custom of moving to the homesteads of their wives. My grandmother and her sisters remained in Burnt Forest until they too had families of their own. The five sisters remained in Burnt Forest and raised their families there.

Living in Burnt Forest meant living off the land and participating in traditional ceremonies as dictated by the Navajo clan system and our reciprocal relationship with members of the Many Goats Clan. My grandparents raised their children in Burn Forest in between the long stretches of time in which their children were away at school.

The road from our Burnt Forest home to the Indian Route 4 has never been paved. During the winter months and rainy seasons the three miles of dirt road often becomes impassable. Daily trips into Piñon are a necessity as the small town is home to a supermarket, school district, gas station, post office, health care center and chapter house. As a child I followed my grandparents to the homes of clan relatives who also lived off windy unpaved roads. Many lessons were learned each summer that I spent with my grandparents. It was in Piñon that I first discovered my interest in Indian education. Therefore it is fitting that Piñon continue to be a place of learning and discovery for my research interests.

Conceptual Framework

For the purpose of analysis, I have chosen to utilize an alternative theory of educational choice. In their book, *“To Remain an Indian”*: *Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education*, K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty (2006) follow the historical footprints of Indian education in order to garner insight into the lessons learned with regard to the notions of choice and self-determination. In doing so democracy is critically examined with special attention paid to the federal policies and practices that have impacted Native Americans so profoundly.

Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) have proposed a unique explanation of educational choice as it operates within Native American communities. A distinction has been made between the uses of the term *choice* as it is used in popular conceptions of educational choice (e.g., school voucher systems and charter schools) and the phenomenon of educational choice as it occurs within Native America. The distinction is made in order to consider the historical and social context that popular notions of school choice often disregard. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) argue that within Native America, "...choice operates in linked domains of individual choice and community self-determination that are rooted in the inherent sovereignty of Native nations" (p.9). Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) believe that perceptions of and opportunities for choice are conditioned by poverty, discrimination, federal control, oppressive school practices, and economic and infrastructural underdevelopment. This theory differs from typical notions of choice as it considers the operations of race, social class, language and power. As Native American parents exercise educational choice within the context of their reservation communities, their decisions operate at the family level but are embedded within systems of shared values.

By utilizing Lomawaima and McCarty's definition of educational choice, the educational choices of Navajo parents can be explained as a consequence of their personal experiences related to conditions of poverty within the family, as well as discrimination, federal control policies, oppression within the school environment, and the lack of economic and infrastructure within the Navajo

reservation. This provides further insight into the context and constraints that impact the educational choices they make for their families.

In addition to the recognition that choice is shaped by distinct conditions within Native America, Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) also offer a theoretical framework for articulating the historical shifts in federal policies and practices. They propose the model of the “Safety Zone Theory” which reveals the changes in Indian educational policies based upon the notion that policies are a reflection of “...an ongoing struggle over cultural difference and its perceived threat, or benefit, to a sense of shared American identity” (2006, p.6). As a result schools that serve Native people have reflected this struggle. Indian schools and communities have struggled to maintain their identities in between policy changes. Some eras were deemed safer than others to support their notions of sovereignty. Schools are sensitive to these shifts in policy as they are a primary institution that communities look towards to develop their citizenry.

Utilizing Lomawaima and McCarty’s safety zone theory to examine the educational experiences and choices of Navajo parents in Piñon, Arizona helps illustrate the impact of historical and social contexts on the availability of school programming. Navajo parents in Piñon, Arizona have experienced school choice or lack thereof within the context of a rural reservation community as a consequence of the federal policies worked out in the metaphorical safety zones that, historically and today, have circumscribed those choices. Parents’ prior educational histories are unique and reflect the BIA policies that constrained the choices of parents in Piñon, Arizona.

Lomawaima and McCarty's theory recognizes the historical impact and social context in which Navajo parents make school placement decisions and is therefore an appropriate lens for analysis.

Methodology

In order to capture both the prior educational experiences and school placement decisions of Navajo parents in Piñon, Arizona, a phenomenological study has been undertaken. In-depth interviews capture the personal histories and school placement decisions of Navajo parents who reside in the community of Piñon, Arizona. This qualitative study is grounded in Indigenous methodologies stemming from Navajo values and beliefs. Interview methods reflect a respect for traditional Navajo ways of knowing and relating. Special attention has been paid to comply with the Navajo Nation Human Research and Review Board's (NNHRRB) rules and procedures in order to gain access and permission to conduct research within the Navajo Nation.

Navajo Framework for Learning

Diné College, a Navajo tribal college, has integrated the Diné philosophy of traditional living systems into their educational philosophy. Within their framework, students progress through learning experiences guided by the life cycles inherent in traditional Navajo ways of thinking and being. This philosophy, referred to in the Navajo language as Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóó, provides principles for life and well being (Office of Diné Education Philosophy, 1994). It represents the Navajo outlook on life. This philosophy is expressed in ideas and values related to the natural processes identified by the Diné within

each cardinal direction. Through this process, each day, like the journey of the sun, individuals progress through each stage of learning. This process of learning is cyclical and iterative as we learn from life experiences daily.

Each cardinal direction is associated with a Navajo sacred mountain and aspect of learning. According to creation myths, the Holy people created the four directions. They believed that these directions have a spiritual knowledge and discipline for the Diné. As described here by Wilson Aronlith Jr. (1992), this learning process is a guide for thinking:

In the beginning, Talking God said the Diné must know that the four directions form our thoughts and thinking. Our thoughts create things and those thoughts and thinking make us who we are. We must constantly strive to identify ourselves by and with these four directions because this completes spiritual unity in our life. We must search for quiet places and hours to make contact with the four directions. When we make contact, spiritual thinking takes place, where all information and all thoughts are used to guide us along the path of the Holy People. We thus gain knowledge and wisdom. This makes us understand the power of our thoughts. It makes us who we are. It creates, forms and brings materialistic things to our hands. It underlies the movement of our body and the movement of the universe. (p.28)

Each cardinal direction is further expressed by thought processes which the Diné follow beginning in the east (Aronlith, 1992). Diné follow the processes beginning in the east and follow the journey of the sun clockwise eventually

ending in the west. The east is associated with the process nitsáhákees, which is associated with thoughts and thinking. The south is associated with the process of nahatá, which is associated with planning. The west is associated with iiná, which is life and living. The fourth and final process, siih hasin, describes the process of assurance and hope and is associated with the north. Following these processes ensure harmony and balance in life.

As the Navajo context cannot be ignored, it is only fitting that a Navajo framework be utilized as the process for conducting research. Within this project, the principles of Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóó are espoused to as the researcher and participants move through each process. The project begins with the process of thinking as research questions are formulated together with foreshadowed problems. Planning of the research project is then conducted as the researcher carefully plans her methodology. In order to learn from lived experiences, participants are interviewed and their life experiences are shared. Finally, conclusions and implications are made and the researcher assures that the data is presented for knowledge and future learning.

As a Navajo researcher, I have situated this study within a framework that honors the context and people it involves.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the purposes of this study, research questions, background information, study site information, as well as the conceptual and methodological framework utilized. In the next chapter I will provide an overview of Navajo educational history and a review of literature

related to school choice. In the third chapter, I will discuss methodology beginning with research questions and design followed by indigenous methodologies and data collection methods. Chapter four includes the presentation of participants through narrative profiles. The focus of Chapter five is the prior educational histories of participants. Data is presented within the theoretical framework of Lomawaima and McCarty (2006). Chapter six presents the parental placement decisions of participants which are also presented within the theoretical framework. Finally, Chapter seven provides a conclusion and discussion.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the context in which Navajo parents make educational choices. A historical background of Navajo education and the introduction of various choice options is an important aspect of school choice for Navajo parents and children. Their choices are situated both within a Navajo context of education as well as within broader notions of educational choice. Educational choice within a Navajo context is closely tied to the historical introduction of choice options. It differs from mainstream tenets of school choice. Mainstream school choice is then briefly discussed in order to make connections between both contexts.

School Choice in the Navajo Context: A Brief Educational History

Prior to their incarceration at Fort Sumner, New Mexico from 1864-1868, Navajo people knew very little about formal educational institutions for educating children (Thompson, 1975). The education of Navajo youth took place primarily within the home by immediate and extended family members. Navajo youth were taught what was needed to successfully function within Navajo society. Prior to their return to Navajo land following their incarceration in a federal concentration camp in Fort Sumner, New Mexico (1864-1868), Navajos signed the Treaty of 1868 which included an article devoted to education (Thompson, 1975). Upon their return, the United States began to fulfill their treaty obligations regarding education. However, education then became the tool that would be used to destroy Navajo culture (Roessel, 1979). Schools began to appear throughout the reservation.

The Ft. Defiance Boarding School, which was built in 1883, was the first permanent school built on the Navajo reservation (Thompson, 1975). Attendance was sparse and sporadic but would eventually increase each year. By 1925 nine boarding schools had been built in other locations throughout the reservation by the BIA (Thompson, 1975). In Arizona boarding schools were built in Tuba City, Leupp and Chinle. Boarding schools in New Mexico were built in Tohatchi, Shiprock, Crownpoint, Toadlena, and Ft. Wingate.

Education within the nine BIA boarding schools continued throughout the 1930's. Student attendance was irregular since students were often obligated to stay home and contribute to the household economy (Thompson, 1975). Consequently, partial completion was the norm for students throughout the reservation. BIA Boarding schools often were known for harsh treatment of Navajo students that included detailed manual labor as a requirement and often a punishment for speaking their mother tongue. Discipline was harsh and the physical conditions of the school were poor (Thompson, 1975).

During Calvin Coolidge's administration then Secretary of Interior Hubert Work commissioned the Brookings's Institute to conduct a survey of the economic and social conditions of American Indians (Thompson, 1975). This survey included educational institutions. Lewis Meriam, the project's director, then compiled his findings in a report which would be known as the Meriam Report. The report faulted the government for inadequate management in the areas of health, social services and education. Boarding schools were targeted as being "...the most severely deficient institutions" (Lomawaima and McCarty, 2006,

p.65). Following the report, federal policies to improve Indian education began to reach reservations across the United States. Many of these policies and improvements were the impetus for the evolution of Navajo schools during the 1930's. The report proposed a departure from the federal policies and practice as they proposed that Native people had a right to decide how they might live (Lomawaima and McCarty, 2006). For Navajos, this meant that choice options would be broadened in order to be more congruent with their lives.

One improvement that was implemented as the result of the Meriam Report was the establishment of day schools (Thompson, 1975). Day schools were intended to allow Navajo children to attend school while remaining with their families. Construction of BIA day schools began during the mid 1930s. This provided an additional school option for Navajo parents. They could send their children to BIA boarding schools or local day schools. The day schools were problematic, however, due to lack of transportation and transportation infrastructure on the reservation; parents were simply unable to transport their children back and forth to school on a daily basis. Moreover, some parents actually began to favor boarding schools due to the lack of resources in the home (Thompson, 1975). Schools could provide the necessities that some families were unable to provide. Still there were many Navajo school aged children who were not attending school on a regular basis. Government officials did not have a clear picture of the population of school aged Navajo children at this time.

During the 1930s Navajo BIA agencies were consolidated into a central agency in Window Rock (Thompson, 1975). Supervisory education staffs for all

day and boarding schools were located at the central agency in Window Rock. This office was responsible for the oversight of the Navajo BIA schools and generated governmental reports.

In the 1940s expansion of the Navajo school system was negatively impacted by World War Two. Congressional appropriations for school operations were limited. Due to the poor conditions of some facilities, 19 day schools were closed in 1946 (Thompson, 1975). This was disturbing to many Navajo families who had grown to value education over the years. In response, Navajos in many communities worked tirelessly to keep schools in operation with limited resources. Community members banded together to keep schools open by donating their time and personal resources to school operations (Thompson, 1975). The intense cooperation of community members was largely responsible for preventing the demise of the system (Roessel, 1979).

Many Navajo families had sent their sons off to the war and many of them had returned with a new perspective on life. Navajos had experienced the war and workforce and returned with a sense of urgency regarding education. They had developed new attitudes towards education and better understood the importance of education and training (McCarty, 2002). Their support illustrated how they had come to value their community schools. It was evident that Navajos supported education and greatly yearned for quality education for their children.

Immediately following the war, Dr. George Sanchez, a BIA consultant, was employed to examine Navajo education and make recommendations for

improving the system (Roessel, 1979). Dr. Sanchez published his findings in 1948 and revealed recommendations for a reservation-wide system of community schools. Sanchez recommended that ten reservation schools districts be created. Each school district would have a central secondary school and satellite community elementary schools within the district (Roessel, 1979). Unfortunately, the recommendations were not realized and the BIA continued to place emphasis on off-reservation facilities.

The recommendations of the Meriam Report were overlooked as education was seen again as the tool to assimilate Navajo youth. The community day school that was recommended as a means to keep Navajo youth close to home was not considered. Instead BIA officials increasingly focused on enrolling Navajo youth in off-reservation boarding schools. It became evident that sentiments that once favored keeping Navajo children close to home had faded (Roessel, 1979). Day schools within Navajo communities would be out of the question. Under the guise of a lack of resources, the plan to send students away from their homes would be realized.

The BIA came to the conclusion that reservation resources could only support an educational system that would serve three fourths of the school-aged Navajo population. It was recommended that the remaining one fourth be educated off reservation (Thompson, 1975). Tribal delegations then met with congressional committees to communicate the need for additional resources. Initial post-war funds that the BIA provided were dedicated to converting many day schools into small boarding schools (Thompson, 1975).

The General Superintendent of the Navajo Agency during the 1940s made recommendations for expanding the school system. Some of his recommendations were realized as several day schools were converted into community boarding schools (Thompson, 1975). The Intermountain School, an off-reservation boarding school in Brigham City, Utah, was also completed and operated with an enrollment of 2,150 students (Thompson, 1975). During this period it was believed that many school-aged Navajo children were not able to attend school regularly due to the lack of adequate infrastructure within the reservation as well as a lack of facilities. Urgency was communicated by BIA reports and funds were appropriated accordingly. At this time Navajo students attended schools in BIA day schools, community boarding schools, and off-reservation BIA boarding schools. They attended boarding schools and off-reservation boarding schools out of necessity.

During the 1940s three out of four school-aged Navajo youth were not attending school (Thompson, 1975). Of this group about 40 percent were adolescents. Since development and expansion of the Navajo education system on the reservation took many years, it was difficult to assure that all Navajo youth would receive a complete education. Adolescents in particular were in danger of reaching adulthood without an education. The BIA Navajo Agency officials felt an urgency to meet the needs of Navajo adolescents.

In 1946 Dr. Willard Beatty, federal director of Indian education, suggested that unused space at the Sherman Institute, an off-reservation boarding school, be used to accommodate the Navajo adolescents (Thompson, 1975). The BIA

Bureau of Budget had required the Navajo Agency to make use of the existing vacancies at off-reservation boarding schools located in various states including California, Oklahoma, and Oregon. These spaces would have to be utilized before additional construction funds would be dispersed to the Navajo Agency for future development (Thompson, 1975). At this time Navajo parents were then asked to allow their children to be sent away to off-reservation boarding schools that were long distances from their home communities. Uneducated Navajo adolescents ages 12 to 18 would occupy the vacant spaces to participate in accelerated educational programs that would meet their unique needs.

Disturbingly, at this time BIA administrators were more concerned with filling spaces within off-reservation facilities than providing quality education for Navajo students. Federal concerns ignored what was best for Navajo students in order to fill spaces within existing facilities. Unfortunately the impact of sending Navajo children away from home was not considered. Yet these very policies and practices impacted the lives of Navajo students greatly. The impact is still being felt by Navajo families generations later.

The Navajo Special Program was then developed and implemented as a five-year educational program for Navajo youth. The first three years would be devoted to essential learning in the academic realm with an emphasis on learning English (Thompson, 1975). At the end of the third year, the student's program was managed by a vocational teacher who selected a vocation for the student. The fourth year of the program was devoted to learning both the academic and practical skills that would be needed to succeed in the chosen vocation. The fifth

year was primarily devoted to vocational instruction that included on the job training with prospective employers. Information about this program was spread by word of mouth throughout the communities via traders, missionaries and school employees (Thompson, 1975). During recruitment it was advertised that there was room for 200 Navajo students age 12 years and older, with little or no school experience, to attend a special five-year program. These students, with parent permission, would be sent away to attend school at the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California.

Many applicants from throughout the reservation showed up. They all could not be accommodated and only 208 were accepted during the first year (Thompson, 1975). Due to such a high demand, the Navajo Special Program was eventually expanded to 11 off-reservation schools that served over 50,000 students for 12 years (Thompson, 1975). The Navajo Special Program was phased out as the needs decreased and more and more Navajo youth began to attend school regularly. This Special Program met the needs of a unique set of Navajo students but also expanded the educational possibilities for school placement. The Navajo Special Program included placement in off-reservation schools which meant that students could attend schools in California, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah. This off-reservation school solution was greatly considered a stop gap measure to meet the needs of students until school facilities were build within the reservation (Thompson, 1975). After the opening of the Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah, Navajo families were sending off more than 6,000 children ages 12-18 to boarding schools far from home (Thompson, 1975).

During the 1950's Navajo leaders continued to see the value of education and recognized that they could have a voice in the educational lives of their people. Navajo Education Committee members, who were appointed by the tribal council, had become more vocal and astute about how to lobby Washington to get their needs met. Many community leaders who did not have a school asked for schools to be built in their communities.

In 1947 three congressional subcommittees visited the reservation and produced reports that resulted in the authorization of the Navajo-Hopi Long-Range Rehabilitation Act (Thompson, 1975). This authorized the comprehensive development of health care, water resources, housing and educational facilities. However, it soon became apparent that the educational needs of Navajo students greatly exceeded the amounts appropriated. The rate of construction and development still would not meet the needs of Navajo communities.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs then met with advisors on how to solve the Navajo education problem. Their efforts to improve educational opportunities and ensure that all Navajo students would have access to an education would be called the Navajo Emergency Education Program (NEEP). In 1953, the commissioner appointed a team to collaborate with BIA and Navajo officials to craft a solution to the problem (Thompson, 1975). A study was conducted by the team and policy recommendations followed. The Navajo Nation had given the Commissioner full authority to solve the education problem by any means necessary (Thompson, 1975).

An unexpected reorganization of student placement in schools ensued. Students were moved about and enrolled in various schools available according to their age. Navajo students within BIA schools on the reservation who were older would have to be moved elsewhere in order to free up more spaces within local schools for the younger children (Thompson, 1975). Spaces in BIA schools on the reservation would be reserved for children ages 6-9 while the 13-18 year olds would be moved away to attend off-reservation BIA schools or public schools (Thompson, 1975). Students age 10-12 would be placed wherever schools could accommodate them.

Contracts with public school boards in towns on the periphery of the reservation signed 20 year contracts with the BIA to provide education for Navajo students (Thompson, 1975). These would be known as bordertown programs since they existed in communities which bordered the Navajo reservation. Each public school district was given \$1,000 for each Navajo student in order to defray the costs of facility expansion for the increased student enrollment (Thompson, 1975). In 1960 there were 2,284 Navajo children enrolled in public schools as part of bordertown programs in eight different communities (Thompson, 1975). These programs provided dormitory spaces for Navajo students to attend nearby public schools.

There were also many temporary day schools that were located in 37 communities across the reservation (Thompson, 1975). The off-reservation schools increased their enrollments as they accepted 1,200 Navajo students (Thompson, 1975). Although the NEEP was able to increase the number of

Navajo students in school, they accomplished their goals by enrolling Navajo children in off-reservation boarding schools and bordertown programs. The development of an educational infrastructure within the Navajo reservation was not realized. Restrictions on funding from the House Subcommittee on Appropriations limited the development of a comprehensive school programs that would meet the needs of Navajo children of all ages within the reservation. As a consequence Navajo parents and children began to view sending their children off to schools far away as the norm. There were a variety of schools they could attend. These schools included local BIA day schools, BIA boarding schools, bordertown programs where they could attend public schools and off-reservation boarding schools.

As a result of the NEEP, many Navajo children attended several types of the school programs available to them throughout their educational careers. The NEEP was a measure to quickly meet the needs of Navajo students and therefore had some flaws in its development and implementation. Long-term infrastructural development of Navajo educational programs and facilities was delayed in order to expedite the enrollment of all Navajo children in any facility that could accommodate them.

Prior to the 1950s Navajo involvement in public schooling in Arizona and New Mexico was very limited due to the lack of an agreement to provide programming as well as a general lack of interest to do so (Thompson, 1975). Public school officials in both states deemed the education of Navajos as a BIA

responsibility and therefore were not moved to alter their funding schemes to meet the needs of Navajo students (Thompson, 1975).

However the need for public school services on the reservation grew as the population of non-Indian children increased. The population of non-Indian children increased as non-Indian employees were hired by the BIA and Indian Health Service (IHS) to work in Navajo communities across the reservation (Thompson, 1975). Since non-Indian children were not eligible to attend BIA schools, there became a need to provide educational services for them. State officials in both Arizona and New Mexico then set up accommodation schools for the non-Indian student population (Thompson, 1975). Accommodation schools were set up in locations where there were a sufficient amount of students to meet the required daily attendance rates. Where attendance rates were not up to the required amount, Navajo students were permitted to attend in order to maintain student enrollment numbers. Accommodation schools were then set up in Arizona at Ft. Defiance, Tuba City, and Chinle. In New Mexico accommodations schools were built in Crownpoint, Mexican Springs, and Toadlena. Navajo student acceptance in accommodation schools was selective and often limited to students who were seen as capable of handling English language instruction and those who appeared to be more acculturated (Thompson, 1975). Unfortunately, the new public schools also were a means to discriminate against Navajo students who were behind in grade level. Public schools were seen as an elite institution and often were selective in their acceptance of Navajo children (McCarty, 2002). Although the initial reason for public schooling on the reservation was meant to

meet the needs of non-Indian students, public schools had entered the picture and landscape of school options for Navajo parents and students. However, only a select group of Navajo students were able to participate initially. Navajo students were included as a means to maintain enrollment at each of the various public schools.

As the select group of Navajo students attending accommodation schools began to make progress, Navajos began to take notice. They perceived their matriculation to be more rapid than those students who attended BIA schools. Navajos attributed the rapid matriculation to be a result of superior methods and curriculum (Thompson, 1975). As a result, many parents began to press for public school for all Navajo children. In addition, Navajo enrollment in periphery dormitories or “bordertown” programs, which allowed them to attend public schools, increased. Navajo interest in public schooling began to swell.

Provisions within funding structures that allowed contracting with public school districts for the education of Indian children has existed since the 1930s. The Johnson O’Malley Act (JOM) of 1934 authorizes the Department of the Interior to contract with public school districts to provide educational services for Indian students (Thompson, 1975). The numbers of Navajo students attending public school increased during this time period. Public schooling became very popular with Navajo parents and many demanded that federal schools be replaced with public schools (Thompson, 1975). Eventually some federal schools were converted to public schools. By the mid 1950s, operations of several federal schools in Arizona and New Mexico were transferred to public school districts on

a contractual basis as authorized by the Johnson O' Malley (JOM) Act (Thompson, 1975).

In addition to JOM funds, the Department of Health Education and Welfare was given the authority to support school districts who served children whose parents lived or worked on federal lands related to military efforts (Thompson, 1975). These populations previously burdened school districts as they did not produce tax revenue that would support the cost of educating these students. In order to quell the burden, Public Law 815 provided per pupil funding for the construction of school facilities. Public Law 874 provided operating funds for schools districts who served these students. Both funding sources were initially aimed at assisting districts with parents who were connected with non-taxable military property. These funding sources were not intended to provide funding for Indian children residing on non-taxable Indian reservation lands (Thompson, 1975). However, officials in the state of Arizona felt that it might apply to the parents of Indian children. Applications were submitted and approved for schools in Ft. Defiance and Ganado. More public school projects in Arizona and New Mexico were then approved thereafter. This resulted in public schools being built in various communities in Arizona such as Chinle, Kayenta and Tuba City. Indian children were considered to be living on the reservation and their parents were considered to be working on the reservation and therefore schools serving Navajo students enjoyed per capita payments from both Public Laws 815 and 874 (Thompson, 1974). This provided incentives for the construction of more public schools on the Navajo reservation. Many public

school boundaries were drawn overzealously and did not account for the lack of infrastructure within the Navajo reservation (Thompson, 1974). Impassable roads and long bus routes generated the need for dormitories. Pressure was placed on the BIA to support Navajo students and their opportunities for public schooling by constructing dormitories adjacent to the schools. The BIA resisted the pressure and maintained that they would operate their distinct dormitory programs and suggested that the development of roads be supported instead (Thompson, 1974). This held back further development of public school construction. By the end of the 1960s public schools built under the aegis of Public Laws 815 and 874 were in full operation in 21 locations and served over 7,000 Navajo students (Thompson, 1974). The number of Indian children attending public schools also increased throughout the United States as well.

Prior to the construction and operation of BIA and public schools, several church groups operated the earliest schools. Federal funding supported these schools until an Act of Congress in 1897 declared that the subsidizing cease in the interest of separating church and state (Thompson, 1974). Mission schools built after this time period have not received federal funds and have operated independently. St. Michael's Catholic Mission School was built by Mother Drexel, the head mistress who funded its costs through an inheritance she received (Thompson, 1975). The Navajo Methodist Mission School was also established in Farmington, NM in 1899. In 1902 the Ganado Mission Schools was opened by Presbyterians. Parents paid tuition for their children to attend until the school was converted to a junior college. The Christian Reform Church also

established the Rehobeth Mission School at Rehobeth, NM. Parents support students by paying tuition costs at these schools. Other mission groups including the Seventh Day Adventists, Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, Lutherans, and Episcopalians have also established religiously affiliated school within or near the Navajo reservation (Thompson, 1974). By the 1960s 20 mission schools were in operation on or near the Navajo reservation and served approximately 1,300 students (Thompson, 1974).

Although many schools were built during the 1950s there were still over 4,000 Navajo children who did not have access to educational facilities by the 1960s (Thompson, 1974). Schools on the reservation could only accommodate a fraction of the school aged population. While expansion of facilities on the reservation was greatly needed, bordertown programs had been expanded instead. Although BIA officials had previously made policy statements which expressed the desire for younger children to remain within their home communities up to grade 6, local schools could not accommodate the actual number of school aged children (Thompson, 1974). Therefore, in order to utilize the vacant spaces, bordertown dormitories were filled with Navajo children under the age of 12 (Thompson, 1974).

In 1960 only six BIA schools on the reservation could accommodate students up to grade 6 in the ways in which officials had planned (Thompson, 1974). Some schools were not even able to accommodate students beyond the second grade due to large student numbers. In order to adequately provide educational services for Navajo students on the reservation extensive school

construction efforts would have to take place. There was a fortuitous alignment of interests when John F. Kennedy was elected; in the post-Sputnik era, public education became one of his administration's key policy goals. Kennedy took an interest in improving Indian education and began by appointing a task force to create plans for educational facilities that would accommodate all school-aged children on all reservations (Thompson, 1974). By 1969 BIA Commissioner Bennett claimed to have built enough schools to provide a classroom and seat for every Navajo child.

By the 1970s the enrollment of Navajo children in schools had reached near one hundred percent (Thompson, 1974). This included almost half of the school aged population who attended public schools. Navajo interest in education increased and expanded to preschool programs as well as higher education.

During the 1970s and 1980s the BIA remained as a significant educational entity for Navajo communities. Large boarding schools in Chuska, Many Farms, and Toney were constructed. Two thousand Navajo students attended the Intermountain Indian School in addition to the students who were enrolled in other off-reservation schools (Iverson, 2002).

This time period also marked a transition towards greater self-determination of Navajo education. A revolution in Navajo education began to emerge (McCarty, 2002). In 1972, Congress passed the Indian Education Act, an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (McCarty, 2002). This marked the first legislation to support the development of Indigenous materials, teacher preparation, and parental involvement. In 1975 Public Law 93-638, the

Indian Self-determination and Educational Assistance Act, was passed. The passage of P.L. 93-638 outlined the procedures for tribes and communities to contract for the operation of social and educational services (McCarty, 2002). Rough Rock Demonstration School became the first successful contract school (Iverson, 2002). Rough Rock inspired other Navajo communities to follow its lead.

During the 1990s the Navajo Nation's 90,000-plus students were being educated by a maze of educational services which included contract schools, BIA schools, public schools, and mission schools (Iverson, 2002). This often left parents confused and discouraged. The 1990s brought yet another layer of schooling options to Navajo parents as charter schools were introduced as an option (Iverson, 2002). The issue of money and control has been central to the discussion regarding how to develop a unified educational system for Navajo students (Iverson, 2002).

In 2005, the Navajo Nation elevated the status of the Division of Diné Education to the Department of Diné Education by amending titles ten and two of the Navajo Nation Code (CJY-37-05). The amendments, authorized as the Navajo Sovereignty in Education Act of 2005, enable the former division to operate as a parallel structure to state departments of education responsible for reservation public schools, with a superintendent and a Navajo Nation-wide elected board of education. Within section 3 of the new amendments, the tribe commits itself to creating cooperative relationships with all education providers serving Navajo students in hopes of achieving educational goals via policies and

Navajo Nation laws. Within the amendments it is specified that Navajo Nation policies and laws are to be applied to the highest extent with regard to the operation of schools. The amendments recognize the existence and jurisdiction over public and charter schools receiving impact aid for Navajo students as well as local community schools. The Navajo Nation defines the term local community schools as inclusive to all K-12 schools serving the tribe and funded by the BIA. This includes both BIA operated schools and community controlled schools as well as bordertown residential facilities.

Navajo parents and students alike have experienced a variety of school options as a consequence of the lack of infrastructure and funding. The haphazard manner in which the BIA attempted to meet the educational demands of the Navajo student population created a variety of educational providers. Each educational entity remains as a remnant of the past. BIA Day schools, BIA dormitories, Contract schools, public schools, charter schools and parochial schools remain as educational providers for Navajo students up to the present day. As the Diné Department of Education works to create a unified structure, parents still have a variety of school placement choices available to them.

In the next section, mainstream school choice literature is reviewed. The manner in which schools are selected and the reasoning behind choice making is explored.

School Choice Literature

Literature regarding options for school choice is often framed within the lens of “accountability” as parents are now faced with the option of leaving so

called failing schools. Research focusing on the new market economy in education is in great abundance. Examples of school choice studies within American Indian communities are difficult to locate. In order to distinguish between the phenomenon associated with recent school choice movements, which include voucher systems, magnet schools and private schools, the term school placement will be utilized in this dissertation. The phenomenon of school placement within Navajo communities may not necessarily be aligned with current definitions of school choice. However, literature related to school choice may shed light on the topic.

Parental Preferences

In a quantitative study Reback (2008) examined the demand for transfer within Minnesota's open enrollment program. Reback found that the demand for inter district transfers was related to test scores and socio-economic characteristics (2008). The demand for transfers was found to be related to students moving into districts with higher test scores and greater socio-economic characteristics than the districts they are choosing to leave (Reback, 2008). These findings suggest that parents prefer to choose schools that are more productive.

Schneider and Buckley (2002) utilized an Internet-based tool to study parental preferences for choosing schools. Parental searches on a school search site were examined and correlated with telephone survey data. Schneider and Buckley found that parents had a strong bias towards accessing the demographics of student populations when conducting searches (2002). Parents were also most likely to view the location of schools. Few parents visited locations within the

site that described teacher quality but did access test score and program data.

Schneider and Buckley's findings suggest that parents do care a great deal about academic performance as well as school demographics (2002).

In a qualitative study conducted in England, (Hollingsworth et. al., 2008) examined the impact of parental anxiety upon the selection of schools. Parents who participated were middle class individuals who opted to reject high status schools in favor of inner-city schools due their concerns for the masculinity of their sons. The discourses of parents related to gender issues and masculinity associated with the underachievement of boys were examined. The participants opted to reject using their cultural capital in order to assure the academic well being and safety of their sons who were described as delicate and sensitive (Hollingsworth et al., 2008). Hollingsworth et al. (2008) concluded that parents were greatly impacted by the need to choose educational environments that would assure the safety and academic achievement of their sons. In this study, the impact of gender issues were so great that parents opted to forego their social class privileges.

Social Power

In a study that examined the dynamics of choice-making within families, Reay and Ball (1998) found that the range of choices available to families and the manner in which they are dealt with are a reflection of the families' wider social power or powerlessness outside the home. Middle-class families tended to have a wider variety of choices available to them including those schools available to working-class families. Reay and Ball found that these families often rejected

working-class schools available to them without any consultation with their children early on in the decision making process. Within working-class families, who had a reduced range of options, Reay and Ball found that the decision was left to the child. It is also noted that what may be perceived as the working-class failure to engage in choice may actually be pragmatic decision-making based on a realistic grasp of the social constraints that characterize their lives. Reay and Ball suggest that an analysis of choice should include not only the power dynamics within the family but also the wider social power dynamics that impact the family and their effect on the internal dynamics of the family. These dynamics reduce the power of working-class families while augmenting middle-class parents. Reay and Ball posit that leaving choice of school to the child is a complex result of the lack of social power of both working-class and immigrant parents. In contrast, middle-class parents espoused a logic of choice related to individuality that elevated parents as experts in decision-making. In this case the parents, often mothers, made the decisions for their children.

Ball (1996) conducted an analysis of school choice-making based on the premise that through education, cultural capital is accumulated and may facilitate the reproduction of status and prestige qualities that symbolize capital. Ball purports that these qualities may be derived from the management of social symbols such as education. Therefore, education becomes an investment. For many families, the choice of school is a reinvestment or strategy to conserve or enhance their class ranking.

In an ethnographic study conducted by Andre-Bechely (2005), the choice processes and practices of parents operating within an urban district's school choice programs were examined. Three mothers were the focus of the study. Andre-Bechely closely examined "choice work," which she terms the actual activities that parents engage in during the school choice process (2005). The manner in which the mothers engaged in "choice work" was examined. Andre-Bechely found that as the mothers engaged in the process of choosing schools, they also unintentionally became participants in the inequities of the district's choice programs. Although the district's choice policies had proposed to be more equitable and democratic, they actually reproduced inequities. In comparing the stories of the mothers who were African American, Hispanic, and White, Andre-Bechely found that public school choice continues to favor those with more power. The district played a role in supporting racial and class privileges through its policies and practices. Although school choice programs are often utilized to support educational equality, the local structures and practices of schools still remain closely tied to issues of race, class, and gender.

In a mixed-methods study, Elacqua, Schneider, and Buckley (2006) examined the school characteristics most preferred by parents in Santiago, Chile. Parents were asked to identify the most important school characteristics they preferred when choosing a school for their child. Interview data was compared to the schools parents actually considered for their children. Findings suggested that although parents stated that strong academic programs were the most important characteristic, in actuality they considered schools based upon socioeconomic

status. They considered schools with a socioeconomic status most like their own. Most parents did not consider the highest performing schools. It is suggested that institutional factors may constrain a parent's ability to construct a more diverse set of schooling options. Parents then unintentionally contribute to stratification of school systems.

The Impact of Past Experiences

In an analysis of working-class school choice, Reay and Ball (1997) found that the working class in general has had more negative educational experiences than middle-class parents. Working-class parents, whose own educational experiences have been characterized by failure, have trouble articulating the future for their own children due to the fact that they are reminded of their own negative experiences. According to Reay and Ball, imagining the future for their children involves the hazard of setting them up for failure. In addition, working-class parents don't seem to have a repertoire of examples of educational success in which to imagine their children or understand what education means socially or positionally. Reay and Ball suggest that what often appears as working-class apathy or fatalism can be redefined as a refusal to participate in a game where the stakes are too high. Reay and Ball suggest that rather than focusing on middle-class norms that problematize the working-class, the new focus should be directed towards problematizing the accepted notions of social mobility and meritocracy. The working-class do indeed have an understanding of what the middle-class prefer and how these preferences not only limit their own choices but infringe upon their own rationale for school choice within the landscape of a free market.

Gorard (1998) examined the impact of parents' previous educational experiences on current school choices and found that they approach school choice as a matter of nostalgia even when encouraged to act as consumers. Nostalgia includes knowledge of what school was like at the time of their schooling. When making decisions related to choosing a school, parents often utilized this historical data rather than current criteria. Gorard found that tradition is appealing to parents who enjoyed or benefited from their schooling which then results in choosing a school like their own. In contrast, parents who have had negative educational experiences may select schools that are different from the schools they've experienced. Gorard's findings suggest that current school choice can be greatly influenced by the parents' education "for better or worse" (Gorard, 1998, p. 512). Gorard discusses the impact of nostalgia as a 'reflection' of the parents' schooling and a 'domino effect' where the younger siblings are impacted by the experience of an older child (Gorard, 1998, p. 513). Gorard suggests that school choices made today are greatly influenced by past events and that "opportunity, nostalgia, tradition, and convenience often combine to make school choice a far from 'rational' process" (1998, p. 522).

How Parents Choose

Ball and Vincent (1998) analyze the configurations, interactions and influences of the social networks which lead to the deliberation and selection of schools. The grapevine, a term that Ball and Vincent have coined to describe the informal information gathering and exchange processes, was examined in terms of its structure for disseminating knowledge. Ball and Vincent hypothesize that

there are many different grapevines and opportunities to access them is based on class-related and spatial factors. Through engagement with the grapevine, parents confirm their choice by the opinions and choices of others. Suspicion, doubt and acceptance are possible responses to the grapevine. The grapevine is not always related to social class but is indeed socially structured and patterned. Some grapevine behaviors identified by Ball and Vincent are explored. They conjecture that the grapevine has a dual function, providing information and a medium for social comparison. Choice of school is then seen as being immersed within class strategies of consumption.

In a qualitative study, Neild (2005) examined how a group of low-income parents in a large urban district navigated the process of gathering information in order to apply to various schools of their choice. Semi structured interviews were conducted with eighth grade parents whose children attended public schools. Neild examined their prior knowledge regarding educational options, the manner in which they gained prior knowledge, the factors most important in their decision making, and the strategies they used for navigating the process (2005). Neild found that parents had very little information regarding the type and quality of schools available. As a result they often relied heavily upon their social networks to inform their decision making. Although parents wanted more information regarding the schools they were interested in, very little information was made available to them (2005). Parents also had very little idea of the prospects of their child's admission into their school of choice. Neild found that the effectiveness of parent management within the choice process varied at different times. Early

on in the process parents had the most impact. However, after the task of choosing a school was complete, parental impact decreased. As the admission process begins parents have limited influence as schools are the final decision makers in the process. Neild's study suggests that parental choices are limited even in an arena of choice.

School Choice from a Native American Perspective

Lynch (1993) provides a legal and historical background of Indian parent school choice. Lynch identifies these choices as including BIA day and boarding schools, public schools, peripheral dormitories, cooperative schools, and tribally controlled schools. Lynch stresses the importance of the availability of choice that has existed since 1908 when a landmark Supreme Court case introduced the possibility of Indian parents choosing secretarian schools as a contractor of educational services. He also states that since then various options for choice have continued to emerge. As a result Indian students may try different types of schools at various instances in their school lives. Lynch states that "Many BIA students have been in a public school and some Indian public school students have been in a BIA school. Tribal and mission school students have also experimented with other kinds of climates. One choice does not keep one in place for the rest of the twelve years of schooling" (1993, p.17). Therefore Lynch posits that Indian students are often quite astute about the benefits of various kinds of schools. Seen in this light, students are seen as decision makers and consumers in an environment of choice options available within the reservation and beyond.

School choice studies within a Native American context have not been conducted. Literature that currently exists focuses on the new option of Native American charter schools. Studies related to Navajo parents and the school choices they make have also not been explored.

Summary

Within this chapter a brief overview of Navajo educational history is provided. The history illustrates the manner in which a lack of educational infrastructure has impacted the experiences of Navajo students and families. Meeting the needs of Navajo children has been a challenge for the BIA and has been further complicated by assimilationist policies that were not always in the best interest of Navajo families. Navajo students were often shuffled throughout various school systems in an attempt to provide students with an education while maintaining an assimilationist policy agenda. As a result students were often faced with the reality that finishing school meant leaving his/her family and community. The lack of infrastructure locally provided Navajo parents with limited choices and constrained their role in the educational lives of their children. As the Navajo people began to execute their tribal sovereignty, more opportunities for development of local educational infrastructure began to emerge. Throughout Navajo educational history, parents have had little choice with regard to the school placement of their children.

An overview of school choice literature sheds light on the role of parents in school choice decisions. We learn that parents choose schools for a variety of reasons that include demographics and quality. Parents also choose schools that

will increase their child's social power by increasing cultural capital. Parents with limited social power often have fewer options and often include their children in decision making. Past experiences have an impact on the choices parents make for better or for worse. Parents make educational choices using social networks as a tool to select schools.

Navajo parents execute their choice options within a unique context and possess a unique history that cannot be ignored. Although the school choice literature presents the tensions that exist within school choice, they may not transcend the Navajo context. School choice within non Navajo communities is constrained by issues of class and race. There is no mention of the impact of history on the manner in which parents choose schools. The history of Navajo education is unique as it is greatly shaped by BIA policies and politics as well as the notion of tribal sovereignty.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research questions and study design. This includes an overview of data collection methods and rationale for selection of the methods. Indigenous methodologies within the Navajo context are discussed followed by a description of the sampling and rationale for site selection.

Research Questions and Design

This qualitative research study will seek to answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the educational experiences of Navajo parents with regard to the type of schools (public, BIA, community controlled) available on the reservation?*
2. *How do their prior educational experiences influence school placement decisions for their own children?*
3. *Are there other extraneous factors involved in parental decision making about school placement? If so, what are these factors?*

Qualitative research is a complex field that has developed since the 1900s (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The definitions of qualitative research have varied greatly throughout this time span. A general definition of qualitative research is offered by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as "...multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.2). Empirical

materials such as case studies, personal experiences, introspective, life stories, observations, historical, interactional and visual texts are collected and studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). These data sources "...describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.2).

Since qualitative inquiry is based upon empiricism, knowledge is obtained through direct experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Qualitative researchers then utilize cognitive reasoning to categorize and saturate those experiences with meaning in order to make sense of the experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Qualitative research is conducted within natural settings rather than controlled settings (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In order to maintain the natural setting, a qualitative approach was deemed most suitable for this study. Parents were interviewed within the context that their school placement decisions were made. Participants recounted past experiences and attached meaning to those experiences.

A phenomenological study was conducted in order to examine the prior educational experiences and placement decisions of 12 Navajo families living in one community located within the Navajo reservation. Rossman and Rallis define phenomenological studies as an endeavor in which the lived experiences of a small number of individuals are investigated (2003). The meaning of a particular aspect of the participant's experience is the focus of the research. Rossman and Rallis (2003) point out that phenomenological studies are conducted in order to better understand the deep meaning of an individual's experience and how he/she

expresses these experiences. Those who employ the phenomenological approach assume, “that through dialogue and reflection, the quintessential meaning of the experience will be revealed” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 97). In phenomenological studies the researcher seeks to understand the meaning of an individual’s experiences and how he/she articulates them (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This design was chosen due to its ability to winnow the deeper meaning and impact school placement has had on the lives of the participants. Participants in essence participated in recreating their personal oral history related to the school placement decisions they experienced themselves and those that they have made for their own children. The manner in which participants expressed their particular experiences within a personal interview serves as the unit of analysis.

Applied research studies aim to “inform action and enhance decision making” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.6). Rossman and Rallis posit that social scientists seldom engage in basic research since they often portray aspects of the human circumstance (2003). Instead of solely contributing to theory, social scientists often conduct research that is essentially applied (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

This study is an applied research study since the data collected will be provided to enhance decision making within the Diné Department of Education. The data collected from this study will be used to inform policy makers of the Diné Department of Education with regard to decisions made regarding the role of parental decision making in school placement. This will enhance the Department’s ability to make decisions that are closely tied to school enrollment.

Data Collection Methods

Irving Seidman (2006) puts forward the notion that an abundance of educational research has been conducted within the United States without involving the perspectives of those directly involved in education such as students, teachers, administrators, and parents as well as others whose collective and individual experiences represent schooling (2006). In response to the need to include stakeholders within educational research Seidman puts forth interviewing as a viable and sufficient method of inquiry (2006). He endorses interviewing as “a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues” (Seidman, 2006, p.14). This study aims to include the voices of parents and the choices they make regarding the schools their children will attend. Their collective experiences reveal the issues surrounding school placement within one Navajo community.

Interviews allow the researcher to access participants’ stories which are microcosms of their consciousness. Seidman suggests that tapping into an individuals’ consciousness “gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people” (2006, p.7). Seidman advocates the exploration of complex issues by examining the concrete experiences and the meaning individuals attach to these experiences as a means of better understanding a topic. Concrete experiences are explored via interviews. School placement is the concrete experience that is examined in this study. By tapping

into the concrete experiences of participants, the complexity of the issues surrounding school placement decisions are revealed

Seidman has crafted a method of in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing which combines life-history interviewing and in-depth interviewing techniques based upon phenomenology (2006). Seidman's methodology has been employed for a wide variety of educational topics such as the examination of student writers, the experiences of women in graduate work, gender issues in student teaching, and physical education as well as many other dissertation studies and publications (2006). Seidman's method is unique since participants not only share their experiences but also participate in meaning making. Participants have a voice in the conjecture of their experiences. Seidman's method is emancipatory in that participants do not merely provide data that researchers analyze. Participants are actually given the opportunity to attach their own meaning to their personal experiences. This method honors the participants.

For this research study Seidman's in-depth phenomenologically based interviewing method was employed. In-depth interviews were conducted utilizing open ended questions. Seidman's method is used to build upon and explore the responses of participants in order to facilitate the reconstruction of their experiences related to the topic (2006). Participants were given the opportunity to reconstruct their educational experiences and the school placement decisions they have made for their children.

Seidman's method includes a three interview series in which three separate interviews are conducted with each participant (2006). The first

interview is conducted to illuminate the context of the participant's experience. During this interview the interviewer's task is to set the context for the participant's experience by asking him or her to tell about him or herself with regard to the topic (Seidman, 2006). This may include personal histories up to the present time.

In the second interview the participant reconstructs the details of their experience within the context in which it takes place (Seidman, 2006). The purpose of this interview is to concentrate on the actual details of the participant's current lived experience with the topic of the study (Seidman, 2006). Participants are asked to reconstruct details. It is upon these details that opinions may be built. Opinions are not overtly solicited. As much as possible, participants and the interviewer must seek to reconstruct the multitude of details surrounding the participant's experience. Participants may be asked to reconstruct a day in their lives in order to elicit these details.

The final interview allows the participants to reflect on their experiences and the meaning of their experiences (Seidman, 2006). The intellectual and emotional connections between the participant's experiences and lives are addressed during the final interview. This requires the participant to make meaning and sense of their experiences by examining how the factors in their lives interacted to eventually bring them to their present situation (Seidman, 2006). Participants must look at their present experience in detail within the context that it occurs. This endeavor is an exploration of the past that leads to clarification of events that led participants to where they are at the time of the

interview. A description of the details of their present experience sets the ground for reflecting upon what is currently happening in their lives (Seidman, 2006).

The third interview can be successful only if the groundwork has been set in the first two interviews. Meaning making is the center of the third interview within the context established by the first and second interview.

There are many instances in which data collection methods warrant modification. Seidman recognizes the need for modifications so long as the structure of the interview series is maintained allowing participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experiences (2006). For the present study, interviews one, two, and three have been modified and conducted within the same interview “sitting”- that is, as a single interview (Seidman, 2006). As I discussed below, this was related to the use of a Navajo-specific Indigenous methodology. Since the structure and focus of each interview series is employed with a respect of the structure, modifications to Seidman’s interview methodology were made to better suit participant needs.

The benefits derived from structured and unstructured methodologies differ and greatly depend upon the goals of the researcher. Maxwell (2005) suggests that structured methodologies help ensure the comparability of data across individuals, time, settings, and researchers. This is especially useful when answering questions that deal with differences (Maxwell, 2005). A structured approach to data collection was utilized since a variety of individuals and experiences are analyzed. This ensures the ability to compare the various experiences across individuals, time periods, and the various settings in which

their experiences with educational decision making occurred. For this reason a uniform interview protocol was utilized for each interview. The protocol used follows the essential elements of Seidman's three phase interview method. It has been modified and included within one interview.

Interviews were primarily conducted in English. I chose to use English as the primary language for interviewing in order to assist in transcription. At the beginning of each interview, prior to the signing of consent forms, participants were informed that the interview would be conducted primarily in English. I identified myself as a Navajo speaker and assured that if there were points within the interview which warranted the use of Navajo, I could interpret them during transcription. Participants often would ask if the interview would be given in English or Navajo. Most participants used Navajo words and short phrases. This was not problematic during transcription. I would translate the phrase and double check with Navajo speakers in my family for accuracy.

Interviews were tape recorded using a Sony IC MP3 recorder to record each interview. Each recording was transferred and stored on a data CD. Each interview was saved to its own folder and named according to the respective pseudonyms. A SONY Clearvoice Plus microcassette voice recorder was used as a back up for the MP3 version. Each interview was recorded on a 90 minute microcassette. Verbatim transcriptions were generated following the completion of interviews.

In addition to the interview data, some observational notes were taken in order to assist with data collection and organization. Creswell acknowledges the

importance of advancing protocols for interviews as well as observations taken while in the field (1994). It is suggested that a form for recording information be constructed prior to conducting interviews. Observation notes may be as simple as a single page divided with a line down the middle to separate descriptive notes and reflective notes (Creswell, 1994). As recommended by Creswell, the descriptive notes will include a portrait of the informant and descriptions of the setting (1994). The reflective notes will include any personal thoughts that may arise during the interview. Following Creswell's suggestions observation sheets should include demographic information about time, place, date and descriptions that create a portrait of the setting in which the interview takes place (Creswell, 1994). Creating observation sheets during each interview assisted in creating participant profiles which were later crafted into portraits of each participant. These portraits can be found within the presentation of data.

Indigenous Methodology

Jennifer Nez Denetdale, a Navajo critical historian recognizes that oral narratives are of great importance as they are the central to Navajo identity, well-being, and the ability to cope with life's stresses and the impact of colonialism (2007). Denetdale's research was largely based upon oral history and required her to modify her research methodology in order to be more sensitive to Navajo needs and community involvement (2007). Denetdale describes how it was almost impossible to conduct one-on-one interviews with participants since the homes were almost always filled with family members (Denetdale, 2007). What often occurred during the interviews were storytelling sessions between questions

and answers that included stories about everyday life and upcoming ceremonies (Denetdale, 2007). In the Navajo oral tradition, teaching occurs through the expression of life history. As Denetdale experienced during her research, life history and everyday events are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. In order to respect the community traditions and Navajo oral traditions of Piñon's community members, Seidman's (2006) interview method was modified to better meet the needs of Navajo participants.

Navajo oral storytelling and the telling of life history are typically conducted in one sitting. As a child I can recall hearing stories of how my mother would fall asleep to the storytelling of her grandfather. My mother remembers how the sessions were long and elaborate. Within our family, I have often listened to countless stories about the past in which my aunts, uncles and grandparents sat together for hours talking about events pertinent to the life histories of our family members. It would have been inappropriate to stop the storytelling or ask to come back later to hear the stories. Conducting the interviews in one visit best fit the oral traditions of the Navajo community members of Piñon no matter how labor-intensive or lengthy.

In recognition of the unique context, a modified version of Seidman's (2006) three-interview method was utilized. Instead of a series of three interviews, one interview was conducted. The interviews included each of the focal points outlined by Seidman's three-interview series. Each participant was interviewed once for approximately one-and-a-half hours. The first part of the interview focused on the educational life histories of the participants and the

educational choices their parents made for them. The second portion of the interview required participants to describe the details of how and when they chose a school for their children. The final portion of the interview required participants to reflect upon how their school placement and educational history impacted their own school placement decisions for their children. The interview protocol is included in Appendix E. Each interview was carried out within a three hour time span.

Modifications to Seidman's interview method proved to be warranted as conducting one long interview felt natural and allowed participants to fully share their personal histories. All of the interviews were conducted within the home with family members present. In several interviews children of participants often sat quietly beside their parents as family histories were shared. This was not at all intrusive and seemed to be a very natural way to share personal histories. Many participants felt comfortable enough to express themselves using the Navajo language, especially when key ideas were presented. Use of the Navajo language was helpful when participants felt a vivid description was necessary.

Data Analysis

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) believe that "Data do not speak for themselves; they are interpreted through complex cognitive processes" (p. 36). Patterns are revealed that transform data into information (Rossmann & Rallis, 2003). Therefore, Rossmann and Rallis (2003) feel that one should "...be exceptionally careful to articulate the conceptual framework you use to interpret the data" (p. 36).

For the purposes of analysis I employ the definition of choice provided by Lomawaima and McCarty as a theoretical framework for the analysis of data (2006). Lomawaima and McCarty argue that within Native America, "...choice operates in linked domains of individual choice and community self-determination that are rooted in the inherent sovereignty of Native nations" (p.9, 2006). Within their framework for understanding choice as it operates in Native American communities, the authors state that perceptions of and opportunities for choice are conditioned by poverty, discrimination, federal control, oppressive school practices, and economic and infrastructural underdevelopment (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). The verbatim transcripts from interviews were coded into the categories provided by Lomawaima and McCarty. The categories used for coding include- poverty, discrimination, federal control, oppressive school practices, and economic and infrastructural underdevelopment. The codes used for each category included the following; P=poverty, D=discrimination, F=federal control, O=oppressive school practices, EIU=economic and infrastructural underdevelopment. Each transcript was coded using the categories. Transcripts were printed and kept in a binder labeled under the pseudonym chosen by each participant. Binders contain two copies of transcripts including an unmarked copy and one coded copy.

Following the phenomenological tradition, analysis included the use of "meaning categorization" in which interview passages were coded into categories which arose during the analysis (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 296). Within each coded category, meaning categorization was employed to further express the

meaning within each category. New categories were named and coded as they arose. This provided an organizational structure for data presentation.

Validation of interview data included member checking. Each participant was provided a copy of his/her transcript to review for agreement and/or editing. Participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback. No participants responded. As an additional form of member checking, preliminary themes and categories were shared with the Diné Department of Education division directors during a data work session. Participants of the work session were given the opportunity to provide comments or additional insight into analysis. The data work session is a requirement of the NNHRRB protocols. The comments and feedback provided were included and considered during analysis.

Sampling/ Site Selection

Collecting qualitative data requires that the researcher enter the field to collect data. Participants are not extricated from their natural environments. Qualitative researchers go into the field to their participants rather than taking their participants out of their everyday contexts (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Qualitative research also focuses greatly on collecting data within the context in which life occurs (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). All interviews were conducted within the community of Piñon, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation. Since parents make school placement decisions within the home, the home was the ideal setting for the interviews. Each interview took place in the home of participants. Interviews were conducted at the kitchen tables or in the living rooms of participants.

In order to enter the field, I traveled to Piñon, Arizona and stayed with family members as I conducted interviews daily. I remained in the field until all interviews had been completed.

Piñon, Arizona was chosen as the data collection site for the following reasons:

1. The Piñon community has both a K-12 public school district and community school within reach of community members.
2. Parents from Piñon, AZ often choose to send their children outside of the community for schooling.
3. Piñon, AZ has had limited educational infrastructure in the past which required community members to send their student population elsewhere for schooling.
4. Many parents from Piñon, AZ have experienced a variety of choice options for school enrollment as part of their past educational histories.
5. Stories from the personal educational experiences of family members in Piñon, AZ have shaped my research interests greatly.

According to Creswell (1994), “The idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants that will best answer the research question” (p.148). Participants of the study include Navajo parents from the community of Piñon, Arizona who presently have or have had school aged children within their homes in the past five years. Parents from 12 households were interviewed. Ten mothers and two fathers participated. Two of the households included a mother and father who were interviewed. The imbalance of fathers is greatly due to the

lack of employment opportunities within the locality of Piñon. It was difficult to find fathers to interview. Due to the rural nature of the Piñon community, many fathers must leave the community to gain employment. Therefore several of the fathers were away at work. The fathers that were interviewed normally work outside of the community. One father was interviewed after he returned from work. The other father was on leave from work and was available.

Prior to conducting interviews the human subject's protocols required by the ASU Institutional Review Board were followed. This included gaining informed consent from each participant. Each participant signed a consent form in order to participate.

Community, family and social networks were used as a resource for identifying participants. This often began with proper Navajo introductions that included personal clan identification and an explanation of who my maternal grandparents are and where they make their home. I also collaborated with community members in Piñon to identify perspective families through word of mouth. As I entered the field I also made contact with family members who also assisted me in identifying possible participants. Through their community and social networks I also identified participants.

Researcher Role

Qualitative researchers construct an understanding of their topics through their research questions, the contexts where the topics are researched, and their personal biographies (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The qualitative research endeavor is inherently interactive demanding the researcher to interact with and

interpret data as he/she goes along. Since qualitative research is highly dependent upon the researcher's interpretation of the data, the researcher's personal biography plays an important role in research. It cannot go unrecognized in the process. The researcher's personal biography influences the project and therefore he/she must develop a keen sense of who they are in their work (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Rossman and Rallis advocate that researchers should clearly state who they are and the assumptions that drive their studies (2003).

Kathryn Manuelito, a Navajo woman, explicitly describes herself as a Native researcher conducting research in a Navajo community (Manuelito, 2004). As a Navajo researcher she divulges her personal ties to the community and culture as an important part of her research. This recognition is also necessary in this study. I am a Navajo and am bilingual in Navajo and English. I grew up outside of the reservation but have had and continue to maintain strong family ties in Piñon. My mother is from Piñon. As a child I spent summers and holidays in the home of my grandparents. I maintain strong family ties with my maternal extended family to this day. I am related to members of the Piñon community through my maternal clans which include the Many Goats Clan and my maternal grandfathers of the Mexican Clan. This identification of self is important to the Navajo community members of Piñon. It allows community members the opportunity to relate to one another through traditional kinship terms known as ké. My interactions with participants were guided by notions of ké. I introduced myself as a member of the Many Goats Clan. This was acknowledged and reciprocated by each participant.

Central to understanding qualitative research is the notion of reflexivity. Reflexivity is in essence the relationship that exists between researcher and participant and the reflections the researcher has regarding this relationship (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Reflexivity begins with the researcher as he/she reacts to participants and their actions and words. These reactions activate ideas and understandings about the context and participants. Patterns and constructs are then drawn from the researcher's theoretical orientations and knowledge in order to explain the actions and words (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Reflexivity also describes how the participants react to the researcher as he/she becomes part of their social world (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Both notions of reflexivity then evolve into an etic perspective (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). An emic perspective grows as the researcher attempts to search for evidence of the participant's worldviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Within the Navajo context *ké* provides a frame of reference for both interviewer and participant. It is an important part of reflexivity that is dependent upon the Navajo context.

As a Native researcher conducting research in a Navajo community, Kathryn Manuelito describes the unique process of gaining entry into the Ramah Navajo community. Manuelito established rapport with the community through her clan relations (Manuelito, 2004). Establishing rapport in Navajo communities requires recognition of clan associations in order to establish relationships and trust (Manuelito, 2004). Throughout her study, Manuelito continued to maintain the Navajo values and respect known as "*Ké*" (Manuelito, 2004). Manuelito was

continually aware of the context of the study and honored the context by constructing a Navajo framework (2004).

Gaining access in Piñon began with informal conversations with family members regarding my research questions. I then accessed the Navajo Human Research and Review Board's (NNHRRB) application and protocol materials. I began the NNHRRB's required 12-phase process during January 2009 by submitting a letter of interest.

I began the first phase of the NNHRRB's procedural guidelines by making contact with Piñon Chapter's secretary who assisted me with the process. I was then scheduled on the Piñon Chapter planning meeting's agenda as a "Discussion Item."

Prior to the Piñon Chapter planning meeting I met with family members who assisted me with the manner in which I should formally introduce myself during the meeting. My aunts stressed the importance of divulging the history of my maternal lineage and connections to the community. Speaking Navajo would be important as many elders would be present at the meeting. My aunts assured me that use of the Navajo language and identification of self in Navajo was important to the context. My mother, cousins and aunts accompanied me to the meeting on March 2, 2009. At the meeting I introduced myself in Navajo which included an explanation of the clan relations of my maternal and paternal family members. I then explained that our family homestead was located in the area of Piñon called Burnt Forest. I also explained how my maternal great grandfather Yellowhair had moved to Burnt Forest to make a home for his family almost a

hundred years ago. This was received well as members of the board nodded in acknowledgement of our family history. Following introductions I explained my proposed project. I asked for any questions regarding my project however the chapter officials and community members did not present any questions. The chapter president, Bessie Allen, then stated that the community should support such educational endeavors of community members and made a motion for the research proposal to be added to the regular chapter meeting as a resolution to be adopted. The motion was then accepted by chapter officials and I was then added to the Piñon regular chapter meeting's agenda.

Prior to the regular chapter meeting, the chapter secretary drafted a resolution supporting my research study. On March 16, 2009 I attended the chapter meeting where a community resolution was listed on the agenda as an Action item for approval. Again, family members accompanied me to the meeting as well as Dr. Timothy Begaye, then a member of my dissertation committee at Arizona State University (ASU). I spoke in Navajo and introduced myself and briefly described my project. Dr. Begaye assisted me in explaining the project further. He also discussed the importance of supporting the research projects of community members. Bessie Allen also added to Dr. Begaye's comments reiterating her support. The Piñon Chapter and 25 community members then voted unanimously to adopt a Chapter resolution supporting my project. The Piñon Chapter resolution represents local community authorization and support for the research study.

As required by the NNHRRB, I established a Tribal Program Partnership with the Diné Department of Education, with which I would collaborate with to create a plan for dissemination of the research findings. Dee McKerry, the interim director provided a letter of support for the project. Andrew Tah, the current Superintendent of Navajo Nation schools has continued to support my research.

On March 16, 2009 I submitted a complete application to the NNHRRB for review. I then attended the NNHRRB meeting on April 21, 2009 where I presented my project. My project was approved unanimously by the board and I was granted a research permit from April 21, 2009 to April 21, 2010. I have since maintained a NNHRRB research permit.

Following NNHRRB approval, I then submitted a Social Behavioral Application for Human Subjects to Arizona State University's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance for approval. My project was deemed exempt. Approved consent forms were used (see Appendix F).

My relationship with the NNHRRB continues as I work through the 12 phase process. I maintain compliance by providing quarterly and annual reports to the NNHRRB. This reciprocal relationship will continue as long as I use the research garnered within this study.

Limitations

Since the researcher creates the study and research questions, it is imperative that an awareness of personal perspective is developed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This involves recognition of the researcher's interests, biases,

opinions, and prejudices. Qualitative researchers begin by articulating personal perspectives and frames of reference for the topic such as that their beliefs, values, assumptions, and biases (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

As discussed previously in this dissertation, my research interests related to school choice began as I listened to the stories my mother recounted regarding her own personal experiences as a student. I also witnessed educational decision making within our family as well as our extended family. It is important to acknowledge the fact that I am an educator. I consider myself an Indian educator who has devoted her career to teaching in Indian communities.

My teaching experience includes work in two Navajo communities, one Keresan Pueblo and a Pima and Maricopa community. I have seen parents in each community choose to send their child outside of their communities for schooling. This has intrigued and perplexed me at times since each school has strived to provide quality education. My bias includes a longing for the support and development of educational self-determination in Indian communities through tribal education departments. This is a perspective that cannot be ignored.

Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed the research design and methodology. Special attention to the context and protocols for conducting research with the Navajo context has been explained. Indigenous methodologies have been described as central to the methodology. In the next chapter, data will be presented as participants are introduced through individual narrative profiles.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

In this chapter I will begin by introducing the participants to readers through participant profiles. Profiles were created by summarizing participant information garnered through the interview process to create a narrative portrait of the individuals.

Introduction of Participants

Participants of this study are presented in the following profiles. The narratives were crafted by transcribing the audio-taped interviews. Pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves are used to identify each profile. Each profile begins with the personal and educational history of each participant followed by a recounting of the school placement decisions the participant has made for his/her children. To maintain anonymity, the actual names of the schools that participants attended have been replaced by a label. Each school is labeled according to the table in Figure 3. Schools will be referred to by these labels in the participant profiles and in the data analysis chapters. The labels include a basic description of the type of school and are followed by a letter to differentiate between attendance of more than one school of that type. The names of the schools that participants' children have attended are used to illustrate the variety of schools outside the community that are chosen by parents. This system is also utilized in the presentation of data chapters as well. The profiles are meant to introduce readers to the lives of parents in Piñon.

Patrina

Patrina is a young mother of four who lives in a trailer about ten miles southwest of Piñon. She lives there with her husband and children. Her husband is a carpenter who often travels for work while she is a homemaker. Patrina is in her early thirties and has always lived in Piñon since she was a child. She grew up five miles north of Piñon at the homestead of her maternal grandparents. Her mother had a small house adjacent to the home of her grandparents. There she lived with her mother, older sister, and younger sister. She and her two sisters were often cared for by her grandparents who were always nearby. Patrina was strongly influenced by the teachings of her grandmother who always instilled upon her the importance of traditional Navajo prayers. These teachings continue to influence Patrina's life today.

Patrina started school at the BIA Boarding Elementary School A where she stayed in the dormitory. She remembers the dormitory aides that cared for her as being "mean." Patrina couldn't recall anything good about her time at the boarding school and especially didn't like doing the chores assigned to her. After the public school was built in Piñon, Patrina was able to leave the dorm and attend the public school from home. The bus came to pick her up each day from her grandparent's homestead. She attended Public Elementary School A until she completed eighth grade. At that time there was not a local high school in Piñon. The Piñon High School had not been built yet so Patrina had to attend high school outside of her home community. She then chose to attend BIA Boarding High School A in Tuba City, Arizona where she stayed at the dormitory. She stayed at

BIA Boarding High School A for a little over a year and then decided to transfer to another high school closer to home. Patrina then attended Public High School A for her sophomore year. She rode the bus each day from Piñon. Buses came to Piñon daily to pick up and transport students. Patrina waited for the bus with other students in front of the Catholic Church in Piñon. She attended school for almost a year when she became seriously ill. She never returned to school.

Patrina now has two children who attend school. She chooses to send her children to Rocky Ridge Boarding School, for their strong emphasis on Navajo language and culture. Patrina stated that at Rocky Ridge “they encourage the students to speak Navajo”. She feels strongly that children should grow up being able to communicate with their elders. Patrina remembers the teachings of her grandmother and hopes her children benefit from the same knowledge. She says that her daughter often returns from school and teaches her about coyote tales and other traditional teachings that she has learned at school. Patrina enjoys the fact that her daughter is gaining a deeper understanding of culture at school. Next year is her daughter’s last year at Rocky Ridge since the school only offers classes up to the eighth grade. Her daughter will have to attend the local public school. She worries that her daughter will not get the same caliber of Navajo language and cultural instruction at the public school.

Ninabah

Ninabah is a divorced mother of four children; three boys and one girl. Her three eldest children all attended the Piñon Unified School District and

graduated from Piñon High School. Her youngest son is currently an eighth grader at Piñon Junior High School. Ninabah works at a store in the community.

She grew up with her family five miles northeast of Piñon. Ninabah's parents were sheep herders but at times had temporary employment in the community. Her mother was a weaver. Her father was often employed with Navajo employment projects during the 1970s. He was an alcoholic during her childhood and was often absent from the home. Both of her parents did not complete high school. Ninabah's mother never attended school and her father attended school up to the third grade. She often wonders how her parents provided for her family with their limited income. She remembers not having a means to bathe regularly and laundering her clothes at the local spring using natural soaps. Ninabah felt the disparity between she and her peers as her parents were not able to provide her basic necessities for school. This caused her some embarrassment as a teenager.

Ninabah began her schooling at the BIA Boarding Elementary School A as a Beginner and remained there until the fourth grade. She stayed at the dormitory during the week and went home on weekends. Ninabah remembers being a "top student" at the Piñon Boarding School. She entered the school as a monolingual Navajo speaker and remembers her first sentence in English as "teacher, he hit me". This phrase was used often as the boys in the dormitory often picked on the girls. From the fourth grade up until the seventh grade she attended the Public Elementary School A and Public Junior High School A. Buses came from Chinle daily to pick up students who attended the public

schools. Ninabah remembers that transportation was a problem for her parents. She then attended Public High School A for two weeks then informed her parents that she didn't like it and wanted to transfer to BIA Boarding High School A. Ninabah then transferred and stayed at the dormitory. It was during this time that she began to baby-sit for her older sister in order to earn money for school clothes. She did so for two summers and then followed her sister to Albuquerque, New Mexico where she attended a local high school while living with her sister. Her parents did not object to the move. She attended school in Albuquerque for her junior and senior years. Ninabah then graduated from high school in Albuquerque. Following her graduation she attended the Navajo Community College and earned a clerical certificate.

Ninabah now has one school aged child at home. She has experienced the Piñon Unified School District with her three elder children. Ninabah has been highly involved in the parent committees and fundraising efforts for each of her children. Her youngest child is now about to finish junior high. Ninabah is currently deciding whether she should keep her child within the district or move him to another district for high school. She is currently considering sending her son to the Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, New Mexico. She feels that if she decides to move her son, he may have greater opportunities to succeed both academically and athletically.

Asdzaa Thizi łani

Asdzaa Thizi łani is a mother of four daughters who has lived in Piñon all of her life. Three of her daughters are grown and raising their own families. She

is in her mid fifties and is a retired government worker. She lives in a trailer with her teenage adopted daughter and husband.

Asdzaa Thizi łani grew up east of Piñon at the homestead of her family. Her mother did not attend school and her father had attended a Navajo Five Year Program at the Keams Canyon Boarding School. She remembers growing up in a home without running water and electricity. The family's water source was the local spring. Asdzaa Thizi łani fondly remembers visits from her paternal grandparents who often came to visit and brought food to the family. Transportation was a horse drawn wagon. The family did not own a vehicle.

Asdzaa Thizi łani has vivid memories of BIA Boarding Elementary School A. She remembers entering the school as a monolingual speaker and having difficulties adjusting to the new environment. Some of her memories of BIA Boarding Elementary School A are very traumatic and reveal the verbal and physical abuse that she and other students suffered at the hands of school staff. Asdzaa Thizi łani remembers not really understanding her teachers due to her limited language abilities. Many of her fond memories are associated with the basic needs that the dormitory provided for her and her siblings. This was very helpful to the family since they came from an impoverished home.

In third grade Asdzaa Thizi łani was transferred to the Bordertown dormitory at Winslow, Arizona since the BIA Boarding Elementary School A could not accommodate children above the second grade. There she attended the local public school while living at the dormitory. She remembers attending school with her siblings and cousins. Asdzaa Thizi łani vividly recalls the strict

regimentation that characterized the daily lives of all dormitory students. She stayed at Bordertown Dormitory A and attended the local public school up until the eleventh grade when she transferred to Public High School B. Then one day during her junior year she came home from school to find out that a traditional Navajo wedding had been arranged for her. She was married and never returned to school.

She remained in Piñon and eventually became employed with a government job which enabled her to raise three daughters. They all attended several high schools in Piñon and outside of Piñon. Currently she has one daughter left at home who attends the Piñon High School. Her daughter is a junior in high school and will begin her senior year during the fall. Asdzaa Tlizi İani says that she would like her daughter to complete her high school career at Piñon High School but her daughter has recently entertained transferring to Chinle High School for her final year in high school. She understands that there are many options that are available to her daughter but transportation must be a consideration. Taking students to schools far from home and picking them up for the weekend can become a strain on the family. She also worries about the transferring of high school credits. Ideally, she would like her daughter to attend a school that provides opportunities to explore possible career interests.

Emily

Emily is a married mother of two children. She is in her mid forties and is employed by the Piñon Unified School District as a teacher. She lives with her husband and son just east of Piñon. She has lived in Piñon all of her life.

Emily grew up two miles north of Piñon. She remembers living near her extended family members. They were all neighbors. She describes her childhood as “happy” and has fond memories of “playing and congregating” with her cousins. During the summertime, the families often visited each other daily. Later on Emily’s family would move seasonally to herd their flock of sheep. During the summer months they would move “in the canyon” to become sheep herders. Herding sheep was the only “big” chore that she and her siblings were responsible for. They didn’t complain and accepted it as “part of our life.”

The family home didn’t have electricity or running water and the sole source of outside entertainment was the radio. Emily and her siblings would listen to the AM stations. At the time they thought it was all the entertainment they needed.

She began school at the BIA Boarding Elementary School A as a “beginner” at the age of five. Starting school was a “frightening” experience for her. Emily didn’t want her mother to leave her in such a foreign place and hung on to her skirt so that she wouldn’t leave without her. Eventually she and the other children all became accustomed to the daily routines and being away from home. The routines she remembers include waking up early to complete chores in the dormitory before breakfast. At that time there were few Navajo teachers at BIA Boarding Elementary School A. Emily remembers her teachers being “strict”. Speaking Navajo was discouraged. Students were punished for speaking Navajo. She remembers being told to “speak English” and not knowing how to do so. Corporal punishment was used in the classroom for giving incorrect

answers. Emily remembers feeling sorry for students who were punished for incorrect answers. Her fond memories include being a bright student and participating in plays with her favorite teacher. She remained at BIA Boarding Elementary School A until she was in third grade.

After the fourth grade Emily transferred to the BIA Elementary Boarding School B where she remembers being placed in an “accelerated class.” She stayed at BIA Elementary Boarding School B up until her freshman year of high school. She then transferred to Public High School A during her sophomore year. She remembers deciding to transfer to Public High School A with her siblings. She and her siblings rode the bus each day from Piñon. Emily’s cousins also attended Public High School A at that time. She remembers making the decision with her siblings and her parents supported their decisions. Then during her junior year, Emily and her friends planned on transferring to the Holbrook Dormitory at Holbrook, AZ. They planned to attend the Holbrook High School together while living at the Holbrook Dormitory. This plan did not work as planned since the Holbrook Dormitory was full to capacity. She was then inadvertently enrolled Public High School B in Snowflake, AZ. She attended high school in Snowflake, AZ for a short time and then asked to be transferred back to Public High School A due to loneliness. She was able to transfer back and then subsequently graduated from the Public High School A.

Emily eventually became a teacher and is now employed with the Piñon Unified School District. Her daughter attended the Piñon Unified School District from kindergarten up until she graduated from the Piñon High School. Her son is

currently a student at the Piñon Elementary School. As an employee of the school, Emily knows that her son's education is aligned with state curriculum standards. She feels that although many parents send their children to other schools that they deem better, success is dependent upon taking full advantage of educational programs at the school your child attends. She feels that her daughter was able to do so. She is satisfied with her decision to place her child at the Piñon Unified School District.

Jim

Jim, who is in his late forties, is a married father of two children who lives northeast of Piñon. He is a railroad worker who often travels for work outside of Piñon. His eldest daughter is grown and living on her own. His youngest son attends the Piñon Elementary School where his wife is a teacher.

Jim grew up eight miles south of Piñon. During his early childhood years, his family grew up near his maternal grandfather. He remembers a homestead that included his extended family members. Family members were a "stone's throw away" during his early childhood. He remembers having livestock such as cattle and horses.

Jim started school at BIA Boarding Elementary School A as a "beginner". He remained a student there until his first grade year. He was then placed into a Mormon Placement program in Douglas, Arizona where he lived with a Mormon foster family while he attended school. Mormon Elders came to his house to recruit him and his sister touting a better education. His parents then agreed to send him away to school.

Jim and his sister attended public school in Douglas, Arizona where he was mistakenly placed in third grade. When he arrived at his new school he was asked what grade he was in and Jim replied “third grade.” School administrators believed him and he skipped a grade. He attended public school in Douglas until he was a freshman in high school. Jim remembers his foster family as being heavily involved in his schooling. He had a foster brother who was the same age. They attended school together. When he was sixteen he returned to Piñon due to his “stubborn” attitude.

Jim remembers returning to the community and attending BIA Boarding High School A where he stayed at the dormitory. He noticed a discrepancy between himself and the students at BIA Boarding High School A since he felt that they were “below” him academically. He described the curriculum as minimal and basic. He remained at BIA Boarding High School A until his senior year when he transferred to Public High School A due to a problem with his English teacher. He lived at home and rode the bus daily from Piñon to attend high school at Public High School A. He graduated from Public High School A.

Jim’s son now attends Piñon Elementary School. He feels that his son attends the local school due to convenience and safety. Since Jim’s wife is a teacher there she can “keep an eye on him.” Jim feels strongly that school aged children from Piñon should attend school in Piñon.

Lisa

Lisa, a homemaker in her early forties, is the mother of three children. She also has a niece who lives with the family as well. Lisa and her family live in

Piñon at the Navajo Housing Authority subdivision. She stays at home caring for her elderly mother-in-law while her husband is away at work. Her husband is a railroad worker who travels for work and is away from home for weeks at a time.

Lisa grew up in the community of Hard Rock, Arizona in a one room hogan. She first attended Elementary Mission School A. She remembers her mother walking four miles to take her back to the dormitory where she stayed while she attended school at the mission. At that time her parents did not have their own vehicle to transport her to and from school. Sometimes she would ride her bike to school on Sundays and stay at the dorm during the week and ride her bike home on Friday afternoons. Lisa remembers the teachers at Elementary Mission School A as “nice” elderly ladies who taught her how to read. She attended school there from first to sixth grade. She then moved in with her aunt and rode the bus to attend the Public Junior High School A in Jedito, Arizona. She attended school in Jedito for one year and then moved in with another aunt in Flagstaff, Arizona. There she briefly attended a public high school before transferring to Public High School A. It was the first year of operation for Public High School A and there was only one grade available to students. The next year Lisa enrolled at BIA Boarding High School A. Family problems greatly contributed to Lisa’s mobility and inconsistent enrollment. She remembers this time in her life as the time that she “went to too many schools.”

Lisa eventually remained at BIA Boarding High School A up until her junior year. A bus came to Piñon each Sunday and Friday to transport students to and from Many Farms. She lived in the dormitory and enjoyed sharing a room

with three other girls. She fondly remembers having her own closet space and bed. In the evenings students participated in a study hour. Lisa was involved in the school band and participated in band concerts. Lisa liked the school but didn't return for her senior year. Instead she enrolled in the Sierra Nevada Job Corps program in Reno, Nevada. She completed high school through the Job Corp program and received vocational training in business.

Lisa now has four school-aged children in her household. Her niece is a senior at Piñon High School. Her oldest son just finished the eighth grade at a small parochial school in Holbrook, Arizona. In the fall Lisa's son will ride the bus to attend public school in Keams Canyon, Arizona. Her six year old daughter attended pre school and kindergarten at the Piñon Community School but will transfer to the Piñon Elementary School for first grade. Her youngest daughter is not old enough to start school yet.

Lisa feels strongly that it is more beneficial for her son to attend a school away from Piñon. He has been in trouble before and has had some gang involvement. She is afraid that enrolling him at the local high school will put him at risk of gang involvement again. She stated that he didn't "get along" with the kids from Piñon. Lisa is very cautious about where her son attends school and wants to assure that he is not involved in negative behaviors. She wants to monitor his behavior during his first year of high school. She knows that he will be facing a big transition from a small parochial school to a public high school. Lisa is willing to transfer him back to the parochial school if he does not prove himself. She maintains that his recent academic success is due to attending school

away from home. However, Lisa wants to keep her daughters close to home until they finish elementary school.

Anna

Anna is an elementary school teacher for the Piñon Unified School District. The divorced mother of four is in her fifties. Her youngest son is the most recent graduate of her four children. She lives in a teacher housing unit just south of the school's campus.

Anna grew up in Piñon near the BIA boarding school. She was raised by her mother, who was a single parent. Her mother was employed as support staff for the BIA boarding school for many years. During her childhood Anna and her siblings grew up in Piñon and attended BIA Elementary Day School A. They did not stay at the boarding school and walked to and from school each day. Anna remembers attending the BIA Elementary Day School A as a Beginner. She recalls sitting in a cold classroom and not understanding anything her teacher was saying. She and her classmates sat on the concrete floor in front of her teacher and "didn't have a clue whatsoever at what she was saying." She remembers not talking or asking questions.

Anna and her siblings attended the BIA Elementary Day School A up until the second grade. From third grade until eighth grade Anna attended the Bordertown Dormitory B. The initial plan was to enroll Anna at Winslow for second grade but unfortunately the dormitory at Winslow had hit capacity and Anna was transferred to the Flagstaff Bordertown Dormitory program for one year. There she attended the local public school while staying in the Flagstaff

dormitory. The following year she was able to become enrolled at the Bordertown Dormitory B. There she attended school with her siblings. Anna's older brother and sister were already enrolled in the program.

What Anna remembers most about going to public school in Winslow was the diversity of the student body. She remembers having her first encounters with students of other races at the Winslow public schools. Prior to this she had only attended school with other Navajo children. Anna enjoyed the opportunity of interacting and observing how students of other races interacted in the classroom. She enjoyed the exposure to their inquisitiveness.

Anna stayed in the dorm for months at a time. Her mother would drop her off in August and not pick her up until Christmas break. She and the other dorm students walked to and from school daily. They stayed in dorms that were segregated by sex. Students participated in a demerit system that guaranteed participation in weekend activities. For the most part Anna enjoyed the independence and sense of responsibility the dorm environment provided.

After Anna's older siblings graduated from Winslow, Anna returned to Piñon and began high school at the Public High School B. She rode the bus from Piñon each day. Anna graduated from Public High School B and became employed as support staff for the district. She then enrolled in education classes provided by the Navajo Community College. For several years Anna attended various satellite education classes and eventually completed her degree in elementary education. She now teaches in the Piñon Unified School District.

Anna's three eldest children attended school in the Piñon Unified School District up until the fifth grade. They then attended the Winslow bordertown dormitory program where they stayed at the same dormitory their mother stayed at during her formative years. They also attended the same Winslow public schools and graduated from Winslow High School. Her youngest son for the most part attended school in the Piñon Unified School District. He briefly attended high schools in New Mexico and southern Arizona when he and Anna relocated for a short time. He eventually graduated from Piñon High School.

Anna feels confident about her decision to keep her daughters at home up until the fifth grade. She says that the decision to leave Piñon to attend school in Winslow was primarily up to her children. She feels that her daughters were exposed to greater educational opportunities in Winslow. She has mixed feelings about whether parents should consider sending their children to the local school district.

Mary

Mary, a married mother of seven children, is a homemaker. She is in her mid forties and has lived all of her life near Piñon. Early in life she was employed with the Piñon Community School. She was raised by her aunt and uncle and grew up caring for the family home and livestock. Her parents were elderly and stayed near home most of the time. This also meant that Mary didn't venture too far from home during her growing up years. She describes her parents as having traditional Navajo values and beliefs that were closely tied to the home, livestock

and land. Her father was a peyote roadman. She still has a great deal of respect for her parents and their teachings.

Mary attended the BIA Boarding Elementary School A as a day student. She did not stay at the dormitory. Mary rode to school with her uncle who worked in the community. She remembers waking up extra early to get ready for school. This was a chore since her family home didn't have electricity or running water. Mary would have to build a fire and warm water for bathing. Consequently, hauling water and firewood was a regular chore that needed to be done in order to maintain the household. Navigating the unpaved roads also added to the difficulty of rural life. She attended BIA Boarding Elementary School A until she was fifth grader. She then attended public school in Chinle. She rode the bus each day from Piñon. Each morning Mary would ride to Piñon with her uncle and wait for the school bus. She briefly attended school in Show Low, Arizona where an uncle lived. She and her cousin decided to live with her uncle's family and attend the local public school. She returned to Piñon after one year.

Since Mary's siblings were much older, they often helped care for her while she was growing up. When she was in high school her older sister accepted a teaching job in Lukaichukai, Arizona. She then lived with her sister and rode the bus to Chinle from her sister's house. This arrangement would alleviate transportation issues for Mary and her parents. Mary enjoyed attending school in Chinle and remembers participating in nursing classes. She worked during the summers and used the money to purchase necessities for school. She eventually

graduated from Public High School A. Mary got married right after she graduated and started a family.

Mary's seven children range in age from her youngest daughter who is five years of age to her older children who are in their mid-twenties. At the time of the interview, Mary's daughter had just graduated from Winslow High School where she attended the bordertown dormitory program. Mary's four eldest children attended school at the Piñon Unified School District until the fifth grade. After the fifth grade they all attended school in Winslow, Arizona. Only one of her children has graduated from the Piñon High School. She currently has two school aged children at home. They both attend school in the Piñon Unified School District. They are in kindergarten and fourth grade. Mary says she plans to send them to Winslow to attend the same bordertown dormitory program as soon as they complete elementary school. Mary is wary of the education provided at the Piñon Unified School District. She feels good about the decision to send her older children to the bordertown dormitory program in Winslow. She feels that her children were able to take advantage of greater opportunities from the programs offered in the Winslow schools. This included participation in programs that allowed them to obtain college credits in their career fields. Mary felt that her son was not challenged enough while attending the Piñon Unified School District. She became directly involved in parent groups to ensure that he received a good education. Mary is feels confident that transferring her children to the bordertown dormitory program in Winslow will benefit them greatly.

Haskan

Haskan is the father of eight children. He is in his early forties and is married. His family includes his daughter from a previous marriage, two children with his current wife and his step children. He works outside of Piñon and travels to work each day. His day is long and he often doesn't get back to Piñon until 7:00 pm each night. Haskan and his family live in a modest house just south of Piñon where the family raises livestock.

Haskan was born in San Francisco, California where his parents were relocated as participants of BIA Relocation Programs. Much of Haskan's childhood was defined by the relocation program as his parents often moved to various cities to participate in the program. Initially his parents met in Denver, Colorado as students of the program. They had both attended Navajo Five-Year programs at off-reservation boarding schools. Haskan's mother attended the Navajo Five-Year program at the Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah. His father attended the Navajo Five-Year program at the Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma. Both being from Piñon, it is quite remarkable that his parents just happened to meet in Denver, Colorado. They then were married and relocated to San Francisco, California where they started their family. Haskan was their second child.

After spending a few years in San Francisco, Haskan and his family returned to Piñon, Arizona. Haskan then began school at the BIA Boarding Elementary School A as a beginner. He was a boarding school student and lived at the dormitory. He remained at BIA Boarding Elementary School A until he

was in the first grade. Haskan describes his experience at BIA Boarding Elementary School A as mostly negative. He describes the dorm staff as being “really abusive”. He recalls being herded from place to place in “military fashion”. Haskan couldn’t recall anything else about his teachers or the classrooms at BIA Boarding Elementary School A. After finishing the first grade he was then transferred to the BIA Boarding Elementary School B since the local school did not provide services beyond the second grade. He was also a dorm student at the BIA Boarding Elementary School B. Unfortunately Haskan’s experiences at the BIA Boarding Elementary School B were similar to his negative experiences at BIA Boarding Elementary School A.

Haskan’s parents then moved the family to Roswell, New Mexico where they attended vocational training programs. Haskan attended the local public school for one year. His father then got a job with a mining company in Tucson, Arizona. The family remained there for several years. Haskan and his siblings attended the public schools in Tucson. He remembers being laughed at and being called “injuns and Chinamen”. Although he felt some discrimination from other students, Haskan remembers his teachers fondly. Eventually they were accepted by the students. He enjoyed his classes and the teachers. He was not able to finish high school in Tucson because his parents returned to Piñon, Arizona. Haskan then transferred to BIA Boarding High School A where he graduated.

Haskan then attended some post secondary schooling and eventually joined the police academy and entered into Navajo law enforcement. He worked

as a police officer for several years before changing occupations. Eventually he married and lived in Piñon.

Haskan's eldest daughter attended the Piñon Public Schools up until the eighth grade. She then transferred to the Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, New Mexico where she attended high school and stayed at the dormitory. She graduated and is now in college. Haskan currently has a son and daughter who attend school at the Piñon Unified School district. Haskan and his wife plan to transfer them to another high school after they finish the eighth grade. They are confident that this will ensure that they are well prepared for college.

Amethyst

Amethyst is the mother of four children. She is in her mid forties and is married. She lives in Piñon but commutes to Chinle daily for work. She grew up in Piñon and remembers being cared for by her maternal grandparents and paternal grandmother. She grew up in a large family with ten brothers and sisters. She is the seventh oldest child. She remembers growing up in a hogan and enjoying the closeness of a large family.

Amethyst started school in Piñon and attended the BIA Boarding Elementary School A up until she finished the fourth grade. She and her siblings all stayed at the dormitory. She remembers it as a good experience. Amethyst and her siblings then transferred to the BIA Boarding Elementary School B which was about sixty miles away from Piñon. Amethyst's older brother decided that he wanted to attend school at BIA Boarding Elementary School B so his parents

accommodated his request. Since the family wanted to keep the children together, all the children were transferred to BIA Boarding Elementary School B. There Amethyst played basketball and enjoyed the curriculum which included instruction in Navajo language and culture. She remembers butchering sheep and learning about the Navajo clan system as a part of the Navajo culture programming. After a few years at BIA Boarding Elementary School B, Amethyst and her siblings moved to St. Johns, Arizona where her father had gained employment. She and her siblings attended the local public school where she had her first encounters with students of other races. This is where she also learned to become more efficient in the English language. After her father was laid off from work, the family then returned back to Piñon, Arizona. She was then enrolled in Public Junior High School A and eventually moved on to Public High School A. She rode the bus from Piñon each day. She enjoyed attending Public High School A and remembers her involvement in basketball. She attended school in Chinle until she was a sophomore. Amethyst eventually left school and attained her GED.

Amethyst sent both of her sons to the Piñon Headstart where she served as a parent volunteer. They then attended school at the Piñon Unified School District until the eighth grade. After the eighth grade, her oldest son decided to attend school at the Hopi High School in Keams Canyon, Arizona. He rode the bus from Piñon each day. He decided to attend Hopi High School because of the sports programs available at the school. He attended school at the Hopi High School for two years and then returned to the Piñon High School. Her second

oldest son stayed at Piñon High School until he was a sophomore and then transferred to Chinle High School in Chinle, Arizona. He also rode the bus daily from Piñon. He ended up transferring from Chinle High School to attend high school in Tuba City, Arizona where he eventually graduated. Currently Amethyst's two younger sons attend school in the Piñon. Her ten year old son attends school at the Piñon Elementary School. Her youngest son attends kindergarten at the Piñon Community School. Amethyst feels that choosing a school is greatly depended on where the parents are employed. She does not want her children to live in the dorm. Amethyst has supported her sons each time they have chosen to transfer to a different school. She feels that this is acceptable as long as they maintain their grades.

Shelly

Shelly is a 44 year old mother of four children. She lives in Piñon in a Navajo Housing Authority housing unit with her family. She is currently a homemaker but has held jobs in the service industry in Phoenix, Arizona and Albuquerque, New Mexico. She returned to Piñon to care for her father. She would like to get a job in the future.

Shelly grew up south of Piñon in a two room house with her siblings. There were seven children in her family. She grew up being raised by her parents. Her father had some schooling. He attended school up to the third grade. Eventually he became a railroad worker. He was away from home often while working outside of Piñon. Shelly's mother did not attend school. During Shelly's

childhood she stayed at home and cared for the children. Shelly and her siblings spent time herding sheep and taking care of the horses.

Shelly attended boarding schools for most of her school experience. She always lived away from home and attended school. She began school at BIA Boarding Elementary School A where she attended kindergarten and remained there until the second grade. She then transferred to the BIA Elementary Boarding School B to continue attending school. At that time there were no other schools in Piñon that could accommodate grades above second grade. Shelly remembers spending so much time at the dormitory that "...being at school was like home". She and her siblings hardly went home during the school year. Visits to home were only for special occasions. Shelly enjoyed life in the dormitory where she got along well with dorm aides who taught her a lot about house cleaning.

Shelly began having some trouble in school when she was in the seventh grade. She remembers being "picked on" and called names by other students. As a result Shelly began getting into fights. Despite these difficulties Shelly enjoyed her classes at the BIA Elementary Boarding School B and remembers participating in Navajo culture experiences while attending school there. Shelly was eventually promoted to high school. She attended BIA Boarding High School A. Shelly continued to have problems at BIA Boarding High School A where she was involved in several fights with the girls at the school. Shelly's mother was "fed up" with her behavior so she enrolled her in a Mormon Placement program where she would live with a Mormon foster family and attend

school. Shelly then moved to Mesa, Arizona where she attended Public High School A. At first she was excited at the prospect of attending public school with students of other races. However, Shelly did not get along with her foster family so she eventually begged her mother to return to BIA Boarding High School A to complete her junior year of high school. Her mother agreed to let Shelly return to BIA Boarding High School A where she graduated the following year.

After high school Shelly moved to Phoenix, Arizona to baby-sit for relatives. While she was in Phoenix she enrolled in community college courses but did not finish her coursework. She held various jobs to support herself and then returned to Piñon. She now has four school aged children at home. They have all attended the Piñon Unified School District since kindergarten. Her children range in age from seven years old to fifteen years of age. Shelly's eldest child attended the Hopi High School for ninth grade at her suggestion. Her daughter did not like the school and returned to Piñon High School mid year. Shelly now feels that her children should all attend the same school. She'd like them to support one another. She doesn't want them to attend boarding school because of all the trouble she got into as a boarding school student. She feels that her children could avoid this by not attending boarding schools. However, she confesses that she'd like to get a job in the future and having her children in boarding school in Flagstaff, Arizona might make it possible to do so.

Anita

Anita, a married mother of six children, is in her thirties. She is a homemaker and lives southeast of Piñon. She was raised near Piñon by her

mother and father in a two room house without plumbing or electricity. Anita was an only child who worked very hard to help her parents with household chores. Her parents were “elders” and needed her help with chores as they got older. As a young child Anita’s parents taught her all that she needed to know about household duties involving cooking and cleaning.

Anita attended boarding school for most of her schooling. She enjoyed her boarding school experience very much, especially the social aspects of dorm life. On weekends she would return from school to help her parents. Anita began school at BIA Boarding Elementary School A as a kindergartener. She was then transferred to a boarding school in Toyey, Arizona where she attended first and second grade. Her cousins also attended school there. After her cousins had moved on to other schools, Anita’s parents wanted her to return to Piñon. They urged her to attend school in Piñon. Anita requested to attend another boarding school so her parents enrolled her at BIA Boarding Elementary School B. She attended school at BIA Boarding Elementary School B up until the seventh grade. Anita remembers BIA Boarding Elementary School B fondly. She enjoyed participating in the activities and sports programs that the school had to offer. After finishing the seventh grade, Anita returned to Piñon to attend the newly built Public Junior High School A. She rode the bus from home each day. She reluctantly attended public school knowing that she wouldn’t have the companionship of her peers in the dormitory. After the eighth grade, Anita had to transfer to BIA Boarding High School A since the Piñon High School had not yet been built. She stayed in the dormitory throughout high school. She graduated

from BIA Boarding High School A. She had her first child a few months after graduation.

Anita now has a full house of school aged children. Her oldest child, a daughter, recently graduated from high school. Her youngest child is two years old. She also has a fifteen year old, an eleven year old, and a six year old. Her son that is fifteen years old attends the Holbrook High School as a dorm student in the bordertown dormitory program. Her oldest daughter recently graduated from the Holbrook High School and was also a dorm student. Anita's younger children all attend the Piñon Unified School District at the Elementary and Middle schools. They ride the bus to school each day and live at home. Anita's older children attended the Piñon Unified School District until they reached the eighth grade. They then requested that they attend high school in Holbrook, Arizona. Since Anita had such a positive dorm experience, she agreed to allow them to attend Holbrook High School as dorm students. Her eleven year old son also plans to attend the Holbrook High School like his siblings. Anita admits that she would like at least one of her children to stay and finish high school in Piñon. Nevertheless, she will respect their wishes if they do not want to attend the Piñon High School. Although Anita did have good dormitory experiences as a small child, she would like to raise her children herself and so she keeps them at home during the elementary and middle school grades. However, she does support her children attending dormitory programs in high school.

Summary

In this chapter, each participant was introduced to readers using profiles. In the next chapter part one of data analysis will be presented. Part one consists of data collected regarding the prior educational experiences of parents. Data presented is within the theoretical framework of Lomawaima and McCarty (2006).

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS PART I-PRIOR EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

In this chapter I will present the prior educational experiences of the participants. Parental prior educational experiences set the tone for educational decision making including school placement decisions. In order to examine parental prior experiences the constraints referenced by Lomawaima and McCarty's theoretical framework will be used as a lens for analysis. Within Lomawaima and McCarty's (2006) framework, they posit that educational choice and perceptions of choice are deeply conditioned by "generations of poverty, discrimination, federal control, oppressive school practices, and economic and infrastructural underdevelopment" (p. 9). Figure 2 illustrates the framework.



Figure 2. Diagram of conditions of choice depicts how perceptions of and real opportunities for choice are seen as conditioned by generations of poverty, discrimination, federal control, oppressive school practices, economic underdevelopment, infrastructural underdevelopment.

Data are presented within each of the conditions for choice as categories. Within each category themes are carved out to further expand upon the data. Finally, new categories that arose from data analysis are also included.

Poverty

Limited or No Schooling

Many participants came from homes with parents who were educationally disadvantaged. Their own parents often possessed limited or no experience with formal education systems including BIA boarding schools and public school programs that were available. Several participants were the first generation to receive a full K-12 educational experience. As expressed by one participant, “My mom didn’t have any education. My dad...I think he only completed up to third grade” (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009). Participants remembered both of their parents having inconsistent school attendance. Some participants shared that one parent had not attended school at all. Shelly remembered that, “My dad went to school up to third grade then he got a job as a dry cleaner. My mom she didn’t go to school...she just stayed home” (Shelly, interview, June 5, 2009). Asdzaa Thizi İani also stated, “My mother never went to school but my father said he went to a five year program□that was all the schooling he went to but my mother never even went one day” (Asdzaa Thizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009). After some conversation with her relatives, who were also present during the interview, Asdzaa Thizi İani remembered that her father may have spent a limited amount of time at the Keams Canyon Boarding school but eventually “ran away” from the

school. Participants often could not recall exactly how much schooling their parents had received.

Participants often recalled the personal educational histories of their parents from stories they had been told while they were growing up as illustrated by Emily. Emily vividly remembers the story her mother had told her about how she has missed out on finishing her education because of family obligations. Her mother had missed her ride back to school during the piñon picking season. Many Navajo families harvest piñon nuts when they are in season. For Emily's mother, a piñon picking excursion interfered with her education. In the past piñon nuts often supplemented the diets of many Navajo families, especially those with limited income.

Well the story my mom has...I think when she was around twelve years old maybe younger...they had built that old boarding school and they started rounding up kids. Her and some of her siblings got picked up and they started going to school...from there she attended St. Michaels school and to this day she regrets not going back because I guess they were...in the fall when they went piñon picking I guess that guy came to pick her up and take her back to school. He drove by but they were out piñon picking and they left her behind and she was mad afterwards saying "because we were piñon picking I didn't go back to school". So that was the end of her formal education there. I think she went up to about fourth grade...and then my dad...she remembers seeing him at that old boarding school...maybe not even a year. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Several participants remembered that their parents were able to attend programs such as the Navajo five-year Program where students were able to learn basic skills to enter the workforce. These non traditional educational programs were common for Navajo students who had limited early educational experiences. Anna remembered that her mother's experience included a non traditional program. She stated, "She was going to school at Riverside. It's one of those where you go to trade school and she finished over there..." (Anna, interview, June 4, 2009). Haskan also remembered that his parents had also attended a special program. He stated, "That's all she ever told us ...she went to school in Intermountain... a five-year program I think..." (Haskan, interview, June 4,2009).

As a result of limited or no education, many of the participants grew up in homes with parents who were not employed on a regular basis. Many families survived by herding sheep for subsistence.

Living with relatives

Having limited or no schooling had a great impact on the family income. With limited resources, families were often forced to ask relatives for assistance. Relatives would often care for children of extended family members. This included children living with aunts, uncles, and older siblings. Ninabah, remembers babysitting for her sister during the summer in order to earn money for necessities. She eventually moved in with her older sister. Ninabah shared her experience:

...during my junior year my sister that had lived in Salt Lake had moved back to Albuquerque and I don't remember if she asked me to go up there

with her or if I asked her if I could go to school up there so I ended up at Albuquerque...during my senior year. (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Asdzaa Thizi Iani also remembers living with her sister. She had been attending a bordertown dormitory program in a town three hours from Piñon and then transferred to Public High School A. She stated, “my sister was working at the boarding school as a secretary and she had a little place there in Piñon so I went to school from there to Public High School A” (Asdzaa Thizi Iani, interview, June 2, 2010).

Many participants experienced living with extended family members on more than one occasion due to an unstable home. Lisa remembered living with several extended family members at certain points of her childhood. She stated:

I stayed with my aunt cuz my aunt used to live in Hard Rock and I used to ride the bus to the BIA boarding school. I went to school over there for one year and then for another year I went out to Flagstaff...east Flagstaff...that’s where I went to school because my step father’s sister used to live there so I went to school from her house. (Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009)

Similarly, Mary was adopted early on by her uncle and aunt but then later went on to live with several family members to attend school. Mary expressed that her adoptive parents, were elderly and often needed extra care and support. As she got older, Mary lived with an older sister while attending school. Mary stated:

...then into my high school years one of my older sisters was a teacher in Lucachukai so we moved over there with her and stayed with her and caught the bus from there. Yeah I went to Public Middle School B for one year. My late uncle...his whole family lived out there so one of my cousin-sisters went out there to go to school too...She thought “you should go to school there”...that’s when I went to school there. (Mary, interview, June 4, 2009)

Many of the extended family members of participants were more than willing to host immediate and extended family members in their homes. This willingness to open their homes is greatly related to Navajo traditional notions of ké. Extended families who were able to take family members into their homes provided a buffer for the poverty their family members experienced. “We did without a lot...”

Many of the homes of participants lacked basic infrastructure including plumbing and electricity. This meant that families had to find alternative ways to provide for their children. Luckily many of the families knew how to survive without the basic infrastructure that most Americans are accustomed to. They used their knowledge of their natural surroundings to endure. This was the case for Asdzaa Tłizi łani, who grew up in Piñon during the late 1950s. She described how her family survived:

...back then nobody had cars...all we had was wagons that were drawn by horses and that’s how we got to Piñon or from your home to Piñon to the trading post or to bring us back to school on a Sunday and...well we grew

up without a lot of things...no running water, no electricity...so if we wanted water we used to haul it from a little lake that they used to haul water from. That's what we used for drinking water, washing up, washing our own clothes or where they had those springs or wells and we didn't have soap either. We used this plant diwoozhi or yucca for our hair.
(Asdzaa Thizi İani, interview, June 2, 2010)

As a result family chores often included chopping wood and hauling water. As children, many of the participants took part in chores that most adults would find labor intensive. For the most part, as children they saw the duties as a part of their way of life in rural Piñon. This is evident in how Mary describes life in her household as a child compared to the lives of her teenagers:

Growing up at home was like hauling water, hauling firewood year round cuz we didn't have electricity. We didn't have running water back then...We had to chop wood...take in water everyday...I guess its easier for teenagers to turn on the water, flip the lights but back then we had to...get our lanterns ready...and most of the time we lived in a hogan too so it probably was hard but...it was a normal life for you...I think life was harder without electricity and running water. (Mary, interview, June 4, 2009)

Many families often subsisted by maintaining a family flock of sheep in order to supply meat for the family. This also meant that sheep herding became a family chore for many children. Families often moved seasonally in order to graze their sheep. This was the case for Emily. Emily remembered:

...during the summertime my mom would bring us up here in the canyon. We used to spend most of our days up here. We didn't have electricity or water. No entertainment of any kind except maybe a radio...and the only big chore we had was herding sheep everyday, everyday and we didn't complain. That was just part of our life until we became teenagers...(Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Families often struggled to provide basic necessities for their children. At some extremes this even included food. Consequently, boarding schools often provided the basic needs that parents could not provide. Sometimes the educational setting provided respite from the lack of resources at home as described by Ninabah:

...I think if you would at least stay in the boarding school you would at least have nice clothes, showers and back then we didn't even have anything so some nights I had to wash my clothes by hand...(Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Similarly when asked whether he liked the dorm, Haskan responded, "I guess it didn't matter at least we had... I was able to take a shower everyday" (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009). Anita remembers enjoying dorm life for the amount of personal space it provided her. She states:

Well for me I really liked living in the dorm...back then I thought I had my room even though we didn't have rooms...all the bunk beds were just all in a row but then I felt that I had my own room and my own closet and stuff like that...(Anita, interview, June 5, 2009)

These sentiments were also true for other participants as many of them lived in two room homes with rather large families often numbering eight to ten family members. Several families lived in one room traditional hogans.

Asdzaa Tłizi łani remembered that the boarding school that she and her siblings attended often could provide basic needs such as food and even some entertainment. Her parents were not able to provide this at home. Asdzaa Tłizi łani compared what was available at the dormitory as opposed to what her family was able to provide at home:

I know we had food to eat...which we really didn't have at home...three times a day...and showering there. They had running water and now and then we would go see a movie which we never saw at home and at Christmas they used to give us a bag of candy too and we couldn't afford candy either from home or our parents couldn't afford that but that candy that we got we used to share it with our little brothers and sisters throughout the vacation we had. (Asdzaa Tłizi łani, interview, June 2, 2010)

Ninabah remembers the fact that her parents could not afford to provide the basic necessities that were required of dormitory students. Unlike other dormitory students, her parents were never able to give her an allowance when she returned to the dormitory. Ninabah recalled:

...the thing that used to really hurt was that kids had money that they had brought back from home and coming back in (to the dorm) they would buy snacks. They brought like powder soap to wash with because we had

to provide our own soap to wash with and shampoo, bars of soap and stuff like that and I never had those things and you know it's like I never had money. (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

When participants returned from school to their homes they were often impacted by the disparities. Ninabah remembers not having access or a means to launder her clothes. Like many rural families in Piñon, her family often laundered their clothes at the local “wash”, which was a dry stream near her home. Water would flow after heavy rains leaving a stream to launder clothes. This included using natural plants as soap. Ninabah remembers:

...we didn't have showers at home. I don't even remember...I don't know how many times we changed our clothes in the summer. We never had clothes to wear and me and my sister always talk about it and joke about it but we don't even remember changing our underwear...and I remember taking the clothes we had to the wash and washed it with diwoozhii.

(Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Participants often recognize the poverty they survived as they compare their experiences to their current lives and the manner in which they can now provide for their own families. Ninabah ponders her experience in retrospect:

My parents were unemployed so it makes me wonder how they managed to buy my school clothes after I left the boarding school...cuz during the boarding school years while I was in Piñon I was able to get tribal clothing but after I left BIA Boarding Elementary School A I went to the public

school and I think my sister had to buy clothes for me so I could wear them throughout the year. (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Poverty included a lack of transportation which made it difficult to access schools. Most families did not have the means to transport their children to school on a daily basis since many of their homes were miles from the local school. Without a means to transport their children to school, students often attended boarding schools. As their children got older, a lack of services for upper elementary, junior high, and high school forced families to enroll their children in boarding schools. Students who were away at boarding schools often could not return home or get “checked out” of school on a regular basis since their parents did not have the means to pick them up or return them back to school. If parents were not able to find ways to retrieve their children, they often remained at the dormitories for long periods of time. This was the case for Asdzaa Thizilani, who attended a bordertown dormitory program hours away from her home in Piñon. She stated, “We used to ride those buses over there but when you started there you don’t come back till Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter cuz there was no way for us to come back unless our parents found a way to get us back” (Asdzaa Thizilani, interview, June 2, 2010). This was also the case for Ninabah who remembers being ashamed about her parents lack of transportation. Ninabah attended a BIA Boarding School an hour and a half away from Piñon. Ninabah remembers the heartbreaking story of how she turned away her mother due to her feelings of embarrassment:

I remember one holiday my mom went out there with some family and she checked me out and I didn't know who she came with and it turned out that the people that she came with were driving an old truck and I did not want to come home with my mom because I felt embarrassed coming home in that truck so I just told my mom I'm just going to go home with my friend so my mother just ended up coming back with the family without me. (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Discrimination

“You think you're smarter than us...”

Participants who left Piñon felt discrimination as they entered society outside of their reservation community. Their first encounters with discrimination were often felt by students who left the reservation to attend school. They felt different and were often discriminated by other students as they entered schools with multicultural student populations. Haskan remembers leaving the reservation with his parents as they gained employment in a small town in southern New Mexico. He was called derogatory names by other students.

Haskan remembered:

When we got to Tucson the kids there called us names because we dressed different. We dressed the way I guess kids dressed around here...The kids used to call us names...different names like injuns and I guess Chinamen because of our eyes. They didn't know. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

When Haskan's parents eventually moved back to Piñon he then attended boarding school again. Ironically, he faced discrimination from his Navajo peers on the reservation. They also made him feel "different." Haskan stated:

...we got called names because of the way we dressed again and how we spoke and other kids wanted to pick a fight with us because of the way we dressed and called us names or called me names. I remember that. They thought we were different. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Haskan remembers often being told by his classmates that "...you think you're smarter than us just 'cuz you come from a public school" (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009). For Haskan there was always an "adjustment period" that he would endure as he moved from the reservation community to the non-reservation community and conversely when he returned to the reservation.

Like Haskan, several participants experienced leaving the reservation for public school programs off the reservation. Some attended the Mormon Placement Program which took them from their homes to live with Mormon Foster Parents in Arizona. These students lived with Foster Parents and attended the local public school districts. All of the participants who participated in the Mormon Placement Programs eventually left the program and returned to their homes on the reservation. Many times this was due to problems they encountered at school or in the homes of their Foster parents. Some participants also left the reservation for bordertown dormitory programs. They too experienced and adjustment period and often felt "different."

Federal Control

As American Indians, the families of participants were subject to laws and policies created by the United States federal government. Thus many participants grew up hearing the stories of various federal programs that their families experienced. These programs and policies would change the course of their lives and their families as well.

“They were put on a bus like cattle...”

Emily remembers her mother describing how BIA officials “started rounding up kids” to send them to school (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009). Her mother was sent away to attend school at St. Michael’s Catholic School.

Haskan’s parents were also sent far from home. He remembers hearing the stories of how his parents were shipped off to school.

Haskan’s mother vividly remembered her own experience and those of other Navajo children who were removed from their families. She and many other Navajo students were sent to Navajo Five Year Programs at various off-reservation boarding schools. These programs were aimed at acculturating and educating Navajo students of an older age who had never attended school. These accelerated programs were intended to provide students with English skills and basic skills for becoming part of the American workforce. Parents put their children on busses for far away places to attend these programs. They often did not know where they were sending their children to. Consequently the children themselves did not know where they were going and for how long. This was very frightening for many students. Haskan recalls the memories of his mother:

My mom went to Intermountain. She says they were put on a bus like cattle and shipped somewhere...she always says that it was like taking cattle to the sale and they were gathered in some town. She believes it was Cortez, Colorado. They spent the night and all night long she could hear kids crying that were taken from their family. Kids crying like calves crying for their moms and that's all she remembers. That's all she ever told us...she went to Intermountain...five year program I think...both of them. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Both of Haskan's parents attended Navajo Five Year Programs. Although they were both from Piñon, they were sent far from home to attend these programs. Haskan's mother was sent to Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City, Utah while his father was sent to Chilocco Indian School in Oklahoma. Anna's mother was also sent away to the Navajo Five Year Program. However, she was sent to attend the program at the Sherman Indian School in Riverside, California. These young adults did not have a choice of attending a school nearby but were instead sent far from their families for their schooling. The descriptions Haskan's mother provided illustrated the inhumane manner in which this process occurred. It was very traumatic to many children.

Later on Haskan's parents were sent off to California as part of the Relocation Program where young Navajos were sent to become part of the workforce. His parents were relocated to California, where Haskan was born. He remembers:

Well basically I grew up in California. I think it was San Francisco or San Mateo, California and my parents were... back then relocatees...the US Government was trying to assimilate them into society I guess. They relocated them into San Francisco and that's where I was born...(Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009).

For years Haskan's parents lived on and off the reservation using the skills they gained from the vocations they learned. Many of the stories and memories of being removed from home to attend school far from Piñon eventually became part of the family histories of many participants.

“It was just a foreign place to me...”

For many years transportation services were not made available to the families of Piñon. During the 1960s and 1970s when many participants attended school in Piñon, very few families were able to provide transportation for their children on a daily basis. Many of the unpaved roads also made it difficult for buses to reach children on a daily basis. This was especially difficult during inclement weather. Consequently, a majority of the students stayed at the dormitory. This included children as young as kindergarten or “beginners” as deemed by BIA boarding schools. This was a fairly common term used in many BIA boarding schools. Even Patrina who attended elementary school in the 1980s attended boarding school early on. As small children they were forced to deal with separation from their homes and families. Emily remembers how upsetting the experience was:

BIA Boarding Elementary School A was the first school I went to. It was frightening because it was a foreign place to us...to me. I remember one time I was hanging on to my mom's skirt. I didn't want her to leave me. That place...like the sheets and everything smelled like...it was just a foreign place to me... plucked out of the home and put there into a different structure but then I guess we got used to being away from home after awhile. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

All of the participants with the exception of two entered boarding school at an early age. With the lack of transportation services, families were left with no choice but to enroll their children in boarding school at the young age of five and six. Most families today would have great difficulty sending their kindergartener to boarding school. However, in Piñon there were no other alternatives.

“We were told ‘speak English’...”

Many of the participants encountered assimilation policies within the school which forbade them to speak Navajo. For native speakers of Navajo this was difficult. Many participants often came to school as monolingual Navajo speakers. Asdzaa Thizi łani remembers these policies carried out at the BIA bordertown dormitory that she attended:

I remember we couldn't talk our own language and if we did we got one demerit which means you had to work one whole hour cleaning the toilet bowls or mopping the floor or something of that sort where they made you work that one demerit for that one hour for talking Navajo...(Asdzaa Thizi łani, interview, June 2, 2010)

Anita also remembered these policies when she attended a BIA Boarding School as an elementary student. Anita stated:

I remember when that time I used to go to school there they really wanted us to talk in English only. Like when you say something in Navajo or if they hear you talking in Navajo they'll like punish you for it. That's how it was...(Anita, interview, June 5, 2009)

Emily, who attended the local BIA boarding school, also remembered the anti-Navajo policies and practices at the school. She recalls:

Back then we weren't really encouraged to speak Navajo or things like that and they used to really discourage it and they used to punish us for that. I remember in the dorms we got to the point where we were saying..."speak English, speak English." That's all they used to tell us. I think that was so engrained in our brains. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

These practices also included life in the dormitory. Students were discouraged from speaking Navajo not only during the school day but also after school while they were in the dormitories.

"We had Navajo language and culture"

The emphasis on Navajo language and culture within the school participants attended varied greatly. The range of programs included some classes that were electives and offered to students at the high school level as well as exposure to music. Most participants didn't view Navajo language and culture at a main part of the school curriculum.

Patrina remembers having very little emphasis on Navajo language within her elementary classrooms. She does remember some cultural activities in the dormitory. When she reached high school she does remember one class that was offered to students. She stated, “Oh we had Navajo language and culture. There was this one man that taught that. We used to go to his class and he would teach like all the four sacred mountains or other things” (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009).

Ninabah remembers that once a year they would learn dances. She stated, “All I remember was that we had Indian dances. We learned how to dance like the basket dance, some other dances, hoop dances for the boys” (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009). In terms of Navajo language instruction, she remembered, “...they didn’t really teach Navajo but everybody spoke Navajo and the only time we heard English was probably when we would be in the classrooms” (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009). There were no classes offered at Ninabah’s school but she remembers conversational Navajo being spoken outside of the classroom. Formal classes and curriculum in Navajo did not exist at Ninabah’s school.

For many participants, Navajo language and culture classes were not allowed. Speaking Navajo was not allowed and often punishable. Asdzaa Thizi İani stated that Navajo language and culture was not a part of any of her dormitory or school programs.

Oppressive School Practices

“I was six...”

Most of the participants attended boarding school at an early age. Only two did not live at the dorm during their early elementary years. Participants started school and lived in the dormitory beginning at age six. This must have been a traumatic experience for many of the young children who lived in the dormitory. Having to leave home at such an early age would have taken great coping skills for such young children who should normally be in the care of their parents. Recommendations of the Meriam Report (Connell-Szasz, 1999) strongly recommended that boarding schools should only be considered for older students for this reason. Asdzaa Thizi İani remembered her experience vividly:

Well I was born in 1952. At that time they weren't enrolling kids till they were six years old. That's when they put you in school and where I first started school was BIA Boarding Elementary School A and we started off with grades that were called kindergarten...I was six...first that kindergarten year and first and second grade I went to school there...

(Asdzaa Thizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009)

Patrina also attended the local BIA Elementary Boarding school. She remembered her weekly routine as she stayed at the dormitory with other children from the community. Patrina stated:

...I had a best friend there that I started school with in Kindergarten. All the way up to fourth grade we both stayed in the dorm. Then Sunday evening my mom would drop me off either that or my grandma would

drop me off at the dorm. Then the whole week I would be there until Friday. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

Several participants also left Piñon for off-reservation boarding schools and Mormon placement programs as early as third grade. The local BIA Elementary Boarding school in Piñon could not accommodate students above the second grade. Later on the school began to accommodate higher grades. “They were just mean in their own way...”

Unfortunately as the young students adjusted to the trauma of being taken from home at such an early age, many students also had to deal with verbal and emotional abuse at the hands of school staff. Memories of these oppressive practices were vivid in the minds of participants. When asked about what she remembered about her experience at BIA Elementary Boarding School A, Patrina stated, “the mean dorm aides” (Personal Interview, June 2, 2009). Patrina further explained her negative experiences at the dorm:

...the dorm aides were not nice. They were mean. They were just mean in their own way. Just about little things like eating. If you didn’t finish your food then they would let you sit there and make you finish your food. They wouldn’t let you leave until you finished your food...(Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

Consequently Patrina still has negative feelings about her experiences in the dorm. When asked whether she liked anything about living in the dorm, she responded “Nothing! There’s nothing I liked about the dorm, maybe just my best friend” (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009).

Haskan also voiced his strong opinions regarding the treatment he and other children received while he attended BIA Elementary Boarding School A.

He stated:

I think the thing that comes to mind mostly about the school there was that...the way the staff were towards the kids. They were really mean. Not like today trying to pamper the kids. They were really mean, abusive and to this day I remember the people that were very abusive. The way they treated the children...the students at the school and the way they were really abusive back then. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Similarly, Asdzaa Thizi İani also endured negative treatment as an elementary boarding school student. She couldn't remember any specific details about the curriculum or instruction. She stated, "the stuff that we went through there it was...I really don't remember those two or three years...just how they treated us...mostly what I didn't like" (Asdzaa Thizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009). Asdzaa Thizi İani describes her time at BIA Boarding Elementary School A like an ordeal she had to endure rather than educational. She did remember being afraid of the school staff and not being allowed to use the bathroom. On one such occasion she urinated on herself. This was an especially painful and humiliating experience for her. Asdzaa Thizi İani shared her experience:

I really don't remember anything back then except peeing on myself in one of the classes where they wouldn't really allow you to go to the bathroom and it seems like you had a hard time holding it and then until you do it then that's when they yank you out of your class. They call one

of the dorm attendants and they take you back to the dorm. (Asdzaa Thizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009)

Asdzaa Thizi İani also remembered having to kneel in the corner as a punishment for speaking Navajo. It is astonishing to think that a young child had to deal with the emotional abuse that she endured, coupled with the fact that she and others faced separation from their families as early as kindergarten.

Participants mentioned that corporal punishment was utilized as a method to control the children. For students who entered school with limited language abilities this was problematic as they were punished often for speaking Navajo. Students with limited understanding of English struggled academically. They were often punished for this. Emily remembered:

We didn't really know how to speak English and in the classrooms they used to...I guess they used to practice corporal punishment back then and they used to use rulers...those long yardsticks too...to hit us if we didn't get answers right and then I remembered that we used to have those round robin reading groups. Red group, red bird or blue birds...I don't know what kind of names they gave it. I remember I was always in the upper group...and I kind of felt sorry for those kids who were always like at the bottom and they got punished more for not getting what we were being taught. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Corporal punishment was not limited to the classroom and often occurred in the dormitories as well. Haskan remembered:

Yeah I think the thing I remember the most was the dorm staff. They seemed to basically...there again they were abusive and you know if you step out of line or talk in line...they hit you in the head with whatever they had in hand. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Demerits

Participants described the great amount of regimentation and protocols they experienced within their schools and dormitories. This was difficult for many participants who were very young and endured these practices as a part of their lives early on. Participants often had negative memories about trying to acclimate to the strict policies and routines. Emily remembered having to adjust to a strict daily regimen. She remembers how difficult it was to leave her family. Many tears were shed but after a few days Emily and other students adjusted to their environment:

We got in tune with the boarding school life like getting up early in the morning around six o'clock. They would get us up and then I remember we had to be herded into the living room where we had to all braid each others hair and then we had to change into our clothes. Then we would do what we called "details" where we had to clean the whole dorm and then we went to breakfast. Then we would come back and go to the classrooms. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

As part of the organization of the students within the dormitories, they were often required to take part in cleaning the dormitory. It was also used as a

form of punishment. Even as early as six years old children were required to clean their living spaces. Patrina remembered this as part of her experience:

About six years old...when I was in first grade I must have been about six years old and we did chores then. When we were that small we did chores. They would make us sweep or mop or we would have to clean the restroom. Back then I don't know if they had vacuum cleaners. We would all sit on the floor. "Sit on the floor and pick up trash." they would tell us. Then we would all get on our knees and pick up trash off the floor. That I didn't like. I didn't like it. I didn't like doing chores either. I mean at six years old? (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

In retrospect this was appalling to Patrina especially since she now has young children of her own.

Participants often felt as if the regimentation even included how they required them to dress and behave. Asdzaa Tlizi łani remembered the following:

¶at the dorm we got clothes during the school year. They were all the same colors¶white blouse, orange pants, black shoes¶laced up. Our hair was cut straight across with bangs. Everybody's hair was cut like that and even in the dining room where we used to eat too. Seems like you had to eat everything whether you liked it or not. They made you eat it. (Asdzaa Tlizi łani, interview, June 2, 2009)

She also remembered being punished for speaking Navajo. The punishment included cleaning the toilets and mopping the floor. Asdzaa Tlizi łani remembered the regimentation being so strict that it felt like a military unit rather than a dormitory of primary children. When the children in the dormitory did not

comply, they were given demerits. Asdzaa Tlizi İani stated, “Everything you did you got a demerit” (Asdzaa Tlizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009).

Haskan also had this experience while he was a boarding school student as a young child. He too described the regimentation as similar to what might be found in the military. He stated:

They used to herd you like cattle to everything you do...almost like military fashion when I went to school back then. You know everyone single file...push the chairs in for the girls and trying to mold you for society or what they thought was society back then. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Haskan also remembered the work assigned to students. In a militaristic manner these assignments were called “details.” He stated, “I remember that and doing your detail...what they called your details. Cleaning the bathroom or whatever your details were for that week and that’s all I remember...just that” (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009).

It may seem that abusive and oppressive school practices are a part of the past. However, many generations later, many individuals vividly remember the pain caused by the experiences. Many parents shared the terrible experiences and they have become part of the family’s history. Participants had no trouble vividly describing the experiences of their parents.

Economic Underdevelopment

“My Parents were Unemployed...”

Many of the participants grew up in homes with parents who were not employed on a regular basis. Families often made their living on subsistence farming and as sheep herders. Families often possessed family flocks of sheep that provided a regular food source. Very few families had regular wage-labor employment.

Ninabah described both of her parents as being “unemployed” (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009). However her parents were sheep herders and farmers. Her father and mother would have brief bouts of employment especially when Navajo tribal economic development opportunities were made available in the local community during the 1970s. At that time Ninabah remembered that her parents participated:

...they took care of the sheep...until later on when I was in the seventh grade I remember my mom weaving and I think they had jobs or maybe I don't know for a month or two months at the chapter house under the Navajo Nation employment program. (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Since there were limited opportunities for employment within the community, many community members often left Piñon in order to obtain employment. Several participants had parents who would leave the community temporarily for employment. At times they would relocate the entire family. Other times families would have to be separated. They would return to Piñon when employment was terminated or if the individual was “laid off.” Haskan's family

moved away from Piñon several times in order to obtain employment. His family moved to New Mexico and various parts of Arizona for job opportunities. When employment ended, his family would return to Piñon.

Amethyst remembers her father being employed outside of the community and having to move away from Piñon for a short time while her father had a job elsewhere. She stated:

My dad was working at the power plant there in X so we all moved up there. My dad kind of didn't want to leave us behind, like my mom and the kids, so he took all of us down there...my mom and all of us. We lived down there so we all had to go to school down there. (Amethyst, interview, June 4, 2009)

Like many families, Amethyst's family eventually returned to Piñon when her father was "laid off" and had gained employment closer to Piñon.

Shelly's father was employed as a railroad worker and had to leave the family for work. He would return periodically but was often away from home. Therefore Shelly's mother became the primary caretaker in the home.

Some families were fortunate enough to be employed locally. Employment in the community typically included employment with the local BIA school or public school district as secretaries, custodial workers, cooks, or dorm staff. Anna and Mary's parents were employed locally as government workers.

Infrastructural Underdevelopment

“No running water, no electricity”

Many participants did not grow up with basic amenities within their homes. Because of the lack of a larger reservation-wide utilities infrastructure, numerous homes did not have electricity, plumbing, telephones or paved roadways. This greatly limited the resources available to the community members of Piñon.

Ninabah remembered not having basic amenities in her family home. She remembers summer time as a time period when she lived without basic conveniences. She remembered that “...we didn’t have showers at home.” (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009) Asdzaa Thizi Iani also grew up in a home without basic conveniences such as plumbing. Obtaining water for the household was a chore for the family. She stated, “..if we wanted water we used to haul it from a little lake that they used to haul it from” (Asdzaa Thizi Iani, interview, June 2, 2009).

Piñon as a community lacked basic amenities for many years including a lack of reliable paved roads. Lisa describes the unpaved winding dirt road that runs from her home to Piñon. Lisa described the road as being “kind of scary around those curves...you have to go really slow.” (Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009) The community does not have public transportation which limits residents with regard to education. This included transportation services for students. In the past many students stayed in the dormitory as a necessity.

“There wasn’t a high school in Piñon.”

A lack of infrastructure also spilled over to the educational services available to community members. A full range of educational services was not available to residents until the late 1980s. Therefore many participants had to transfer to another school after they had exhausted the educational resources available to them in Piñon. Parents often had to choose a school outside of the community to send their children to. This was problematic for some parents who also were unable to transport their children to school daily. Their choices had to also meet their transportation needs.

Anna remembered that she and her extended family members attended a BIA bordertown dormitory miles away from Piñon due to the lack of services beyond the third grade. She stated:

We all just went there because I think here it just went up to...I don’t think it went past third grade. I think from there you had to either go to Chinle, Keams Canyon, or Many Farms or somewhere else. (Anna, interview, June 4, 2009)

Ninabah remembers attending BIA Elementary Boarding School A up to the third grade. She then had to transfer to another school outside of Piñon. She enrolled in a public school and had planned on riding the bus from Piñon each day. The bus only made one stop. Her parents did not have transportation and could not transport her to school daily. Ninabah remembers that when she started attending the public school she didn’t realize the logistics involved in her decision. She stated “I didn’t really think about all the hard work it would involve

now that I think back.” (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009) The “hard work” included getting up early in the morning, washing her own clothes by hand and having to secure transportation daily. This was compounded by the fact that her home lacked basic amenities so a mere task like washing her clothes would include obtaining water and building a fire to warm up water to wash her clothing. Ninabah eventually enrolled in another BIA boarding school that would meet her needs. This limited her school options. She eventually transferred to another BIA dormitory since her parents could not provide transportation daily.

Patrina remembers attending the local BIA boarding school up to the fourth grade and then transferring to the local public school after it was built. She attended the public school up until she was in the eighth grade. There were no services available beyond the eighth grade at that time. Patrina stated:

I went up there [Public High School A] from fifth grade to eighth grade then I graduated eighth grade from there. Then there wasn't a high school in Piñon so I had to go off to Tuba City, Arizona. There I started my freshman year again. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

After attending BIA Boarding High School A, which was located approximately ninety miles away, Patrina eventually returned to Piñon and caught the bus to attend high school in a town an hour away from the community. She caught the bus at a bus stop in Piñon everyday.

Lisa attended various schools near Piñon. Eventually she did enroll in the local public school when it was newly opened. She couldn't attend school beyond the ninth grade due to a lack of services. Lisa stated that she couldn't continue to

attend school locally since “they didn’t have a sophomore [grade]” (Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009). She eventually transferred to a BIA boarding school approximately two hours away from Piñon to live in the dormitory and attend school.

Eventually as years passed, educational infrastructure in Piñon slowly began to improve. All of the participants eventually attended school outside of the community due to the lack of educational infrastructure. This may have included riding the bus long distances or attending a boarding school.

Additional Themes

The following themes are new themes that fell outside of the categories outlined in the theoretical framework.

“Too many different schools”

As Lisa looks back upon her schooling, she remembers the numerous schools she attended. She attributes this to a lack of family resources. She stated, “For me I think I went to too many schools. It’s probably because my mom didn’t have a vehicle so she mostly had us stay in the dorm side.” (Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009) Like Lisa, many of the participants attended a variety of schools. As Lisa noted this was often a consequence of the lack of family resources. Boarding schools were often an option for parents who could not provide transportation on a regular basis.

None of the participants experienced attending one school district from beginning to end. At some point each participant experienced transferring to another type of school district. Many students transferred between BIA schools

and public schools several times. A few students attended Mormon Placement Programs and Mission Schools as well. Many students attended more than one school during the elementary, middle school/junior high and high school years. None of the participants experienced a typical progression from elementary to high school.

Figure 3 illustrates the various schools participants attended. It shows the type of school and how many he or she attended.

Name	BIA Day School	BIA Boarding School	BIA Bordertown Dormitory	Public School	Mission School	Mormon Placement Program
Patrina		ES-A, HS-A		ES-A, MS/JHS-A, HS-A		
Ninabah		ES-A, HS-A		ES-A, MS/JHS-A, HS-A		
Asdzaa Tlizilani		ES-A	Bordertown Dormitory A	ES-A, MS/JHS-A, HS-A, B		
Emily		ES-A,B MS/JHS-A, HS-A	Bordertown Dormitory A	HS-A,B		
Jim		ES-A, HS-A		ES-A, MS/JHS-A, HS-A		ES MS/JHS HS
Lisa		HS-A		MS/JHS-A, HS-A,	ES-A (boarding school)	
Anna	ES-A		Bordertown Dormitories-A,B	ES- A,B MS/JHS-A, HS-A,B		
Mary	ES-A			MS/JHS-A, B, HS-A		
Haskan		ES- A,B HS-A		ES- A, B, MS/JHS-A, HS-A		
Amethyst		ES- A,B		MS/JHS-A, HS-A		
Shelly		ES- A,B MS/JHS-A, HS- A		HS-A		HS
Anita		ES- A,B,C, MS/JHS-A, HS-A		MS/JHS-A		

*Key-
ES=Elementary School
MS/JHS= Middle School or Junior High School
HS= High School
Letters A,B,C denote attending different schools of the same type.

Figure 3. Depicts the variety of schools and types participants attended.

“I told my mom I didn’t want to be there anymore”

Another reason participants migrated between schools was due to lack of educational infrastructure within the community but many times students themselves would change to another school. They would often ask their parents if they could change schools or simply inform their parents of their decisions.

Ninabah remembers beginning junior high school at a BIA boarding school. She decided to transfer to the public high school in the same town two weeks later. Ninabah stated that she “didn’t like it so I told my mom that I didn’t want to be there anymore.” (Ninabah, interview, June 4, 2009) She then transferred to a public school in the same town. This meant that her family, who already lacked adequate transportation, had to find transportation for Ninabah daily as she began catching the bus in Piñon.

Asdzaa Tlizi İani remembers that she and her brother transferred from the BIA bordertown dormitory program after their sisters graduated. She remembered them both making the decision to leave:

I went up there to Thanksgiving in my junior year but my sisters graduated like the year before and I felt so out of place without them so that was one of the reasons why I just left. I didn’t want to go back over there and my brother left from there because he wanted to go to Intermountain. I guess he knew some friends that he made that were going that way so that’s where he went and I just didn’t have my sister over there anymore so I just left from there. I didn’t want to go back over there. (Asdzaa Tlizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009)

She then chose to ride the bus from her sister’s house to attend a public school outside of Piñon. Her brother then left to attend a BIA Boarding school in Utah.

Emily remembers conspiring with her friends and cousins to decide which schools they would transfer to. At one point she and her cousins decided to transfer from the BIA boarding school they were attending to another public school. She stated, “I’m not sure. I think my younger brothers were going to

school at Public High School B and then we just kind of got the idea that we should go there too.” (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009) Emily’s parents were fine with her decision and allowed her to transfer. She stated, “ I think they just kind of supported our wishes like yeah we wanna transfer to Public High School A so it was just like ok.” (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009) She attended the school for a few years then suddenly decided to transfer to a BIA bordertown dormitory. Again, she and her friends and cousins planned to transfer together. At no time did Emily’s parents ever object to her requests to transfer. Emily stated:

Yeah it wasn’t like oh that’s not a good place for you or I don’t remember hearing anything like that and then sophomore year, junior year, senior year...oh yeah senior year I transferred to another school too...even then when we were juniors we were all planning together to transfer to a BIA bordertown dormitory program but then during the summer I found out that it was full so they just put me in Bordertown Dormitory A and here I was the only one that ended up there and I got so lonely in one semester so I just came back to Public High School A and that’s where I graduated from. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Emily remembers that she and her friends decided upon attending the BIA bordertown dormitory program in Holbrook because they wanted to “try” another type of school. She stated:

Yeah we wanted to go to Holbrook. I think we were saying that it was a better school or something. Maybe we just wanted to try a bordertown

school. I don't remember exactly how we all said we wanted to go to Holbrook. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Emily remembers that her parents trusted the decisions they made regarding school transfers. They never questioned her decisions. She stated:

I think they were ok, once we got into high school. They were ok with us making choices. I don't think they really knew the education system to really have an opinion about it. They just kind of went along with what we wanted but then at home they always encouraged education like, "You need to finish school. That's the only way you're going to be self sufficient." And things like that, I always heard that. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Like Emily's parents, many families did not have the educational background and experiences with the school system to understand the manner in which students should typically progress through grades and schools. This made it difficult for parents to participate in decision making on behalf of their children.

"I really liked living in the dorm"

Several participants who attended BIA boarding schools found it to be a good experience. They enjoyed the skills they learned and the sense of independence it brought. Anita especially enjoyed her time in boarding schools and actually requested to remain in boarding schools even after the local public school was built. Her older cousins had left the school but she decided to remain.

Anita stated:

I remember that my mom didn't want me to go to BIA Boarding Elementary School A by myself so she told me to come to like a closer one. She tried telling me to come back to Piñon. At that time there was still a school in Piñon but I told her that I didn't want to go to a public school so I told her to put me where I could go to a boarding school so I went to BIA Boarding Elementary School B. (Anita, interview, June 5, 2009)

Anita felt that the dorm taught her valuable skills while providing a wide range of activities that she could participate in. Anita felt that there were many benefits to being a dormitory student. Anita stated:

Well for me I really liked living in the dorm. I learned a lot of stuff and I liked living in the dorm like back then I thought I had my own room even though we didn't like have rooms. All the bunk beds were just all in a row but then I felt that I had my own room and my own closet and stuff like that and you get to get up in the morning and do my details and go to class and it was like that. After school there was a time when they had to make us do our homework. When I come back to the house it's like I had nobody to spend time with except my parents and if I had brothers and sisters I probably spend time with them and laugh and stuff like that but out in the dorm it's like I had all these friends and did a lot of activities and I really like staying in the dorm. I think I learned a lot like how to be

on your own if you're out there if you're going to school...responsibility I guess. I learned a lot about that. (Anita, interview, June 3, 2009)

For Anita, boarding school offered more activities and opportunities for socialization than the rural life of Piñon. Growing up in a small home without children her age also allowed her to see the benefits of having her own personal space and living and interacting with children her own age.

Shelly also enjoyed her time at the dorm. She remembers, "We spent a lot of time with the dorm aides...taking us on field trips and a lot of house cleaning...teach us about house cleaning." (Shelly, interview, June 5, 2009)

Shelly also remembered the dormitory fondly for the independence she felt while living there. She stated, "It's just like an apartment to us." (Shelly, interview, June 3, 2009). Shelly remembered that the most important skill she learned while living in the dormitory was housekeeping.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the prior educational experiences of participants. This included their own educational histories and that of their parents as well. The themes outlined by Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) as conditions for perceptions and real opportunities for choice are salient.

Families lacked many resources and often struggled to provide basic need for their children. Participants were often the first generation to experience formal schooling. Very few families had consistent family incomes. These conditions at home caused constraints for individuals who also dealt with having

to leave their families to continue their schooling. The school setting, mainly dormitories, often provided respite for students who experienced poverty at home.

The lack of infrastructure at the community level created opportunities for what might have been perceived as a choice as families had to choose which boarding school to send their children to as a result of a lack of educational infrastructure.

The personal experiences of participants often included enduring abuse at the hands of school staff. Many experienced the oppressive school practices that were a consequence of federal government policies. The fact that participants experienced these painful experiences as a part of their educational experience is appalling.

In the next chapter, parent placement decisions will be addressed as participants share the school placement decisions they have made for their own children.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS PART II-PARENTAL PLACEMENT DECISIONS

In this chapter I will explore the school placement decisions parents have made for their children. The placement decisions parents make include deciding which school to send his/her child to. This chapter will reveal the choices parents make and some of the constraints that impact their decisions. In order to examine educational choices Lomawaima and McCarty's theoretical framework for choice will be utilized as a frame for analysis. Within Lomawaima and McCarty's (2006) framework, they posit that educational choice "operates in linked domains of individual choice and community self determination that are rooted in the inherent sovereignty of Native nations" (p. 9). Figure 4 illustrates the framework.



Figure 4. Depicts how choice in Native America is linked to domains of individual choice and community self-determination.

Data is presented within each of the linked domains as categories. Within each category themes are carved out to further expand upon the data. Finally, new themes are explored.

Individual Choice

“Some people don’t have vehicles”

For some families, transportation and lack of educational infrastructure have been issues they have dealt with for some time. As their children got older and time passed they were able to see the changes and improvements to infrastructure and thus were able to have their needs better met. Asdzaa Thizi İani experienced this as she raised four girls who all started school in Piñon. She has watched the changes and improvements as each of her daughters progressed through school. With her first two daughters, she enrolled them in school until there were no longer services available. At the time, her daughters reached the intermediate grades and then had to transfer to a public school outside of Piñon. She stated that her children transferred “because in Piñon they only had it up to third grade” (Asdzaa Thizi İani, interview, June 2, 2009). Her daughters then rode the bus each day. Since there was no middle or high school in Piñon that they could attend, her daughters, like many other children, were transferred to boarding schools. She remembered it as a natural progression for her children. Asdzaa Thizi İani stated:

Then automatically they sent you on to Chinle. There was a boarding school that they put you in so you just enrolled there again and it went up

to... I think it's sixth grade that it went up to...and seventh grade they go up to Many Farms. (Asdzaa Thizi Iani, interview, June 2, 2009)

Asdzaa Thizi Iani eventually gained permanent employment in Piñon and was able to bring her daughters back to Piñon where they rode the bus from her house daily. Prior to this she and her daughters lived at the family homestead near her parents several miles east of Piñon off an unpaved road. Her daughters were then able to catch the bus from home and attend school outside of Piñon for high school. Her third daughter was able to attend the newly built elementary school in Piñon. Asdzaa Thizi Iani's youngest daughter was able to attend school in Piñon from kindergarten to high school. She is the only daughter that was able to attend school in Piñon consistently since Kindergarten. She never had to attend boarding schools or schools outside of Piñon.

Patrina has four children, two of which attend school at a BIA Boarding School nearby. Although they attend the boarding school, they do not live at the dormitory. She and her husband have chosen to send their children to the BIA boarding school due to transportation issues. Their family home is located in a remote homestead that is accessed by traveling ten miles of unpaved roads that meander through various large dry stream beds. These stream beds often become impassable after heavy precipitation. In order to attend Piñon's public school, children in the surrounding area have to drive out to the main unpaved road to catch the bus. This can often be a hardship for families.

Patrina has two small children at home and her husband is often away out of state for employment. Job opportunities in the local community are scarce.

Patrina is then often left at home with the children for long periods of time.

Therefore transportation can be an issue for the family. Patrina stated:

We let her go there because the bus comes to our front door too...every morning and every evening. She wanted to go to Piñon during her sixth and seventh grade years. During her sixth grade year she wanted to go to Piñon but I couldn't take her there every morning because her dad was working too. He would go off to other states to work and it was just me and the kids and I had little kids here. I couldn't put them in the truck every morning and take them over there and come back again. My son he finished up first grade this year. It's the same with him. We couldn't take him to the road either so since the bus was coming to the house...that's why he also attended the BIA boarding school. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

Patrina also stated that her family is not the only one that struggles with transportation. Families who live nearby also have trouble with impassable roads. She stated:

Some people don't have vehicles to be taking their kids out to the main road. Some of them live way off the main road far away. There's this one lady that takes her kids out here to the main road. Sometimes there's a big wash out here and I don't think they get across there so they have to go down the other road and that's like a couple of miles again. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

Patrina is not the only parent who worries about transportation during inclement weather. Impassable roads are the norm when it rains and snows.

“He was getting himself into trouble”

Lisa has three children in school. Two of her daughters currently attend the local public school in Piñon. Her oldest child, a fourteen year old son, only attended the Head Start program in Piñon. After Head Start, he took the bus each morning to attend school outside of Piñon. He attended a public school outside of Piñon until the sixth grade. At that point Lisa’s son began getting into trouble. She feared that he would continue on a negative path and decided to remove him from the school and then transferred him to a parochial school in Holbrook, Arizona. She stated:

Until his sixth grade year he started getting out of hand that’s why I had to change the school for him. That’s when I took him for seventh grade to a parochial school in Holbrook...he was getting himself into trouble and I started going to the conferences for him and stuff like that. She would tell me he’s doing this. He’s getting into this and I wanted that to stop...whatever started with him so that’s why I took him out of there.

(Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009)

Lisa’s son successfully completed two years at the school and will soon complete the eighth grade. She attributes this to the small student population and low teacher to student ratio. She feels that her son is “getting more attention by the teachers.” (Lisa, interview, June 2, 2009)

After her son completes the eighth grade, Lisa still plans on keeping her son in school outside of the community. Lisa firmly believes that her son will become involved in gang activity if he attends the local school. She stated:

Cuz I don't trust him going right there cuz he doesn't really get along with the kids over here. That's why I don't want him...well what he was trying to do was get himself into those gang stuff at the public school and I didn't want him to go through that so I'm avoiding it...putting him away from all that stuff. (Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009)

Lisa is trying her best to secure a positive future for her only son. She also attended a religious mission school as a child and felt like it was the best option for her son. She plans to do the same for her two daughters when they are old enough. Lisa stated her plans for her older daughter, "I just want her to go to school up to sixth grade again and then probably take her to the parochial school like her brother. That's what my plan is for both of the girls." (Lisa, interview, June 4, 2009)

"I expect them to succeed"

Ninabah has four children, three of which have already graduated from the public school in Piñon. Her last child in school is her son who is in the seventh grade. He will be approaching high school soon. Ninabah is contemplating on sending him off to a BIA College Preparatory school in New Mexico where he can experience increased academic rigor. Ninabah says her choice is related to the experiences she has had with her three older children. She feels that her children have not received the best education at the public school. Her daughter

experienced difficulty in college and she attributed it to the lack of qualified teachers and quality of college prep courses during high school. Ninabah stated:

She took chemistry but never had a real teacher. I didn't find that out until the semester was almost over. They just took somebody out of the office and that person taught chemistry and that person is not even a teacher. She was just an office aide and they took her out and put her in the classroom and for that reason I think she's struggling with chemistry.

(Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Ninabah does not want this to happen with her son when he attends high school. This is why she is looking to send him elsewhere outside of the community. Ninabah would also like her son to experience a variety of programs and experiences that might better prepare him for college. She feels that schools outside of the community may have better programming. Ninabah stated:

I want to put my son in a school where the school can help him prepare for college. I want him to find out what's all out there. Some schools you hear that they send their students to summer enrichment programs and Piñon doesn't do that. They always say they don't have the money.

(Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Ninabah feels strongly about the future path her children will take. She feels that their experiences in high school play a large part in their future. She says "I expect them to succeed. I want them to have things that I wasn't able to."

(Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

Mary has seven children. She too has high expectations for her children. Her oldest son is the only child that attended the local public school in Piñon for the entire duration of his educational experience. At the time her son was in school, Mary became heavily involved in school matters. As a parent she advocated for higher expectations and rigor in the classroom. She remembers one instance where she and other parents rallied for a teacher who sought to increase academic rigor. Many parents who were opposed did not want to keep the teacher. Mary remembered:

He had a real high [a teacher who taught with academic rigor] English teacher there and the last year that he was going to be there...there was about ten kids in that English class. Only ten kids and a lot of parents didn't like the teacher because she was way advanced for their kids but just a few of us parents wanted to keep her because we thought, "Well our kids are going to be going out into the world. They're going to be challenged in life. Why can't they challenge it from here in high school?" And they were trying to remove that teacher from that class. I don't think that was a good idea that they wanted a lower teaching teacher in there so a few of us parents argued with them, the superintendent and principal. "Why can't the teacher complete the school year and teach our kids because that's what we need?" So I think from there I didn't like how the teaching was going there. (Mary, interview, June 4, 2009)

After this negative experience, Mary decided to remove her children from the district to attend a BIA Bordertown dormitory program where they could attend

another public school. The school she selected was over one hundred miles away from Piñon. For her next four children she elected to remove them from the district to attend high school and live at the BIA bordertown dormitory. Her eldest son eventually graduated from Piñon but she decided upon a different path for her other children. Mary describes this path:

Once they got into junior high...I transferred them out to Winslow. They all went to school in Winslow and they all stayed at the dormitory and they all went through junior high and high school in Winslow...So I think the school is a lot better...a lot. I think the teaching was good. My kids said, "oh this is hard for us." First couple of months they thought it was hard and they wanted to come back to Piñon and I said, "Nope you're not coming back to Piñon. You're staying out there." But they caught on. It was good. (Mary, interview, June 4, 2009)

Mary still has two elementary aged children at the local public school. She says that her plans for them will be the same. She tells her two younger children, "...I'm waiting for you to get out from the elementary. You're going to Winslow" (Mary, interview, June 4, 2009). Although she has to maneuver her and her husband's schedule to arrange drop off and pick up, Mary feels that the extra effort is worthwhile. For some time there was limited transportation made available to families who wanted their children to attend that particular BIA bordertown dormitory program but that has since ceased.

Mary stated:

For a few years they had the bus meet us in Second Mesa and then they cut that off and we had to take them all the way back...but I think it was worth going back and forth and especially...well they have a lot of other programs with it too like they all went through Northern Pioneer College when they were going to school. (Mary, interview, June 4, 2009)

Since Mary's children were able to take vocational classes through the high school, they were able to obtain certificates in nursing and welding before they graduated from high school. Her children were then able to use these skills after they graduated. Mary enjoyed these extra benefits her children accomplished.

Haskan is the father of two daughters and one son. His eldest daughter attended the local public school in Piñon up to the eighth grade. After she completed the eighth grade, Haskan decided to send his daughter to a BIA college preparatory school. She stayed at the dormitory. He wanted his daughter to attend a high school that would prepare her for college. He was also greatly influenced by a news article published in the Navajo Times which slated Piñon as having the lowest scoring students. Haskan felt that the article reflected poorly on the school and students. He stated, "This was about two years ago, about how each school on the reservation ranked and Piñon was at the bottom and they made it seem that the kids in that community were not smart" (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009). That's when Haskan decided, "I'm going to send them some place else once they get to the age when they can be some place else" (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009). From then on Haskan has felt that it would be better for his children to leave the community to attend high school. His eldest daughter

eventually graduated from the BIA college preparatory school and now attends a public university in New Mexico where she is a pre-med student.

“I went to school there too”

Anna chose to send her daughters outside of the community to attend middle and high school. Each of her daughters attended the local BIA elementary school in Piñon from kindergarten to the sixth grade. After they completed the sixth grade there were no other alternatives within the community. The middle or high schools had yet to be built. Therefore students in the community were being bussed to Chinle to attend middle and high schools. Others enrolled in boarding schools outside of Piñon. Anna decided to send her daughters away to the same BIA bordertown dormitory program she attended as a child. Her daughters stayed in the BIA dormitory while they attended public schools in Winslow. She stated that her daughters were a part of the decision to attend school outside of Piñon.

Anna remembers:

I didn't even think of any other schools except Winslow. They themselves didn't want to go either. They didn't want to go to school out here. 'Cuz I went to school there too so we went there every weekend to pick them up and take them back on Sunday. (Anna, interview, June 4, 2009)

Even though it meant that Anna would make an hour and a half trip to retrieve her daughters, she still decided to send them away to school. Anna felt good about her decision stating “I'm glad they went to Winslow.” (Anna, interview, June 4, 2009)

“He decided to transfer there”

Amethyst has four sons; two of them are currently in school at the local public school. Her older sons are out of school but also attended school in the community. Her oldest son started school in Piñon at the Head Start and then attended the elementary and middle school in the community. While Amethyst’s son was attending high school he decided that he wanted to transfer to another school outside of the community. She entertained her sons request and allowed him to transfers schools. His main reason to transfer schools was so he could participate in a better sports program. Amethyst’s stated, “He liked the sports so he decided to transfer there and go to school there so he could be in football...” (Amethyst, interview, June 4, 2009). The bus to the school, which is approximately forty five miles south of Piñon, leaves Piñon each morning. Amethyst’s son was able to be transported each day and so transportation was not an issue for the family. Amethyst trusted that her son was making the right decision for himself. A few years later, her son changed his mind and returned to the local school. He wanted to participate in sports at the local school. Amethyst stated:

He only went to school there for a couple of years and then he decided to transfer back because he left his younger brother behind here and he was in sports so when he used to play sports they would play against each other so he decided to transfer back then they were in wrestling so that’s why he transferred back. (Amethyst, interview, June 4, 2009)

Her oldest son remained at the school and then decided to transfer to a BIA boarding school two hours away from the community. He attended his senior year at the school. Amethyst stated the reason he decided to transfer:

His cousin went to school out there and then his step brother was out there so he wanted to go to school out there and go to his step brother's house on weekends and spend some time with him so he went to school out there. (Amethyst, interview, June 4, 2009)

Amethyst felt that her sons had reached an age where they could make educational decisions for themselves. She stated, "My two oldest sons they got to stay home and go to school from here until they were old enough. They wanted to stay in a dorm up in Tuba City so I let them go..." (Amethyst, interview, June 4, 2009). Amethyst feels like denying her son's requests may have an impact on their motivation. Amethyst stated:

...if I say "no" they might not be into their school work and get behind on their school and I know being in sports you have to have good grades and that was one of the reasons when they wanted to go to school there I supported them and they are happy. (Amethyst, interview, June 4, 2009)

For now her two younger sons remain at the local public school. They have no plans to transfer out of the community to attend school.

Shelly has seven children who are each attending the local public school in grades ranging from first grade up to eleventh grade. With the exception of her eldest child, a daughter, they have all consistently attended school within the same district. However, during her sophomore year, her daughter transferred to a

public school forty five miles south of Piñon for a short time. Shelly and her daughter decided to try the school to see if she might like it better than the local school. Shelly thought this might be a good idea. She stated that she told her daughter, “You should go to school over there because I heard the school is better...” (Shelly, interview, June 5, 2009). Her daughter spent half of the semester at the school and decided to transfer back because “I guess she didn’t have any friends...and besides that she had to get up early like she has to be on the bus at 6:30” (Shelly, interview, June 4, 2009). Shelly allowed her daughter to return to Piñon mid semester. All of Shelly’s children now attend the local public school.

Anita has six children. Four of her children were enrolled in school. Anita has two young children at home. Two of her children attend the local public elementary school. The two older children attended school in Holbrook, Arizona where they lived in a BIA bordertown dormitory while attending the local public school in Holbrook. Her eldest child, a daughter, completed the school year and graduated from Holbrook. Her son is still a student at the school. Anita says that it was her daughter’s decision to transfer out of the community. She stated, “After she finished eighth grade she decided to go to Holbrook High School” (Anita, interview, June 5, 2009). After some consideration she and her husband allowed her daughter to make the decision. Anita remembered:

I just let her...we, the parents, and her talked about it...where she wanted to go to high school. We all talked about it and so there were a couple of schools around here. She decided to go to Holbrook High School. At that

time we found out that there was a dorm there at the high school. Well she really wanted to go to Flagstaff and she really wanted to go to school out of the community here. We went and checked into the school in Flagstaff but the dorm was already full so it's like her second choice was Holbrook so that's where she went and that's where she graduated this past May. (Anita, interview, June 5, 2009)

Anita said that her daughter found out about the school through her relatives. She stated, "There are some of my cousins that graduated from there and they talked about it and they said it was a good school so that's where she decided to go" (Anita, interview, June 5, 2009). In order for her children to attend school in Holbrook, Anita must make a weekly trip to pick her children up on Fridays and return them back to the dormitory on Sunday. Her younger children have already decided that they too will follow their older siblings and transfer to Holbrook when they finish the eighth grade. Anita stated:

I ask them and they say "I'm going where my sister went" so my eighth grade son, he's saying that he wants to go to Holbrook High School too so I tell them at least one of you should stay around like through their high school years instead of being at the dorm but they all want to go to the dorm. (Anita, interview, June 4, 2009)

Anita said that she would like her children to stay at home during their high school years but they are making the decision to transfer to the dormitory. With Anita there exists a tension as she sees the benefits of dormitory life and what she

derived from it as a student herself but then wants to have her children at home.

She stated:

It's like I told you during my school year I stayed at the dorm and I learned a lot and met a lot of good people and dealing with my kids they're like into dorms during their high school years but when they are still in elementary and middle school it's like I want to watch them myself and try to raise them...and teach them and stuff around the house and even going to school...to behave and just things like that so in high school I'm putting them into dorms...that's how I see it. (Anita, interview, June 5, 2009)

Anita feels that it is best to keep her children at home during their elementary years and they can attend the dormitory when they reach high school.

Community Self-determination

“They encourage the students to speak Navajo”

Patrina chose the BIA boarding school that her children attend due to the strong emphasis on Navajo language and culture. It is important to her family that her children gain the knowledge to communicate with family members in the community. She feels that many children in the community can benefit from the Navajo curriculum. Patrina stated:

Some kids from the time they start growing up they don't speak Navajo...they [the school] encourage that...for them to speak. They encourage the students to speak Navajo. Over there it's like that. Well that's the only way they communicate with their grandparents too because

sometimes we usually let them stay over there so they know when they're being talked to. They know what is being said over there. They are learning things like that. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

Knowing that her children are gaining cultural knowledge also helps Patrina maintain a connection to the teachings of her late grandmother. Throughout their house, Patrina displays many of the cultural artifacts that her daughter created at the school including rugs and woven sash belts. As Patrina and her daughter sat side by side she stated:

Then the Navajo prayers...that's what they're learning, Navajo songs also. Well a long time ago our grandma used to say "It's important to have your prayers. That's the way it should be, or teachings. These four sacred mountains they are called these names and these are the things you need to know." Those are the things you are supposed to know. Sometimes I still don't know so my daughter sometimes she tells me. Some of the things I know but then other things I don't so that's what they learn there. Like the coyote stories...what grandma used to tell us. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

Patrina remembers the teachings of her grandmother and how she had forgotten some of them. Thankfully her daughter is learning some of this knowledge and Patrina is relearning it from her. She feels good about this. Patrina fondly remembers her grandmother as a wonderful teacher of traditional knowledge. To see her daughter learning some of the cultural lessons she had forgotten is very rewarding to Patrina. She stated:

Some of them [cultural teachings] I don't remember. When we used to stay up there with her, she used to tell us about things like that but some of them I've forgotten and now my daughter is telling me about them. She'll tell me the way things are. So it seems like I'm learning from her too what she gets from the school, what they are teaching her at school. I think that's what I really like about it I'm sure. (Patrina, interview, June 2, 2009)

The BIA school that Patrina's daughter attends is a K-8 school. After the eighth grade, Patrina will have to choose a high school for her daughter to attend.

Patrina often worries that the high school her daughter will soon attend will not provide this type of programming.

Navajo language instruction is also very important to Ninabah. She would like her son to participate in language programs so that he may apply for tribal scholarship funding which requires proficiency in Navajo language and studies.

She stated:

I want him to learn Navajo. I want to put him in a school where the school is very strong, very outstanding and you hear good thing about that school. That's where I want to put him and I told him he needs to learn the Navajo language and take Navajo studies so he can at least try for that Chief Manuelito [Navajo scholarship for higher education] award. (Ninabah, interview, June 2, 2009)

“If they are from Piñon, they should keep their kids in Piñon”

Emily has two children. Her eldest child, a daughter, attended school from kindergarten through high school. She graduated from the local high school. Her son is now a student at the local public middle school in Piñon. She is confident that her children have received a good education and has never entertained sending them away from Piñon. She stated:

I think I’m pretty satisfied with what he’s offered. I know that Piñon...the curriculum is in line with the state standards and all that and he’s doing pretty well with the curriculum that offered and with the assessments that they give to him. He’s way above grade level so I know he’s achieving.
(Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

She feels confident that her children can do well beyond the community. Her eldest daughter has done well after leaving Piñon. Emily feels that students are more “well rounded” than in the past. She stated:

Nowadays I think kids are more well rounded like all around they are exposed to the outside world and if you pluck them out of Piñon and put them somewhere else I think they can function pretty well. (Emily, interview, June 3, 2009)

Emily feels confident and is secure in her decision to continue to enroll her children in the local public school.

Jim feels strongly that families from Piñon should enroll their children within Piñon’s school system. He feels that student success is strongly related to support at home. He sees his daughter as an example. Jim stated:

I have this philosophy I guess from what I've experienced and observed in people like my own daughter. She went to school all the way from kindergarten to high school. She graduated from Piñon. So looking at her I think it's just the motivation you give them and the encouragement that you give them to make the best of what's offered to take advantage of it. (Jim, interview, June 3, 2009)

Jim has witnessed many parents in the community send their child to school outside of the community. He has even witnessed it in his own family. Jim feels strongly about sending your child to school within the community. He stated, "I'd say if they are from Piñon they should keep their kids in Piñon." (Jim, interview, June 3, 2009)

"We have no plans of moving anywhere"

Although Haskan is not satisfied with the high schools locally, he feels that it is important for him to maintain his home in Piñon. Living in Piñon allows him to maintain a small family ranch and modest home where he raises livestock. That life style is especially important to him. Haskan stated:

We have no plans of moving anywhere from here because I've experienced life out there so I don't...you know the life here...what we have here...our horses and chickens, goats and sheep and even though this house is what it is but we had plans of doing other things but I wouldn't move any place else but I have to place my kids someplace else after they get to high school. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Haskan is not willing to leave Piñon but is willing to send his children away to attend school elsewhere. It is evident that he values the rural community lifestyle in Piñon and is committed to maintaining it. Although he sent his daughter out of the community to attend school, Haskan admits that this is not the answer to improving the educational rigor and quality of education in Piñon. Haskan states:

...you know sending our kids off some place else ain't the answer. We need to change. I've got a big mouth and I've got my opinions...nobody's addressing the real problem...so the only other choice we have is to send out kids out to some other school to help them succeed. (Haskan, interview, June 4, 2009)

Haskan alludes to the need for improvement in the standards of the local school district. Voices of parents need to be heard so that their opinions are heard by school officials.

As the realms of individual choice and community self-determination are deeply rooted in tribal sovereignty, the impact school placement choices have on sovereignty cannot be ignored. The impact on sovereignty will be addressed in the final chapter.

Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated the manner in which school placement decisions operate in linked domains of individual choice and community self determination. Participants recounted the school placement decisions they have made for their children. School placement decisions have been categorized as individual choices or choices related to community self determination. Although

many improvements have been made community wide and educational infrastructure has improved greatly, many families are still constrained by the lack of community infrastructure, mainly a lack of paved road systems. The lack of economic development in the community also constrains many families as they are often separated in order to work outside of the community.

Families have become accustomed to having their children participate in educational decision making. This may be a remnant of the past when participants made educational decisions as young adults. This was often a consequence of their parents knowing very little about the education system. Parents trusted their decision making and often saw it as a natural part of growing up. Some participants have carried on this practice with their children. At a certain point, children are seen as equals in terms of being able to participate in making decisions regarding their education. Many participants see high school as the point when their children can participate in educational decision making. Parents are passionate about supporting their children even if it means that they have to go out of their way to support the educational choices their children make.

School placement choices that are related to community self-determination include an emphasis on developing Navajo language and culture programs within the schools. Many families would like their children to contribute to the family and community by being able to speak Navajo and carry forth important tenets of Navajo culture and society.

Community self-determination also includes participating in school reform. Piñon as a community has been often seen in a negative light due to bad publicity. Many parents view the educational system as in need of reform.

Individual choices and choices related to community self determination both have an impact on Navajo tribal sovereignty. This will be further described in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations based upon the data and analysis presented in previous chapters. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of past educational experiences on school placement behaviors of Navajo parents in Piñon, Arizona. The following research questions were addressed by interviewing parents within the community.

- 1. What are the educational experiences of Navajo parents with regard to the type of schools (public, BIA, community controlled) available on the reservation?*
- 2. How do their prior educational experiences influence school placement decisions for their own children?*
- 3. Are there other extraneous factors involved in parental decision making about school placement? If so, what are these factors?*

Conclusions and Discussion

Parental Prior Educational Experiences

In terms of prior educational experiences, Navajo parents in Piñon experienced a variety of school systems throughout their educational careers. This was a consequence of a variety of constraints including a lack of community and educational infrastructure. The educational infrastructure lacked a full range of services for many decades. Until the late 1980s, Piñon students could only attend school up to the intermediate elementary grades. As a direct result of the BIA's lack of support for the development of educational infrastructure, parents were forced to send their children outside of the community to attend school. The

parents of Piñon relied upon the local BIA school to provide educational services. When the BIA would not further develop the school system beyond the elementary grades, students were sent away to school. Therefore many participants experienced BIA boarding schools and public schools outside of Piñon. In order to attend public schools, many participants enrolled in BIA bordertown dormitory programs. When these schools reached capacity, students were often shuffled from school to school in order to find a school that would accommodate them. As a consequence, participants rarely experienced attending one school district from start to finish.

Since participants grew up in homes with parents who had very little formal schooling, parents could not assist their children or participate in making educational decisions. Within the home, children often became educational decision makers early on. For better or worse children independently made decisions that often meant relocation outside of the community to complete their education. Often students were unaware of the ramifications of their decisions until choices had already been made. Students made life changing decisions at an early age and often felt a sense of independence. Their parents did their best they could to support the education of their children by supporting their decisions.

School Placement Decisions

Currently a full range of educational services are available to school aged children who live in the vicinity of Piñon. Educational infrastructure within Piñon has greatly improved. Parents can send their children to school locally and keep them at home. Parents no longer have to send their children outside of the

community. Possibly as a consequence of the past, many parents in Piñon socialize their children to participate in educational decision making as they once did when they were children. Children are seen as equal contributors to the decision making process and often choose to attend schools outside of their community. BIA border town dormitory programs are still very popular with Navajo students in Piñon. Many of the schools surrounding Piñon are accepting students into their schools as well. Families have the perception that a variety of options exist if their children chose not to attend the local school. They are taking advantage of these perceived choices and enrolling their children elsewhere.

Many of the parents experienced leaving home at an early age and were not able to live at home when they were children. They spent many months away from home and often experienced abusive practices within the dormitories and schools they attended. Parents who had traumatic experiences often opt to keep their children in the local school district. They feel strongly that elementary aged children are to remain in the care of their parents. However, after students reach high school they are often allowed to choose schools outside of the community. Consequently, many students choose to attend school outside of Piñon after they have finished the eighth grade. Very few of the parents interviewed have decided to keep their children within the local school district for the entire duration of their education.

Other extraneous factors that impact decision making include educational quality. Parents feel strongly that school reform at the local level needs to occur. They often feel that the local district is not providing the support for college

bound students. Therefore many families send their children elsewhere to schools that they feel provide a more rigorous curriculum.

An increased emphasis on language and culture is also prominent within families. As students, very few participants experienced Navajo language and culture curriculum within the schools they attended. Many parents are hoping that schools can incorporate Navajo language and culture curricula so that their children can participate within the community and communicate with Navajo speakers. Additionally, parents want to assure that their children can secure Navajo tribal funding by passing Navajo language proficiency tests, which are qualifiers for certain scholarships.

Although educational infrastructure has greatly improved, Piñon still has many dirt roads that parents must navigate to get their children to school. Community infrastructure still needs to improve as many parents struggle to transport their children to bus routes during inclement weather.

Connections to Other Research on School Choice

Within the findings, connections can be made between the experiences and practices of Navajo parents in Piñon to those of parents in school choice studies. It is important to delineate these connections so that the importance of context is illustrated.

Congruent with the research findings of Reback (2008), many parents in Piñon prefer to choose schools that they see as are more productive. In terms of preference, parents often viewed local schools as not having the college preparatory courses and support they want for their children. This moves parents

to choose schools that they feel possess greater resources and college preparatory programming. These schools are located off the reservation and often have partnerships with local community colleges. Parents choose not to relocate to these communities but remain in Piñon and enroll their children in dormitory programs. This then allows their children to have access to these schools and their resources.

The findings of Reay and Ball (1998), suggest that leaving choice of school to the child is a result of a lack of social power within the family. Parents are aware of the social constraints and therefore leave decision making up to the child. Navajo parents in Piñon include their children in the decision making process. However, parents do not absolve themselves from the process entirely. They instead see their children as equal decision makers in educational matters. Within this study, Navajo children often participate in decision making when they reach adolescence. They are often asked which schools they would like to attend for high school, even if the school is located outside of the community. Parents also entertain educational decisions that their children make independently. If a child wants to transfer to another school outside of the community, parents are willing to entertain their requests.

Navajo parents in Piñon are indeed aware of the social constraints that impact their lives. They understand that they live in a rural community and their constraints are greatly a result of the lack of community infrastructure. Parents have experienced the lack of resources as a part of their own educational experiences. However, understanding the constraints does not move them to turn over their decision making to their children such as Reay and Ball (1998) have

found within working class homes. Instead they see their children as invaluable in the decision making process. They are included in school choice decisions.

Ball (1996) found that parents use educational choice as a reinvestment strategy to enhance the social ranking of their children. Within the Navajo context, parents see education as they key to self-sufficiency. Parents do not refer to education as a way to increase social status. They are more concerned with the ability to be self-sufficient within the outside world if their child chooses to leave the reservation. The notion of social class and status may not transcend the Navajo context. Parents do understand that leaving the community and leaving the reservation does require certain skills and knowledge that they feel schools should provide.

Gorard (1998) found that parents utilized historical data to choose schools for their children. Parents who had a positive experience often chose school like the ones they experienced themselves. Those who had negative experiences often chose schools unlike the ones they experienced. This is also true with the participants of this study. Navajo parents in Piñon frequently choose schools that they attended themselves. Since infrastructure was limited in the past, many participants left Piñon to attend schools outside of Piñon. Many parents feel an affinity for the schools they attended. They encourage their children to attend these schools even though there are now local public schools available. Some parents maintain the value of BIA bordertown dormitory programs and continue to send their children to these programs and schools. This is also true for participants who had negative school experiences. Several participants, who had

negative experiences while attending BIA boarding schools as children, have opted not to send their children to the schools they attended as children.

Ball and Vincent (1998) studied social networks involved in the selection of schools and coined the term “grapevine” to describe the networks used in selecting schools. They found that these networks are socially structured and patterned. Within the context of Piñon, a rural Navajo reservation community, networks are also used to select schools. However, the context and structure of social networks often involve family members. This is congruent with traditional Navajo notions of k'é and the value of familial opinion and participation in decision making. Often participants described their decision as a familial one. Families create networks that provide resources for decision making.

Theoretical Framework

The stories of participants illustrated the pendulum swings of federal policy described by Lomawaima and McCarty (2006). Participant experiences were shaped by the safe and unsafe zones that characterized their educational experiences. Many participants experienced colonizing curriculums and oppressive practices while some experienced resurgence in Navajo curriculum. These experiences and the lives of participants illustrate the impact of federal policy on the lives of Navajo people. Lomawaima and McCarty's (2006) framework is pertinent to Navajo educational experiences and choices of the past and present.

Implications

Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) posit that choice operates within linked domains of individual choice community self-determination. Both realms are deeply rooted in sovereignty. Since context cannot go unnoticed, the impact parental placement decisions have on Navajo sovereignty at the local and tribal level cannot be ignored.

As parents choose to make school placement choices at an individual level, they often fail to ignore the impact on the local community. Parents who are dissatisfied with the local school district and remove their children to attend another school outside of Piñon, fail to see the loss local sovereignty endures. By not participating in school reform at the local level, improvements cannot be made by local leaders. The local school district cannot improve or meet their needs if their voices are not heard.

Individual choice and community self determination are closely linked. As the development of infrastructure increases at the local level, more choices are available to community members.

Department of Diné Education (DODE)

As the Department of Diné Education (DODE) seeks to create a unified school system to educate their school aged population, they must consider the vast landscape of schools that still exist within reach of Navajo parents. This includes BIA bordertown dormitories that allow parents to send their children to school off the reservation. Parents continue to operate as if there are a wide range of choices available to them. This undermines community development at the local level as

children leave the community to be educated elsewhere. As a consequence parents then cease to be involved in educational development at the local level. Parents and students who seek a more rigorous academic program leave the community and cannot contribute to the school community draining the local schools of its best students. This surely has a negative impact on local test scores.

As a policy making body, the DODE should consider future plans for consolidating programs and educational resources so that students do not have to leave their communities. This includes consideration of open enrollment policies throughout the reservation. Further studies need to be conducted focusing solely on the desires of parents in communities across the reservation in order to better meet their needs.

Community Development

Many parents still struggle with a lack of community infrastructure. This includes paved road systems. Countless roads in Piñon are still unpaved and many homes are situated off dirt roads that become impassable. The local Chapter should consider the impact the lack of paved roads has on educational decision making. Long range planning should include parents from the community as well as transportation officials who navigate dirt roads and transport children to school.

Local School District

Many parents in Piñon are concerned with the academic rigor and availability of college preparatory support for their students. Surveying parents and allowing them to become involved in long range planning would be of utmost

importance to the local school district. Families who are satisfied with the services locally would not be enticed to enroll their children elsewhere.

Since students are often included in educational decision making, school officials should consider aiming their recruiting efforts at not only parents but students as well. Marketing schemes should be clear and aimed towards different student clientele and what can be offered to each group.

Contributions to the Field

Scholarly Literature/Research

Reay and Ball (1998) suggest that an analysis of choice should include not only the power dynamics within the family but also the wider social power dynamics that impact the family and their effect on the internal dynamics of the family. This study complements the work of Reay and Ball as the impact of wider social dynamics on Navajo families and their school choices are considered. It provides a window into how larger social dynamics, such as historical federal policies, have impacted decision making within Navajo families. This study illustrates how educational choices for Navajo families are impacted by social constraints both within the realm of family and community. The impact of Navajo community sovereignty is also illustrated as parents contemplate how schools can prepare their children for participation within the community and Navajo society.

Indigenous Education

This study provides that basis for understanding the impact past educational history has on the educational decisions parents make for their

children within the Navajo context. It considers the impact of history and personal experiences and the manner in which they commingle to create social practices within the family.

The impact of federal policies and the impact they have had on the lives of Navajo individuals and their families is considered. The stories of parents and their prior educational experiences are evidence of the pendulum swings that characterize federal Indian policies.

Much has been written regarding the history of Indian education. The bulk of literature typically includes historical accounts. This study seeks to provide a glimpse into the contemporary experiences and behaviors of students and parents within Indian education during the 21st century. The lived experiences of participants provide a glimpse into Indian education in contemporary times. This includes the improvements that have been made and challenges that still need to be addressed.

The findings provide a knowledge base for tribal decision makers and educational leaders across Native America who continually seek to better meet the needs of parents and students within reservation schools.

Indigenous Methodologies

Within the study, a Navajo framework for learning and understanding was followed. This included adhering to the principles of Sa'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóó within the research process. The Navajo context was honored as Navajo ways of thinking and learning guided the process. This project progressed through each of the necessary aspects of Navajo learning: thinking, planning, life

and assurance. Methodologies were adapted to meet the needs of participants and context.

For Further Study

Further research studies can expand upon the various viewpoints of decisions related to school placement. This study focuses on parents and families. Since the findings of this study indicate that Navajo students participate in decision making, future studies could focus on the perspective of students. Interviewing students and exploring their views on educational decision making would broaden the knowledge base related to school placement decisions within the Navajo context.

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APPENDIX A

RESOLUTION OF PINON CHAPTER



PIÑON CHAPTER

Post Office Box 127 • Piñon, Arizona 86510 • (928) 725-3710/3711 • FAX (928) 725-371

PIN-09-41

RESOLUTION OF PINON CHAPTER

Supporting the research project entitled "Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present: A Qualitative Study of Navajo Parent School Placement Decisions" to be conducted by Ms, Danielle R. Lansing, ASU Doctoral Candidate.

WHEREAS:

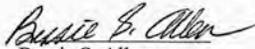
1. The Pinon Chapter is recognized as a local government entity within the Navajo Nation Government promoting the interest and welfare of the constituents pursuant to Navajo Nation Code; and
2. The members of the Pinon Chapter support carefully design research projects that aim to investigate educational issues and seek ways to improve education: And
3. The members of the Pinon Chapter represent and advocates the educational interest of students and residents within the Pinon Community: And
4. The Pinon Community is impacted by the school placement decisions of Navajo Parents.

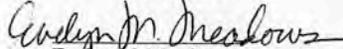
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

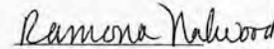
1. The Pinon Chapter hereby supports and approves the research project entitled "Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present: A Qualitative Study of Navajo Parent School Placement Decisions" to be conducted by Ms. Danielle R. Lansing.

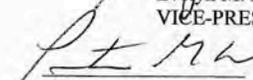
CERTIFICATION

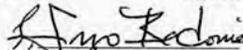
We, the undersigned, do hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly considered by the Pinon Chapter at a duly called meeting at which quorum was present, at Pinon, Navajo Nation, ARIZONA, and same was passed by a vote of 29 in favor, 00 opposed, 03 abstained this 16th day of March, 2009


Bessie S. Allen
PRESIDENT


Evelyn M. Meadows
VICE-PRESIDENT


Ramona Nalwood
SECRETARY/TREASURER


Preston McCabe, SR.
COUNCIL DELEGATE


Lorenzo Bedonie
COUNCIL DELEGATE

Motioned: Maryhucy Joe

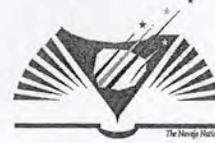
APPENDIX B

DEPARTMENT OF DINE EDUCATION SUPPORT LETTER



**DEPARTMENT OF DINÉ EDUCATION
THE NAVAJO NATION**

P.O. Box 670 · Window Rock, Arizona 86515
PHONE (928) 871 – 7475 · FAX (928) 871 – 7474



Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr.
President

Ben Shelly
Vice-President

March 16, 2009

Human Research & Review Board
Navajo Nation
P.O. Box 9000
Window Rock, Arizona 86515

Dear Navajo Nation Human Research and Review Board:

I am pleased to provide a letter in support of the research study entitled, “Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present: A Qualitative Study of Navajo Parent School Placement Decisions.”

The Department of Diné Education (Department) supports research that will provide us insight into the underlying factors that regarding all aspects of the educational process – including how and why parents choose to enroll their children at particular schools. The findings of this research project is of interest because it will provide the Department of needed data that will inform administrators and policy makers may use in making important decisions as move toward becoming a “State Education Agency”.

When approved, the Department is willing to entertain a partnership with Ms. Danielle Lansing, ABD, Principal Investigator, in order to assure that the benefits of the research project are fully realized. We are willing to provide any consultation that may assist Ms. Lansing with her project. At the culmination of Ms. Lansing’s project, we will assist her in determining which Navajo Nation Department and programs will receive her data for further use.

The Department looks forward to collaborating with the NNHRRB and Ms. Lansing on this research project.

Regards,

Delores McKerry
Interim Superintendent

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Jimmie C. Begay, President · Rebecca M. Benally, Vice President · Vee F. Browne, Secretary

Members: Katherine D. Arviso · Dolly C. Begay · Juanita K. Benally

Rose J. Yazzie · Virgil Kirk, Jr. · Timothy Bitsilly

Delores McKerry, Interim Superintendent of Schools

APPENDIX C

NIH CERTIFICATION



Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Danielle Lansing

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 02/04/2007.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nih.gov>

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FIRSTGOV

APPENDIX D

NNHRRB APPROVAL LETTER



The Navajo Nation

DR. JOE SHIRLEY, JR.
President

BEN SHELLY
Vice President

April 28, 2009

Ms. Danielle Lansing
16801 N 49th St., Apt. #103
Scottsdale, AZ 85254

Dear Ms. Lansing:

This is to advise you that **Study #NNR-09.35T "Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present: A Qualitative Study of Navajo Parent School Placement Decisions"** was presented to Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board on April 21, 2009 and considered your research proposal as presented. The Board approved your proposal with all standard conditions and that you submit the ASU IRB approval as soon as you received it. Approval becomes effective **April 21, 2009 to April 21, 2010**. We have given your proposal a permanent **ID# NNR-09.248** to reference all correspondence pertaining to your research proposal.

Additional contingencies are:

The Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board has added a very important additional contingency regarding failure to comply with NNHRRB rules, regulations, and submittal of reports which could result in sanctions being placed against your project. This could also affect your funding source and the principal investigator. **Under Part Five: Certification**, please note paragraph five wherein it states: *"I agree not to proceed in the research until the problems have been resolved or the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board has reviewed and approved the changes."* Therefore, it is very important to submit quarterly and annual reports on time and if continuation is warranted submit a letter of request sixty (60) days prior to the expiration date.

The following are requirements that apply to all research studies:

1. The Navajo Nation retains ownership of all data obtained within its territorial boundaries. The Principal Investigator shall submit to the NNHRRB a plan and timeline on how and when the data/statistics will be turned over to the Navajo Nation;
2. Only the approved informed consent document(s) will be used in the study;
3. Any proposed future changes to the protocol or the consent form(s) must again be submitted to the Board for review and approval prior to implementation of the proposed change;
4. If the results of the study will be published or used for oral presentations at professional conferences, the proposed publication, abstract and/or presentation materials must be submitted to the Navajo Research Program for Board review and prior approval;
5. Upon Board approval, three (3) copies of the final publication must be submitted to the Navajo Research Program;
6. All manuscripts must be submitted to the Navajo Research Program for Board Review and prior approval;

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

“Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present: A Qualitative Study of Navajo
Parent School Placement Decisions”

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INFORMATION FOR INTERVIEWERS: This protocol is a modification of I.E. Seidman’s (2006) 3-part interview series, with the 3 parts condensed into a single 50- to 120-minute interview for participants. Questions are designed to maximize a free flow of participants’ experiences related to School Placement Decisions.

Part I: Focused Life History – Placing Participants’ Experience in Context	Part II: Details of Experience – Concrete Details of Participants’ Experience with school placement decisions	Part III: Reflections on Meaning – Intellectual and Emotional Connections to school placement decisions
<p>1. Tell me as much as you can remember about your own school experiences. <i>Focusing Questions</i> (use as needed to elicit details of participants’ experiences): -Tell me a little about your growing-up years. Where did you grow up? Can you tell me about your parents and grandparents? <i>(NOTE: Used to elicit something about family background; this is likely to be an influence on the participants’ parents’ decision-making and options for where they sent their children to school.)</i> -Where did you go to school? What were the available school options for you at the time? How were you placed in the schools you attended? <i>(Use follow-up questions to help lead the participant through her/his school experience.)</i> -What do you remember</p>	<p>2. Now let’s focus on the time when your own children began school. -How did you decide to place them in the school they attended? -Think of the day you enrolled your kids. What happened that day?<i>(Use follow-up questions to explore the participant’s child’s/children’s school experience; thoughts on that experience – similar questions to #1, above.)</i></p>	<p>3. Given what you said about your life before your children began school and your decision to place your kids at _____, how do you understand your decision to send your children to the _____ School? -Have you been happy about that decision? Why or why not? -What would you recommend for other parents facing a similar decision? -What would be the “ideal” type of school for your child(ren)? -What were the most important factors/influences on your decision to send your children to _____ School? Explore influences.</p>

<p>about first going to school?</p> <p>-Who were some of the teachers you remember most?</p> <p>-What was the curriculum like at the schools you attended?</p> <p>-If you lived in a dormitory, what was the dormitory experience like?</p> <p>-What did you like best about X, Y, Z school?</p> <p>-What didn't you like?</p> <p><i>NOTE:</i> inquire about language/culture issues related to the school they attended (i.e., was Navajo language/culture part of the school program and if so, what are their thoughts about that?).</p>		
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APPENDIX F
CONSENT FORM

**Landscapes of School Choice, Past and Present: A Qualitative Study of
Navajo Parent School Placement Decisions**

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Teresa L. McCarty, a professor of education policy studies in the M. L. Fulton College of Education at Arizona State University; and Danielle R. Lansing, a Delta Doctoral Student, ASU College of Education, have invited your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE

Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of school choice. None have explored the school enrollment choices available to Navajo parents who live on the Navajo reservation. This study aims to explore the school enrollment decisions of Navajo parents who live on the reservation. The impact of their past school experiences will be considered.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of your personal experiences related to the school placement decisions you have made for your children. You will be interviewed and asked to discuss your personal experiences. You can skip any questions during the interview if you wish to.

If you say YES, then your participation will last for about 1 to 2 hours within your home or at a place most convenient to you. You will be asked to answer questions and recount personal experiences. Approximately 10 Navajo men and women from Piñon, AZ will be participating in this study. Your interview will be recorded for analysis.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

These may involve the feelings and experiences that we will discuss during your interview.

BENEFITS

The possible benefits of your participation in this research study includes an opportunity to reflect and understand how the past has impacted the school

placement choices you have made for your children. In doing so you may be better able to articulate the impetus behind your choices. Consequently, you may become a better advocate for your self and your children.

Data collected will assist Navajo Nation policy makers in future educational planning. It will inform education decision makers by providing insight into which schools parents are choosing and why. The variety of schools Navajo parents are able to choose from will also be illuminated. This may assist Dine Education policy makers in making future decisions regarding the newly developed Dine Department of Education and its education planning.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researcher will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, all project staff will sign a Confidentiality Statement. All information will be coded to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. Dr. McCarty and Danielle Lansing will not use your name to identify you. Interviews will be coded according to a self selected pseudonym. The pseudonym will be used in research reports and files and/or tapes containing your interview. Dr. McCarty and Ms. Lansing will be the only individual who will have access to the confidential records. Audio tapes will be destroyed after analysis of data has concluded. The tapes will be burned. Digital MP3 (audio) files containing the interviews will be permanently deleted from the hard drive. In all reporting, anonymity will be protected and confidentiality ensured; we will report the analysis of data, not raw data. All data will be kept on a password-protected computer and in the researcher's office in a locked file cabinet.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. Non-participation or withdrawal from the study will not affect your employment status, your relationship with Arizona State University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, any information you have provided, including any audio tape or MP3 files containing interview recordings, will be destroyed.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers want your decision about participating in the study to be absolutely voluntary. Yet they recognize that your participation may pose some inconveniences. In order to compensate you for your time, you may receive a \$20.00 Bashas gift card at the completion of your interview. If you are not able to complete the interview you will not receive a gift card.

