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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS' INDIAN  
STUDENT PLACEMENT SERVICE: A HISTORY

by

Lynette A. Riggs

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

Approved:

---

Barry M. Franklin, Ph.D.  
Major Professor

---

Martha L. Whitaker, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

David Rich Lewis, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Kay Camperell, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Kathryn R. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.  
Committee Member

---

Byron Burnham, Ed.D.  
Dean of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2008

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## ABSTRACT

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Indian

Student Placement Service: A History

by

Lynette A. Riggs, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2008

Major Professor: Dr. Barry M. Franklin  
Department: Education

From 1947 to 1996, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operated a foster program that placed Native American children into Latter-day Saint (LDS) homes to attend public schools and be immersed in Mormon culture. This program, the Indian Student Placement Program, is described through LDS perspectives as being generally successful. The children were baptized into the LDS church, removed from the reservations, and relocated to live with white Mormon families where they attended public schools and were expected to conform to white cultural life ways. Critics charge that the program was a missionary tool used to assimilate children into white Mormon society, often at a great cultural, familial, and psychological cost.

Although historians and scholars are writing more about Native American education experiences as of late, little has been recorded about this particular phenomenon. This study pulls together what has been recorded about the program and

adds additional perspectives and information provided by past participants via an interview process.

There are both negative and positive outcomes suggested by past program participants and researchers. Perhaps the most important contributions this study makes, however, concern the Native Americans themselves and their responses of accommodation, resistance, and, ultimately, resilience in the face of acculturating and assimilating forces.

(205 pages)

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Finally, I wish to thank my parents, who died when I was small. They read to me. I associated books and learning with love.

Lynette A. Riggs

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

From 1947 to 1996, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operated a foster program that placed Native American children into Latter-day Saint (LDS) homes to attend public schools and become immersed in Mormon culture. An early LDS public relations pamphlet meant for Indian families states that the program would “help your child succeed in his home life, his job, and in his service in the Church. As you help him in this program, you will be helping the Indian people fulfill their destiny” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, p. 7). “Destiny” refers to an LDS *Doctrine and Covenants* scripture (D & C 49:24) which promises, “the Lamanites [Native Americans] shall blossom as the rose” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, p. 90).

The majority of the students entering the program were Navajo; however, by the end of the 1960s, students from at least 63 tribes in the United States and Canada had participated. At its peak in 1971, the LDS Indian Student Placement Service, generally referred to as the Indian placement program, served approximately 5,000 children (Allen, 1998).

Although historians and scholars are writing more about Native American education experiences of late, little has been recorded about this particular phenomenon. This study pulls together what has been recorded about the program and adds additional perspectives and information provided by past participants gathered through a series of interviews.

There are both negative and positive outcomes suggested by past program

participants and researchers. Perhaps the most important contributions this study makes, however, is providing an account of the Native Americans themselves and their responses to the program's acculturating and assimilating policies and practices.

### The Problem

According to LDS historian James B. Allen (1998), "The Indian Student Placement Service performed exceptionally well in achieving the major goal it began with—to provide better educational opportunities for LDS Indian children" (p. 110). Clarence R. Bishop, a past director of the placement program, concurred and added that the program also created a foundation of Native American LDS church leaders in Indian communities and impacted the Indians' "culture of poverty and alcoholism" in positive ways (telephone interview, October 4, 2004).

Various LDS foster mothers defined other positive outcomes. For example, Helen Smith,<sup>1</sup> who fostered several Native American "placement" students, felt the program prompted Christian charity, the charity given by the foster families to the Native American children and their families. In her view, all acts of selfless giving were good, and those acts might overshadow other ultimate outcomes. She added that Satan did not want the program to work, but "if even one Native American child was saved in the LDS gospel, then all the effort was worthwhile," for generations are often converted because of one progenitor (telephone interview, October 15, 2005). LuDene Bankhead, another past foster mother, voiced similar opinions about Native American conversion to the LDS

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms are used in this text to identify LDS foster family members and Native Americans who participated in the program.

faith and how that conversion related to the success of the program. She also felt the experience was valuable for her natural children—they learned charity, sharing, and a better understanding of cultural diversity (telephone interview, October 12, 2005).

The program, however, is controversial when viewed from other perspectives and positive perceptions of the program have been challenged. As Gottlieb and Wiley (1986) wrote, “Numerous Indian critics have castigated the church for kidnapping their young, for skimming the best of Indian youth from the reservations to which they have never returned, and for targeting certain tribes, particularly the Navajos, for eventual takeover” (p. 158). They also asserted that many Hopi leaders viewed the church and the placement program as being part of “the dominant white society that has used and manipulated native Americans for its own purposes” (p. 158). Adams (1995) claimed that education, a foundational premise of the student placement agenda, was used for the specific purpose of “destroying” Native Americans by assimilating them into the white culture (pp. 336-337).

Indeed, through an LDS church perspective, educational opportunities were offered and provided through immersion in white LDS culture. But the outcome of that provision is more nebulous: Did the students become “better” educated? Was a white education worth its price, particularly in cultural terms? Were efforts to assimilate a minority group into the culture and values of the majority population legitimate?

Apple (2004) aligned himself with a philosophy he calls “the common good.” Included in the philosophy is the belief that any social program, including education, should be judged “against the likelihood that it will result in linking equity, sharing,

personal dignity, security, freedom, and caring” (p. xxi). Jim Curley, a Native American who participated in the Indian placement program and attended public schools, has a similar view, though he worded it differently. He believes the success of the placement program—or any endeavor, including the endeavor of education—should be measured by the amount of inner personal peace (equity, personal dignity, security, freedom, and caring) that can be achieved through participation. Growing up in alternating, opposing worlds, mostly away from his native home and family, did not bring about inner peace. He said there were several contexts where he could not find a peaceful “fit” within the white culture, the Mormon culture, the traditional Indian culture, nor within the mythic, generalized, idealized “Lamanite” construct of Native Americans found in the *Book of Mormon* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991; e-mail interview, April 20, 2005).

What was the nature of the Indian Student Placement Service? Was it for the common good and did most participants benefit? Was this model an effective way to educate Native American children? Informing data and histories, both pro and con, lie as fragments; there are brief overviews, church-published pamphlets, related theses, dissertations, articles, testimonies and first-hand accounts. The experiences of many who participated remain untold, and soon these stories will be lost. This study responds to the problem of a lack of existing studies, which attempt to bring together the differing, often conflicting perspectives and opinions of those who participated.

In addition, this study is pertinent to current problems regarding education and culture: How can schools and teachers better educate people of all cultures? The

function schools play in an assimilation process is still pivotal—and controversial.

Reyhner and Eder (2004) were bold in addressing this topic:

The common practice in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere to use teachers and schools to destroy minority cultures and to indoctrinate children into mainstream cultures that continue to maintain ethnocentric and racist attitudes, despite their “melting pot” philosophies, is a travesty of what education should be. (p. 326)

### Purpose

My foremost purpose is to describe this historic phenomenon deeply and to create a more unified, more correct understanding of the program. Additionally, it is hoped that this study will contribute to a clearer picture of the history of assimilating school practices that deny and devalue particular cultures and cultural understandings. As the “proficiency” gap widens for minority populations despite the current pressures of Adequate Yearly Progress demands as outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110), it is imperative that improvement be made in educating minority populations.

By considering studies, documents, articles, and reading and listening to the perspectives of those involved—Native American foster students and their families, LDS foster parents and their natural children, church leaders, LDS Social Service counselors, public school teachers—a history has been constructed which examines the origins, development, and demise of the LDS Indian Student Placement Service. The study includes the following related questions.

1. What was the Indian placement program?

2. What were the historical contexts that led to its creation, its operation, and its demise?
3. What were the controversies during its operation?
4. What did the program do for/to the child? The child's family? The foster family?
5. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
6. What does the Indian placement program experience tell us about educating
7. Native American and other minority children?

### Interpretive Framework

The theoretical lens through which I explore the placement program is that provided by the concept of assimilation—the process and results of a minority culture being changed, absorbed, or replaced by a dominant culture. Assimilation was once considered the foundational concept for the study of ethnic relations

...when ethnic and racial groups could be rated according to a cultural profile presumed to be required for success in an advanced industrial society...but in recent decades it has come to be seen by sociologists and others as an ideologically laden residue of worn out notions. That [earlier assimilation concept] is now condemned for the expectation that minority groups would inevitably want to shed their own cultures, as if these were old skins no longer possessing any vital force, and wrap themselves in the mantle of Anglo-American culture. The one-sidedness of this conception overlooked the value and sustainability of minority cultures and, in addition, masked barely hidden ethnocentric assumptions about the superiority of Anglo-American culture. (Alba & Nee, 2003, p. 1)

Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003) did not write off the usefulness of this theoretical lens, however, for acculturation and assimilation processes continue. They

argued that this theoretical approach to viewing today's racially diverse society and its continuing stream of immigrants is still applicable—with modifications:

A viable conceptualization must recognize that (1) ethnicity is essentially a social boundary, a distinction that individuals make in their everyday lives and that it shapes their actions and mental orientations toward others; (2) this distinction is typically embedded in a variety of social and cultural differences between groups that give an ethnic boundary concrete significance (so that members of one group think, "They are not like us because..."); and (3) assimilation as a form of ethnic change that may occur through changes taking place in groups on both sides of the boundary. Consequently, we define assimilation as the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences.... Assimilation, as we define it, does not require the disappearance of ethnicity; and the individuals undergoing it may still bear a number of ethnic markers.... Our definition of assimilation intentionally allows for the possibility that the nature of the mainstream into which minority individuals and groups are assimilating is changed in the process. (p. 12)

Others might see that definition as one of acculturation. LaBelle and Ward (1996)

contrasted the two concepts.

Acculturation is the adoption of out-group values and is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for assimilation. Acculturation depends on direct contact, is not necessarily egalitarian, and most often occurs in the direction of the dominant group. Acculturation need not depend on a positive orientation toward an out-group, and the out-group need not hold a positive orientation toward the acculturating group. Assimilation on the other hand, is dependent on acculturation, requires both a positive orientation toward, and an identification with, the out-group on the part of the assimilating individual or group, and is contingent on the acceptance by the out-group. (p. 9)

Certainly, I acknowledge a continuum-type connection between acculturation and assimilation. This continuum reflects a process of cultural change, a systematic cultural change of a particular society carried out by an alien, dominant society. The minority culture moves toward integration—assimilation—within the majority culture. Thompson (1996) echoed and extended this definition:

First, dominant cultures coerce minorities...to acculturate and assimilate. This



process is slowed down considerably when minorities are territorially... concentrated, such as in the case of large native minorities who often become ethnonationalistic. Second, acculturation must precede assimilation. Third, even though a minority may be acculturated, assimilation is not always the end result. Fourth, acculturation and assimilation serve to homogenize the minority group into the dominant group. The many factors facilitating or preventing this homogenization include the age of the individual, ethnic background, religious and political affiliations, and economic level. (p. 114)

Historically, assimilation processes and events involving Native Americans have spread across a continuum from their forced assimilation to a more willing “acceptance” of Anglo-American lifeways. The LDS Indian Student Placement Program, conceptualized and designed upon theories of assimilation, was a complex social experiment aimed at assimilating Native Americans into the Anglo world through the gates of foster care, baptism, and public schooling where their languages, religions, and native lifeways would be replaced by white ways. At the beginning of the program’s inception, it was asserted that Native conversion to the Anglo world would result, literally, in lighter skin. As the program evolved, as the Civil Rights movement gained momentum, acculturation became more of an acceptable outcome to LDS leaders; however, assimilation continued to be a desired goal of program participation (Allen, 1998; Bishop, 1967; Gottlieb & Wiley, 1986; Lee, 1987; Mauss, 2003).

Why was assimilation so important? According to Spencer W. Kimball, the LDS church official who conceived the program, Indian foster placement was designed to improve the quality of life for the Native Americans through schooling in white contexts (Bishop, 1967; Kimball & Kimball, 1977; Mauss, 2003). An ability to function in the white world—to compete in white society and learn “appropriate” nuclear, patriarchal family behavior—would be learned outcomes of the foster experience. Spiritual

salvation for Native Americans would result from baptism into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

LDS participation in the program would fulfill obligations and prophecies set forth by LDS church founder, Joseph Smith (Allen, 1998; Bishop, 1967; Gottlieb & Wiley, 1986; Lee, 1987; Mauss, 2003). If the placement students did not readily assimilate into the family and display typical LDS behaviors—if they did not behave like the other white children—the foster situation was generally unsuccessful and short-lived. These obligations and outcomes will be discussed further.

LDS church practice is nested in a broader American context. Assimilation was a way to deal with immigration, other minority groups' needs and behaviors, and the “Indian problem,” in particular. Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) wrote,

The quest for a narrow zone of tolerable cultural difference and the eradication of cultural differences perceived as dangerous has been the dominant theme in the U.S response to Native Americans as they struggled for social justice, democracy, and an education that would allow them to retain their languages, cultures, and religions. (p. xiii)

These researchers believe the American public and politics have historically sought to safely domesticate and neutralize Native American cultural differences that were deemed dangerous and, ironically, “un-American.” The Indian Student Placement Program goals, in effect, aimed to neutralize those “dangerous” and destructive behaviors.

#### Researcher as Research Instrument

Near the beginning of their paper titled “When Tribal Sovereignty Challenges

Democracy: American Indian Education and the Democratic Ideal,” Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) wrote,

We begin by acknowledging history as a social construction. We do not claim to be disinterested outsiders but note that no historical account is disinterested or politically neutral. As scholars of American Indian education...we come to this discussion with a strong interdisciplinary orientation and a stance as both “insiders” and “outsiders.” Each of us works with Native and non-Native students and educators.... The understandings developed through our scholarly and applied work inform the present analysis. (p. 280)

In many ways, I feel this statement is appropriate to introduce my study, as well.

I acknowledge that history is a social construction and those who inform my account are influenced by their own personal and professional orientations—as am I. Indeed, throughout the completion of this study, my most consuming task was to monitor and question my own value system—a system taught to me through school, church, and family. I am an educator who taught placement students in public school settings; I am white and LDS, and I have lived as a foster child in LDS homes.

I soon realized that my orientations also clouded my ability to think about and use value-laden language critically and with sensitivity. I did not intend to use such language in pejorative or discriminating ways; I use the language of my cultural context without a critical ear. I discovered I was and am, through lack of experience, linguistically insensitive and careless. This fault prompts an explanation of terms below.

I approached and worked through this task with tension. I value all children and work in my classrooms and schools to educate and prepare children to be literate, capable human beings. But the curricula and value systems of my local school setting undeniably belong to the dominant culture—my white, LDS, Christian culture.

I am personally aware of Lomawaima and McCarty's (2006) concept of a safety zone of allowable cultural difference. In classrooms of 30-35 pupils, common understandings and values seem critical to maintaining order, to minimizing teacher preparation time, and to quelling open contention. It is difficult to give space to a multitude of voices. A single, tidy concept was often my drive; pandemonium and frayed conclusions seemed the alternative.

By nature I question the status quo, but that is exactly what I live. I am an active member of the LDS church, and I do not feel comfortable criticizing church practice openly. This study worked for me, however, because I feel my criticism is most directed toward society, in general, and the ways Native Americans have been misunderstood, misinterpreted, and mistreated historically by conquerors and colonizers, church people and educators.

Most of my Native American students have been placement program participants. Surrounded by white students and teachers, they generally held us at arms length and were politely obedient. Their classroom chatter was superficial, and their narratives were never about the reservation. I rarely saw inside their heads and hearts—that hurt me—but I believed I knew why. They were protecting their core, their identity that was pure and undisturbed. I recognized that from experience as a foster child myself. When placed in an alien environment, you fiercely protect that which is most precious, and that inner core is often all you have.

#### Terms

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, it has been difficult to use language

and terminology appropriately; for language is, by nature, value laden and situationally defined by perspective and history. The following terms, a small sample of terms that are potentially problematic, will be discussed further in this paper. Most of the definitional tension relates to power and subjugation issues.

*Altruistic/selfless* - Even though most LDS families obediently accepted students into their homes because they were asked or they felt they could contribute to the well-being of a child, tribe, or humanity in general, I acknowledge that most human charity is not completely selfless. There were rewards for accepting a placement student, as I discuss further on. Concerning the placement program, typical rewards or prompts might include guilt, a promise of spiritual reward, curiosity, social expectations, or companionship. It was and is considered inappropriate to deny a direct request from LDS church leaders, for that refusal would indicate a lack of true testimony and spiritual conversion. No LDS family received financial remuneration, although family-situated labor, such as farm labor and babysitting, might be considered as such.

*Choice*—As just discussed, LDS families chose to participate; however, they may have felt pressured to do so for the above reasons. Native American participants were also given the choice to participate. They too entered for various reasons, which will be further discussed. Pressures such as physical and financial survival or the promises of health care and schooling may have had a great bearing on their choice to enter the program. Unbalanced power relations between the two cultures may have prompted Native Americans to do as they were asked, which was to baptize and send their children on placement. As noted above, unbalanced power between LDS leaders and the general

congregation also created a situation that promoted compliance.

*Culture broker*—As applied in this study, this term describes a Native American person who acts as an agent for other Native Americans in daily life and business. Primarily because they are bilingual and can function to some extent in both cultural worlds, they can protect, negotiate for, and facilitate communication and understanding between the two groups (Szasz, 1988).

*Cultural deficit theory* - Native Americans were often seen by LDS members and society, in general, as being “without” certain life skills or competencies. White ways were to be inserted into that void. For example, because hugging and kissing (as appropriate in white culture) was not often observed as signs of affection among Navajo families, it was falsely assumed that parents did not show affection to their children (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). This deficit theory was often applied by whites to Native American child rearing, religious, and schooling practices (Tozer, Violas, & Senese, 1998).

*Education*—What children should know, how they should know and demonstrate that knowledge, and how they should learn curriculum are all concepts that vary greatly from culture to culture. Certainly “schooling”—the act of attending school—does not necessarily coincide with being “educated” or receiving an “education.” Viewing the power of “education” in the placement program context is troubling. The concept of a white “education” was so powerful that it was touted as the main reason for the program. White institutional schooling, re-education, was also accepted by many Native Americans as a solution of sorts; hence, they “chose” to participate. What was chosen was

assimilation. In this context, “education” was assimilation. Ironically, the Native American children were already educated, but not socialized into a white school milieu.

*Native American*—This is the term I have used most often to denote native, mostly Navajo, participants of the placement program. It is pointed out later in the paper that “Indian” is a white construct and symbol.

*Opportunity*—“Opportunity” generally refers to something positive. In this paper, however, opportunity carries a connotation in white terms to mean opportunity to live or be more like us. The placement program was to provide “opportunities.”

*Parenting and life skills*—This is another “deficit” area. Because Native American parenting and life skills and values often differ from typical white ways, it was assumed that Native Americans were deficient in these areas and needed to be taught better skills and values.

*Perspective*—During my study, I was continually amazed by how differently people could view the same event. Certainly this makes it difficult to reach a historical “conclusion.” All interviews have been taken at face value. Many times I wished I could interview all of the people concerned in one event—foster parents, foster siblings, church official, foster child, and Native American parents—but rarely was this type of richness in description possible because of informant accessibility issues.

*Positive outcomes/success*—Perspectives define these concepts. The program promoters announced success and positive outcomes, which included a white education, better jobs and higher incomes, and spiritual salvation through LDS church conversion and activity. Assimilation equaled success. Some Native American participants believed

the same; others defined the measure of success as happiness and personal peace.

*White*—This is the term I have most often used in this paper to connote the “Anglo Saxon” or “Anglo” participants or Anglo society.

The title of the program, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ Indian Student Placement Service” is cumbersome, and it was not referred to as such often in either speaking or writing. It was shortened in usage to the “LDS Indian Student Placement Program,” but was more often called the “Indian placement program” or the “placement program.” When a Native American student entered the program, they went on “placement,” and they were often referred to as “placement students.” I employ those abbreviations in this paper.



CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE: HISTORIES OF NATIVE  
AMERICAN EDUCATION

There is a vast literature that uses the idea of assimilation to examine the history of Native American, Indian-White relations, and U.S. federal Indian policy. Within that literature, the focus of this chapter is on the writings on Native American education that shed light on processes of assimilation.

The history of Native American education, as a significant subject alone, is a relatively recent concern. The search for an existing literature review citing only broad, comprehensive histories of American Indian Education produced no results. Email correspondence with Jon Reyhner, a noted historian on this topic, validated my observation. Donna Deyhle and Karen Swisher provided a summary of Indian education research for Apple's *Review of Research in Education* (1997). Their review is quite comprehensive, but its intent is not to focus on Indian education history per se (people, events, and timelines); it is more about education practice and measurable outcome (curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation). Curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation are categories in a broader history of education. These issues will be touched upon in this paper; however, they are not a main focus.

Deyhle and Swisher's (1997) introduction does give a brief overview of Native American school history, however, and their attitude toward that history seems clear:

Perhaps the most visible symbol of assimilation strategies and goals of the dominant society was the development of the boarding school system. The idea was that the best way for Indians to become Americans was to remove their

children as far as possible from the influences of their homes, families, and culture. The use of native languages by children was forbidden under threats of corporal punishment; semiskilled vocational training was encouraged for Indians; students were placed as laborers and domestics in white families' homes during vacation time; and native religions were suppressed. In a very real sense, the schooling package that provided literacy for Indians also required becoming "white." While the structure has changed somewhat, this practice has changed very little in the past 100 years. (p. 115)

Ultimately, Deyhle and Swisher (1997) argued in their summary that research has made little difference in the academic achievement of Native American youth primarily because deficits, as per cultural deficit theory, have been located in the native child and the Native American community, not in the schooling process.

Most of the works considered in this dissertation's literature review, however, place an onus of blame on American schooling practice. Assimilation is named as the targeted goal of all school settings, but none of the historians believe this goal was reached. Though many Native American children were robbed of their cultural knowledge and heritage and taught white society mores, it is asserted that few successfully assimilated into white society. Contrary to deficit ideology, the reason for this failure to assimilate related to strength at the core of "Indian-ness." That strength surfaced as adaptation and accommodation, resistance, and, at times, revolt.

I have placed the works in chronological order, not by copyright date, but by historical focus under the subheading of "Historical Interpretation of Native American Education." I have done so to provide insight to the slow shift of assimilating practices that eventually evolved toward an allowance of Native American self-determination in schools. Under the subheading "LDS Accounts," I have placed the specific histories of the Indian Student Placement Program provided by two LDS historians at the end of this

chapter. A shift in attitude is made obvious by this juxtaposition. In these two works, assimilating practices are discussed without apology, and they are termed “opportunities.”

For me, perhaps the most surprising outcome of this literature review process was realizing the magnitude of the repeated failures of schools to assimilate Native Americans into white society. Millions of dollars and generations of manpower have gone into that effort, but little seemed to be learned by governing bodies, including the LDS church.

Reyner and Eder (2004), whose work I consider below, wrote:

In order for educators and policy makers to understand why the various programs in Indian schools exist and why certain curricula are more likely to lead to success, they must know about the past failures and successes of Indian education. They must know the roots of Indian resistance to schooling and the educational empowerment that Indians are striving for.... The five centuries of white ethnocentrism, cultural chauvinism, and insensitivity to Indian needs ...still exist. (p.12)

That very ignorance and insensitivity presaged program failure in parochial schools, government boarding schools, and public schools. I am left to wonder why, then, would the LDS church repeat that obvious pattern? Why, then, do educators and schooling enterprises repeat that pattern today?

Lomawaima (2004a) has written chapters for both, *A Companion to American Indian History* (2004a) and *The Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (2004b) that discussed American Indian education. Both chapters included many citations of studies and various other types of related literature that are about Native American schooling and can inform the writing of educational histories, but only five contemporary works emerge as important, inclusive texts which the authors themselves declare to be broad histories of Indian education: *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the*

*Boarding School Experience 1875-1928* (Adams, 1995); *Promises of the Past: A History of Indian Education in the United States* (Dejong, 1993); *American Indian Education: A History* (Reyhner & Eder, 2004); *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928* (Szasz, 1999); and *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783* (Szasz, 1988).

All five works are of the post-civil rights era. The human and political sensitivities of the time, an interest in the civil rights of minority populations, not only serve as a catalyst for the creation of these histories, but also prompt a similar activist voice that critiques past and present discrimination practices.

Certainly the earliest Native Indian education by Indians for Indians began with the birth of the first indigenous child. Because the first written documents and histories were produced by colonial missionaries, their work became the larger starting place for “school” as organized and imposed by white society. The grand history is too long to relate here, of course, but the framework subheadings and subjects are telling. Between the five books, information is organized and discussed under subheadings and topics such as: traditional Indian education, colonial and early American education, Indian schooling in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, treaties and western removal, mission education in the treaty years, reservations, religious school controversy, tribally controlled education, allotment and dependency, government boarding schools, Indian children and public schools, the Meriam Report, the Indian New Deal, termination and relocation, the public schools, the Kennedy report, self-determination, higher education, Indian-controlled schools, and new directions in Indian education.

These and other Native American histories are multidisciplinary in nature. Historians concerned with public policy, educators concerned with the legacy of schooling, and ethnographers and anthropologists concerned with the human experience all contributed to the above works and resulting grand narrative.

The following discussion focuses on the five previously mentioned works, but other notable contributors are included, such as: Allen (1998); Archuleta, Child, & Lomawaima (2000); Bishop (1967); Buffalohead & Molin (1996); Child (1996, 1998); Coleman (1993); Horne & McBeth (1998); Hoxie (2001); Hyer (1990); Lomawaima (1994); McCarty (2002); Prucha (1979); Riney (1989); Senese (1991); Thompson (1975); and Trennert (1988).

### Historical Interpretation of Native American Education

#### *Dejong - Focus: Precontact to 1990*

Of the five works, Dejong's (1993) history, *Promises of the Past: A History of American Education in the United States*, is the most inclusive in time coverage. The history is built primarily of quotations from historical/government documents, but Dejong also utilized biographies and other histories and provided introductions and transitions that give "flow" and cohesiveness to his book. The work quotes both government voices and Native American voices. Dejong's attitude that provides a bias and interpretive lens surfaces in his preface with comments such as "Educational efforts that seek not to instruct but to assimilate constitute educational malpractice. Until the educational process reflects the values and needs of the Indian community, it may well

remain a battleground for American Indians” (p. x). Ultimately, Dejong pressed for educational self-determination, emphasizing bilingual and culturally relevant curricula in schools.

Dejong’s words precede Reyner and Eder’s (2004) as he calls for an educational process that responds to Native American needs. Surely that battle he predicts is a political one. Indeed, the pressures of passing current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates leave little room for anything other than the study of math, science, and white-American oriented language arts. The data producing high stakes tests are written in English, and the questions reference white cultural contexts. I have visited and studied southern Utah reservation schools that are under tremendous pressure to satisfy NCLB requirements. Unless the politicians change their course, these schools will be some of the first to be destroyed and restructured under federal guidelines. This is ironic because supposedly NCLB was passed to help schools close achievement gaps, not to literally close doors. A battle is on the horizon.

Perhaps another way to interpret “the battle” has to do with a more personal resistance to assimilation. If the schooling imposed on Native American children did not meet their needs, if the white culture did not fit, it is logical that there would be resistance. Here again this suggests an important reason why most placement program students returned to the reservations after a brief participation period.

*Szasz - Focus: Circa 1607-1783*

The Szasz (1988) history, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*, is quite remarkable in that it concerns an earlier history of schooling that is not

usually visited during discussions of Indian education. For example, Szasz's study ranges from the initial attempts by Virginians to instruct Powhatan children in the early 1600s to the efforts of Indian schoolmasters and teachers who taught the Iroquois during the decade before the American Revolution.

The purpose of this early, formalized schooling was similar to later attempts: It was believed these young students should learn European-American ways and be able to read the Bible. This would appropriately "redirect" their lives and the lives of their people (p. 4).

Szasz's history is not about happy Thanksgivings. Concerning her frame of reference, she wrote:

In 1975 Francis Jennings jolted the world of American colonial history with the appearance of his book, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest...* Jennings mounted a frontal assault on the myth of the Happy Thanksgiving and by so doing, marked the coming age of a major reinterpretation of Indian and European interaction in early America. (p. 1)

What this quote implies, of course, is that there is a reality beyond the stereotypes and perceived deficits. These early native people did not see the world through European-American eyes, and they did not stand happily without thought or misgivings during pastoral feasts celebrating the coming of the Europeans.

As her book concluded, Szasz contemplated how historians should evaluate those early efforts to school indigenous children and how evaluators should define success. That contemplation includes the concept of "cultural brokerage"—educated Native Americans who served as "culture brokers" at many levels and functioned as communication agents for cultural exchange. She wrote:

[Culture brokers] met a significant challenge in their lives by achieving a balance between two or more cultures. The remarkable accomplishments of the two Algonquin students at Harvard...Pocahontas...other New England Algonquin made possible the printing of the Indian Bible and other works, which led to literacy among their people.... These groups formed their own communities where they were to recast their lives in a new mold containing a blend of cultures. All these Indians attained the unique position of cultural broker. This liaison role enabled them to serve as intermediaries between their own people and Euroamericans and Afro-Americans. Their noteworthy achievements provide a touchstone for assessing the merits of the many ventures in Indian schooling in colonial America. (p. 263)

Szasz esteemed the culture broker status. Does “balance” mean “biculturation”—to essentially be able to slip from one culture to another seamlessly and feel equally at home in both worlds? Is a “recasted,” blended culture one that does not fit naturally in either a Native American or white culture? Acculturation and some level of assimilation into white society is necessary for a Native American to fill this role, but where is the balance? It is asserted by LDS officials that the placement students were to be culture brokers. Fulfilling this role involved more than just enhanced communication, however. Program participants were to act as acculturating and assimilating agents—culture and religious missionaries—within their own Native American communities. Furthermore, many participants found they no longer fit into either world once they were acculturated (Curley, email interview, April 20, 2005; Brown, personal interview, October 15, 2006). This will be discussed further in Chapters IV- VI of this paper.

It is important to mention that Szasz collaborated with and mentored Carmelita Ryan (1988) to write “The American Indian Education” chapter of the *Handbook of North American Indians: History of Indian-White Relations*. This chapter condenses much of the history that appears in *Indian Education in the American Colonies* and



combines it with the historically later information found in Szasz's (1999) *Education and the American Indian*, thus creating a full historical continuum for readers. Through narrative, general history, policy and politics are duly treated in the handbook

*Adams—The Boarding School Experience –  
Focus: Circa 1875-1928*

In 1995, David Wallace Adams published *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1875-1928*. This well-written text fleshes out the education experience of Native Americans and reads more like a narrative than a critique of politics and policy, which Szasz's histories tend to do. The focus of his story is as the title suggests—a close look at the Native American boarding school experience. The study is particularly attentive to the pre-1900 experiences of the children, but Adams' contextual information broadens the perimeters of his focus considerably.

The reformers and the reformed are viewed. Systems, models, policies, individual institutions, classrooms and dormitories, resistance and accommodation, and native children and their families are described. Adams asserts in his work that boarding schools did not help Indian children to assimilate into the majority society. Instead, the schools separated children from their parents and cultural heritage and gave them little useful knowledge. In his words, Adams is critical of the role that schools played in “severing the child’s cultural and psychological connection to his native heritage . . . in the federal government’s desire to find a solution to the Indian problem, a method of saving Indians by destroying them [was employed]” (pp. *x-xi*).

Adams' thesis is clear, however: Indian students and parents were not passive

victims of the government's assimilation campaign but participated in and shaped the experience, when possible, for their own purposes and protection. This history is a broad story of accommodation, resistance, and resilience.

Adams published a paper that preceded *Education for Extinction*, titled "Fundamental Considerations: The Deep Meaning of Native American Schooling, 1880-1900" (Adams, 1988). Though most of the article's content appears in *Education for Extinction*, his claimed purpose is different. In "Fundamental Considerations," he sought

[T]o reveal the fundamental considerations that underlay the late nineteenth-century campaigns for the establishment of Indian schools. To characterize this campaign as merely another use of the common school as an instrument for assimilation misses...the deeper historical significance of the determined crusade to school the Native Americans in the ways of White society. (pp. 3-4)

The focus becomes a study of reformers' motives and how those motives were translated into educational policy. Specifically, he questions Protestant ideology, the civilization-savagism paradigm, and the whites' desire for Indian land.

The LDS placement program also separated children from their parents and cultural heritage and attempted to replace that void with the English language and white middle class values and religious ideologies. In both cases the assimilating school institution was a centerpiece of the experience. The placement program, however, provided white church leaders and congregations and white nuclear families to serve as socialization models in addition to white public school administrators, teachers, and classmates.

A centerpiece of Adams' discussion of boarding schools is Richard Henry Pratt's off-reservation boarding school enterprises. These boarding schools were initially

developed from prison models, but they expanded to include more. In particular, Pratt believed that true assimilation could be accomplished through an “outing” program. Pratt believed Indian students would master the English language, internalize the nation’s Protestant work ethic, and acquire everyday habits of civilized life better when enveloped by white society. Pratt’s ideal solution to the Indian “problem” was to scatter the entire population of Indian children across America into some 70,000 white homes. Pratt’s number of placements are not discussed by Adams, and there were many, but the actual total fell far short of his dream. Adams wrote: Pratt initiated the idea...the first summer distributing eighteen students among Pennsylvania farm families. In a few years, the outing experience had become a central component in the school’s program” (p. 54). The parallels between Pratt’s “outing” model and the LDS placement model are striking and many. It is interesting to note, however, that the relationship is not mentioned in any of the few short program histories written by LDS authors.

The bulk of other education history research focuses roughly on the same time period that Adams considers. Because of its controversial methods and philosophies, its icon-status as a symbol of assimilation ideology, the boarding school phenomenon and era have drawn much attention. Other notable histories of this time were written by authors such as Prucha (1979), Hoxie (2001), Coleman (1993), and editors Archuleta and colleagues (2000), which I briefly consider below. This list is not inclusive; these school-specific histories are chosen for their frequent mention in other Indian education bibliographies. In particular, Adams’ (1995) noted at the end of his book, *Education for Extinction*, provide a valuable bibliographic summary of texts.

*Prucha.* A history of Protestant and Catholic efforts at Indian education reform is the topic of Francis Paul Prucha's (1979) book, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912*. Prucha's account adds depth to Adams' history concerning the role mainstream church organizations played in the education of Native American children and the affect these churches had on nineteenth century American Indian policy. His focus is primarily on the adversarial and competitive politics and economics of the mission school ventures. His focus begins when the Catholic Indian school system was the principal beneficiary of federal funds for mission schools. At this same time a public school system for the education of Indians was rising to become a competitor. The study concludes with the end of direct federal appropriations for mission schools. Prucha stated sadly, "The Indians were only obliquely a part of the story...they were but pawns in the hands of the managers of the [politically charged religious] campaigns" (pp. xi-xii).

Prucha, a prolific researcher and writer, discussed the history of Indian education in other works such as *American Indian Policy in Crisis: Christian Reformers and the Indian, 1865-1900* (1964) and *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (1986). In these works, Prucha mentioned that Mormons were also participants in this tug-of-war for system control; however, they were not appropriated Federal money or territorial space to proselytize and school the Indians as were the Methodists, Orthodox Friends, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Catholics, Hicksite Friends, Baptists, Reformed Dutch, Congregationalists, Christians, Unitarians, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and Lutherans (1964, p. 53). According to Prucha, Mormons were a rather rogue organization that did not worry about where other religious

denominations were already officially working. Prucha pointed out how the different religions showed a “complete disregard for the religious views and religious rights of the Indians themselves” while they battled for exclusive missionary rights in the name of religious freedom (1964, p. 58).

*Coleman.* The time frame of Michael C. Coleman’s (1993) history, *American Indian Children at School 1850-1930*, is similar to Prucha’s (1979) work, but the study itself is very different: Coleman created a history out of 100+ published autobiographies written by Native Americans who attended boarding schools. In the introduction, Coleman stated the goals of his study are

Firstly, to demonstrate the ambivalent responses of the narrators at missionary and government schools, as these responses are recalled in published autobiography; and, secondly, to demonstrate the surprising historical credibility of these recollections. In other words, I am mining the autobiographies for data relating to events and responses that took place decades before the autobiographies were written. (p. xi)

Concerning the appropriateness of his sources, Lomawaima (2004a) stated,

The evidentiary base of traditionally acceptable documents has been expanded to include oral history accounts [Szasz, 1977], Indian autobiographical accounts [Coleman, 1993], personal narratives [Lomawaima, 1994]...and previously untapped documentary records such as the letters of Indian Students and parents [Child, 1998]. (p. 435)

Indeed, the autobiographies quoted by Coleman are considered significant from a research standpoint. Frances La Flesche’s (1963) autobiography, *The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe, 1900*, was a catalyst for Coleman’s study. Initially, it was La Flesche’s portrayal of positive experiences and his acceptance of the boarding school situation that surprised Coleman. Charles Eastman’s autobiographies, which are included, are generally well-known Native accounts (1971, 1977, 1980), as are

some of the more recently published autobiographies by authors such as Crow Dog (1990), Mourning Dove (1990), Momaday (1976), and Silko (1981). Other, less well-known autobiographies are used, such as Ah-nen-la-de-ni (Daniel La France) (1903); Black Hawk (1964); Deloria (1971); Highwalking (1979); Mitchell and Allen (1967); and Standing Bear (1978, 1988). These personal stories are, in essence, stories of revolt, resistance, accommodation, cultural brokerage, and assimilation. These concepts and actions continue to rise repeatedly as prevailing themes throughout most of the boarding school studies.

Although disparaging, pejorative language is generally used to describe the boarding school experience by today's researchers and activists, Coleman shows that students related many pleasurable memories and experiences in their first-hand accounts. This depiction informs a fuller understanding of the boarding school phenomenon. First-hand reports of placement program participants also demonstrate such a good/bad paradox, as I will discuss later. In both schooling situations, Native American cultural understandings and natural familial connections were sacrificed. In both cases, however, some participants reported warm relationships with the adults, peers, and other children in their new school and foster care milieus; the poverty known on the reservations was temporarily alleviated for students and their natural families; and students learned skills and language that would help them negotiate the white world.

Are first-hand accounts "factual" and to be taken at face value? All narrations and communications are influenced by audience and purpose. I was very aware that respondents were weighing their words because of audience and purpose issues with me,

a researcher. I would suspect that the autobiographies noted above were also impacted by such concerns. The contemporary autobiographies I will cite concerning the placement experience were also very obviously molded by audience and purpose sensitivities.

*Hoxie.* F.E. Hoxie's (1984) book, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*, is not a book about Indian education per se, but Hoxie devoted a very informative chapter on "Schools for a Dependent People" that flows naturally from his scholarship about Native American assimilation, in general. The chapter is packed with detail about education policy and the trends of the time. His book responds to an important guiding question, which I will return to later: How did this society, at this time, produce these ideas and these actions? The study shows how the Native Americans in the early twentieth century shifted in the public mind and in the minds of policymakers from the category of potential citizens to something resembling the station occupied by colonized people. According to Hoxie, that change of attitude played itself out in school ideology and curriculum.

This work prompted me to contemplate the moment ideology changed from idealistic to realistic. Boarding school assimilation tactics did not work as planned—few, if any, Native Americans cooperated appreciatively, gave up their "Indian-ness," and melted into white society. The LDS Indian placement program administrators and foster families believed their determination and "altruistic" efforts would mold Native American children into *Book of Mormon*-like citizens. Where was the Mormon turning point from idealistic to realistic? Later in this study I quote the furor of George P. Lee, a Native American and a past LDS General Authority, directed toward the Mormon church

presidency in an infamous letter written in 1989. Though much of his language seems prompted by anger, it indicated the church had scaled back its programs and efforts to support Native American church members. Even 10 years earlier, Boyd K. Packer, a church authority speaking to a Brigham Young University Native American audience, chastised the students for a lack of “results.” According to Packer, these people were not exhibiting a steadfast faithfulness and drive; levels of “Indian-ness” remained; there was resistance. Assimilation into the Mormon culture was not working. The church began turning its efforts to convert and baptize South American “Lamanites” (Mauss, 2003). By the time of Packer’s address in 1979, Indian Student Placement Program enrollment was in steep decline.

*Archuleta, Child, and Lomawaima.* Archuleta and colleagues (2000) work, *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1979-2000*, is atypical also. First, it is one of the few books about boarding schools that extends its view toward contemporary Indian boarding schools. Secondly, it is unique in genre. It is not a singular research discussion, but rather an artistic visual and literary artifact published by the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, which showcases the three authors’ prior historical research and the research of others. It is a poignant combination of visual representations of Indian school history (paintings and photographs), student voices (quotes), poetry (written by notable Native American writers such as Louise Erdrich), and historical narrative. The message of the work is stated in the introduction, “The experiences of boarding schools are shared with us by those who were students there. They ask us not to forget what they experienced. They remind us that, in the end, the



goal of cultural genocide failed. Ultimately, the story of the Indian boarding schools is one of personal survival and cultural triumph” (p. 10).

The last topic of the book concerns the model family program experiment conducted at Pratt’s Hampton Institute, where young Native American families were brought to the school as resident units to learn white ways of family life. In many ways, the text could have been written about the placement program. The parallels are obvious:

Hampton’s model family program for American Indians is probably best understood as a novel social and educational experiment with little impact on most Indian communities. The program was novel because it focused on the assimilation of the family unit, rather than the individual.... At the time the model family program operated, there was little understanding of Indian families or the role of the family in tribal cultures or communities. Indeed, most people...held Indian family and community life in contempt, and viewed Indian social customs as the enemy of educational efforts to assimilate Indians into American life. What Indian agents, educators, and missionaries called “returning to the blanket,” however, Indian people saw as a return to normal family and community life.... When Hampton “model families” returned home, they often selectively integrated Native and “modern American” lifestyles.... Indian people continued to negotiate real life, to adapt and to survive, and to build their own definitions of “model families.” (Archuleta et al., 2000, p. 133)

The placement program experiment tried to acculturate and assimilate Native American children through white family contexts. They were to learn from white parent role models and implement these understandings when the time came for them to form their own families. When the students left the program, many found ways to integrate and combine some white customs and values with their own Native American points of reference. Perhaps one of the reasons this assimilation failed was that the LDS church and white society at large did not understand the richness and complexity of the Native American family and community units. The deficit model was wrong; there was not a familial cultural vacuum. Maybe, however, the intent and action was more aggressive.

Trennert (1988) suggested below that, first, the culture had to be obliterated in order to form that needed vacuum.

### *Individual Boarding Schools*

Reyhner and Eder (2004), mentioned already and discussed more below, began their history noting that “no book that attempts a broad historical overview can be written without drawing on the works of other historians” (p. ix). The importance of Szasz’s two books and Adams are noted, as well as historical studies that look at specific, individual Indian schools such as *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in Arizona, 1891-1935* (Trennert, 1988), *The Rapid City Indian School* (Riney, 1989), and *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lomawaima, 1994). There are several other researchers of individual schools who also stand out in the literature: Buffalohead & Molin (1996); Child (1999, 1998); Hyer (1990); and Horne and Mcbeth (1998).

The annotations below of Trennert, Riney, Lomawaima, Buffalohead and Molen, Child, Hyer, and Horne and McBeth’s school-specific works are very similar in nature, for they share like themes: These schools were meant to assimilate the children but failed in most respects. There was adaptation, resistance, accommodation, and revolt. These young resilient students protected their “Indian-ness” and built social and cultural contexts in which to reinforce each other’s cultural identities. There were good experiences as well as bad. The children did find ways to forge and savor happiness.

*Trennert.* According to Trennert (1998), the Phoenix Indian Industrial Boarding School was founded “for the specific purpose of preparing Native American children for

assimilation.... [T]he main goal was to remove Indian youngsters from their traditional environments, obliterate their cultural heritage, and replace that background with the values of middle-class America” (p. xi). Trennert’s history of the school is meant to provide “an in-depth look at the effect of assimilationist education on Indian children” (p. xiii), and he speaks of the Phoenix School’s objectives which included teaching the English language and work ethic, Christian moral principles, and the responsibilities of citizenship (p. 6). It is interesting to note that part of the argument offered by activists to convince the community of the urgency to create this school was that “[t]he Indians of Arizona, long under the tutelage of a Mexican civilization, are now exposed to the no less debauching influence of Mormonism” (p. 15).

Trennert’s history begins in roughly 1891 and ends in 1935, with commentary continuing through 1987. The study looks at the implementation of Indian educational policy at the local level and discusses interactions between the school and its staff and the local Indian and white communities that hampered the school’s ability to follow the national policies. Trennert concluded that his work is a history of an institution that cannot be deemed a failure or a success. “Students seldom merged into the mainstream of American society nor did they find adequate employment. Neither did the school improve the general condition of the Indian population” (p. 206). On the other hand, Trennert stated that a large percentage of Indians students learned “something about the larger world, generally valued their school experience, and tended to have fond memories” (p. 207).

I will return to these “positives” later in this study, for they echo the memories

many children had of their placement experiences.

*Riney.* Riney's (1989) history of the Rapid City Indian School also focuses on roughly the same years, 1898-1933. The Rapid City School, an off-reservation boarding school located in South Dakota, initially drew its student body from the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River reservations. According to Riney, even though the school existed for only 35 years, its history is significant because it spanned "an important era in the history of Indian education, closing as the era of coerced, assimilative schooling came to an end" (p. 15). Riney's conclusions echo Trennert's assertion that the boarding school experience was both good and bad. The ultimate goal of assimilation failed, however. Despite the school's attempt at assimilation, these northern Plains Indians "enjoyed a demographic, political, and cultural renaissance...that continues today" (p. 216).

*Lomawaima.* Lomawaima's (1994) history is a story of the Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, also an off-reservation boarding school, located in Oklahoma. Her story describes "social and cultural variables that made a difference" to these students during the school's years of operation, 1882-1940 (with a closer focus on the 1920s and 1930s; p. xiv). At the heart of the history are interviews, autobiographical stories of Lomawaima's father and sixty other past students who tell of "adaptation, accommodation, resistance, and revolt" (p. xiv). Lomawaima stated, "This study examines the relations of power within the school to comprehend federal disciplinary practice and to situate the strategies Indian children devised to escape it" (p. xiv). She continued, "Their words portray how an institution founded to transform Indian youth was paradoxically given life by the very people whose tribal identities it was committed

to erase” (p. xv).

Again, the common theme emerges in these specific school histories—to repeat Lomawaima’s words: “adaptation, accommodation, resistance, and revolt.” Adaptation was survival. The students adapted to their new environmental and societal conditions in amazing ways. They ate new food, wore different clothing, learned a new language, and, in many cases, worshipped a new God. The students accommodated and compromised their cultural beliefs and value systems. Even so, they resisted. Note Adams’ (1995) parallel agreement:

Judged by the ambitious scope of their assimilationist vision, reformers clearly failed to achieve their objective.... Underlying the reform program was the presupposition that the acculturation process was a relatively simple matter of exchanging one cultural skin for another.... The possibility that Indians...once having been exposed to the white man’s cultural system would react in any manner other than complete embracement, that the acculturation process itself could involve various forms of selective incorporation, syncretization, and compartmentalization, was beyond their comprehension.... Indian students were anything but passive recipients of the curriculum of civilization. When choosing the path of resistance, they bolted the institution, torched buildings, and engaged in a multitude of schemes to undermine the school program. Even the response of accommodation was frequently little more than a conscious and strategic adaptation to the hard rock of historical circumstance, a pragmatic recognition that one’s Indian-ness would increasingly have to be defended and negotiated in the face of relentless hegemonic forces. (p. 336)

The comment stands out: “The acculturation process was [presupposed to be] a relatively simple matter of exchanging one cultural skin for another.” In contemplating LDS motivations, I believe this can be a likely answer to Hoxie’s (2001) guiding query: How did this society at this time produce these ideas and actions? Were the boarding schools—or the LDS placement program—organized and executed for intentionally cruel purposes? Perhaps some researchers might say, yes, there was nefarious intent to commit

cultural genocide. Others might say, yes, the cruel result outweighed the schools' and church's paternalistic intent to do "good." Over and over again, however, I see the near-sightedness of a dominant, ethnocentric society in action. The world view that the white way or the LDS way was the right way, blinded people from really doing the right thing—acknowledging the basic human right of self-determination for all cultures.

In *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences* (Archuleta et al., 2000), Brenda Child extended this discussion of dominant culture blindness to global times and places:

Canada's policy of forced assimilation through education mirrored that of the United States and lasted even longer. In Canada, a national dialogue on residential schools proceeded from a series of troubling court cases in British Columbia that exposed physical and sexual abuse of Native children. In Australia, the "stolen generation," Aboriginal children removed from their homes and families to be adopted by non-Indian, were victims of the same impulse that dominated U.S. policy at the turn of the century. Aboriginal people in Australia demanded the national government apologize to them for forcibly destroying families with the "Sorry Day" movement of recent years. So far the Australian government has not acknowledged remorse, though states and citizens have apologized and thousands signed "Sorry Books." In the United States, no such dialogue has emerged. (p. 135)

No such dialog has emerged. It is interesting that the LDS church is also silent on the matter. The most recent LDS publication about Spencer W. Kimball (1982), *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, does not mention the Indian placement service at all, even in the explicit biographical section; yet, it was a major chapter in Kimball's life.

*Buffalohead and Molin.* In "'A Nucleus of Civilization': American Indian Families at Hampton Institute in the Late Nineteenth Century," W. Roger Buffalohead and Paulette Molin recorded Hampton Institute's early practices in the *Journal of*

*American Indian Education* (1996). Instead of following Richard H. Pratt's "outing" programs at Hampton and Carlisle (putting Indian students into white homes to be assimilated in context), 23 carefully chosen "model family" units were brought in and targeted for assimilation instruction at Hampton and Carlisle in the fall of 1882, as mentioned above. Ethnographer Alice C. Fletcher attempted to instruct young married couples in the art of model Anglo housekeeping. Small cottages were constructed on campus for the families to live in. A focus on the family unit was logical: it was considered the unit of Christian civilization. The school also tried to keep the younger students in school until they married, in Anglo custom, another student already there. Commented one Indian Agent: "We knew the only hope for the girls was in marrying them to some of our educated and civilized young men. If they returned to the camp [traditional tribal community], they would return to their Indian life" (p. 4).

The outcome of the costly and effort-intensive program was debatable. More than half of the families remained at Hampton for less than 1 year. According to the authors, most of the families who participated had already adopted a varying degree of Anglo family customs because of boarding school or missionary influences.

Certainly, the parallels to the Indian placement program are obvious. The LDS placement families were considered foundational units of Christian civilization. The fostered children were to become civilized and establish assimilated, LDS homes in turn. The foster family program was costly in money and human resources, yet successful levels of assimilation were less than hoped for. Pre-participation levels of acculturation and assimilation influenced the outcomes. This factor, this study variable, blurs the

ability of researchers to cleanly judge the outcome of the placement program, as well.

*Child.* While a graduate student under the tutelage of Karen Swisher, Brenda Child (1996) published “Runaway Boys, Resistant Girls: Rebellion at Flandreau and Haskell, 1900-1940.” As the title implies, the article focuses narrowly on several acts of rebellion at the schools. Child used student and parent letters to inform and report her inquiry.

Child continued her studies and, in 1998, published *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940*. In this work, Child again used letters written by students and parents to explore the relationship between boarding schools and Ojibwe families at Haskell Institute, Flandreau Indian School, and the Carlisle School. The study notes that most Ojibwe families lived a great distance from the schools, and the school administrators worked to enhance the assimilation process by discouraging visits with parents. The Native American’s resistance to institutional control and cultural assimilation is highlighted, illuminating the gap between the intentions of school policy and the real-people results. The work specifically looks at the effects of separation on children and parents, the dangers of illness, the nature of boarding school work, and the techniques of student resistance and rebellion. Echoing Adams’ (1995) and Lomawaima’s (1994) assertions, Child argued that boarding school experiences actually facilitated cultural persistence. Many boarding school graduates used their education to become prominent tribal leaders on the reservations. They served as culture brokers working to enhance Indian political sovereignty and perpetuate and unify tribal customs.

*Hyer.* In *One House, One Voice, One Heart: Native American Education at the*



*Santa Fe Indian School*, Sally Hyer (1990) utilized the results of an oral history project to also demonstrate how Native Americans used boarding schools as a stage for subverting goals of assimilation. The chronological scope of her project lies between 1890 and 1930. The study's end parameter is natural, according to Hyer, because of Indian Commissioner John Collier's influence: The school changed its programs and tactics, which then supported cultural literacy and tribal pride. Although the school eventually closed in 1962, it reopened in 1981 as an Indian community controlled school.

Almost all of the boarding school histories end when overt assimilating practices ceased. This question begs an answer: What was the impact of the post-Collier, culture-friendlier policies at the Santa Fe Indian School on student school achievement, post-high school achievement, and participant satisfaction? Referring to Child's thesis: Did incidents of revolt (i.e., running away) dramatically decline after 1940? Again, thinking in terms of study variables, can the nature, effects, and angst of a boarding school experience, in general, be separated from other school-related cultural and psychological impacts? As with the Indian Student Placement Program, can the effects and angst of the foster experience be separated from the cultural and psychological impacts of the overall placement program?

*Horne and McBeth*. In the 1998 autobiography, *Essie's Story: The Life and legacy of a Shoshone Teacher*, Anthropologist Sally McBeth and Shoshone educator Esther Burnett Horne collaborated to tell Horne's experiences as a student at Haskell Institute and as an instructor at Eufala Creek Girls' Boarding School and the Wahpeton Indian School. Despite Haskell's goal of assimilation, Horne remembered her

experiences as mostly positive. In passive resistance, she devoted her time as a teacher in nurturing Indian cultural identity within the boarding school system. It is interesting to see the names of the Native American leaders she was taught by and whom she taught. She was inspired by teachers Ruth Muskrat Bronson and Ella Deloria. Her students included Dennis Banks, George Mitchell, and Leonard Peltier.

The main themes of the book support the conclusions of other boarding school scholars: The boarding school system that strived to assimilate Native Americans actually strengthened their “Indianness.” McBeth quoted Horne:

The schools were trying to take the Indianness out of us, but they never succeeded. Not completely, anyway. They actually ended up putting a lot of Indianness into the Indian, just by throwing us all together in a group. The boarding school may have contributed to the breakdown of the family and may have increased the rate of alcohol abuse. I have read that this may be so; but it also unwittingly created a resistance to assimilation, which might take shape in very subtle or quite rebellious forms. The experience of us boarding school students strengthened our resolve to maintain our identity as American Indians and to take our place in today’s world. (pp. xxxiii-xxxiv)

As well as giving us additional insight to the boarding school experience, this autobiography introduces us to an interesting and remarkable woman, Esther Horne. This work is not the first study published by McBeth. Earlier known publications build on her work for her doctoral dissertation, including *Ethnic Identity and the Boarding School Experience* (McBeth, 1983). This research focuses on the Oklahoma Indians’ perceptions of their boarding school experiences.

*Szasz–Focus: History to the Present*

Having the earliest copyright of the five major histories noted earlier, Margaret Connell Szasz’s *Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination*

*Since 1928*, was first published in 1974 and revised in 1977 and 1999. Specifically, this history traces and critiques federal Indian policy and its negative effects on American Indian education. The year 1928 is the significant starting date for her study because of the Meriam Report, which is considered the most important inquiry into Indian conditions in the twentieth century. Pressured by social reformers such as John Collier, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work commissioned an impartial and scientific study of the Indian Administration to be led by Lewis Meriam, an expert on government efficiency. The report labeled the 1887 Dawes Act and allotment policy a monumental failure, advocated support for Indian community life, strong protection of Indian property rights, and new initiatives in the areas of education and health (Prucha, 2000, pp. 219-222). According to Szasz, implementing the report's recommendations became the social, political, and educational focus for Indian rights reformers for the next twenty-plus years.

Szasz's book offered an initial history of federal Indian education from the years 1870-1926, and that history also included a brief treatment of the boarding school effort. Laws, people, and educational trends are examined. More specifically, Szasz discusses the impact of W. Carson Ryan, John Collier, Willard W. Beatty; the Indian New Deal and the Johnson-O'Malley Act; progressive education, cross-cultural education, and Indian-controlled schools.

Though Szasz's book was a negative critique of American policy and Indian education reform, her end message was upbeat: Native Americans have dealt with their federally-caused education woes creatively. She is optimistic about the future, noting that

Indians are competently taking control of their own educational needs.

The one-woman policymaker who is discussed by Szasz is Hildegard Thompson, a former national director of Indian education who followed Willard Beatty in the position from 1952-1965. She, too, wrote of Indian education.

*Thompson.* Hildegard Thompson's (1975) history of Navajo education is titled *The Navajos' Long Walk for Education*. She asserted that the history she wrote came from her own personal knowledge and experiences beginning in 1941. Hence, the work is an autobiography/memoir/report. Like the autobiographies mentioned earlier, her personal, insider knowledge, though from an Anglo perspective, is poignant and instructive. Like the personal experience of Guy Senese below, her labor in behalf of Indian education was both frustrating and exhilarating.

The first 23 pages identified as "author's statement" lead readers through the difficult political processes she endured, and the heroic efforts of particular Navajo leaders and parents who worked for educational resources and reform are noted. She told that during the late 1940s, following World War II, most Navajos began to realize that, sadly, their children must lead a different life from theirs. For "traveling new roads," they knew their children needed education (p. 15).

In most works, the Indian lifestyle is generally associated with deprivation and suffering. Thompson included the testimony of an aged Navajo grandmother who reported the richness of her world: Her life was good. Their hogans were warm and inviting. They lived in extended-family groups, herded sheep, wove wool, and silversmithed. Their social life and symbiotic relationship with nature was a religious

relationship enhanced by tradition and ceremony. This was the life she believed her grandchildren must leave.

Thompson's statistics are shocking: In 1946, 75% of all school-age Navajo children had no schools to attend or no way to travel to the few poorly equipped ones that existed. Though we often read that most Native children were hesitant to attend school, Thompson stated that the day each new school opened, that school would be filled to capacity with a "backlog of children still snowballing" (p. 18). In 1952, the government brought school trailers to the Navajo reservations. An amazing 8,000 more children showed up for school the first day. Thompson stated that this phenomenon was important, for it made it harder for the government to pretend that these children did not exist.

Following the author's statement, Thompson backed up and began her linear history by relating the incarceration, the "desolate imprisonment," of the Navajos at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, from 1864 to 1868. Even though her then-third-person account sounds more like a historian speaking, it is clear that she loved and cared deeply for the Navajo people she was speaking of—her word choice throughout the history clearly communicates her emotions. The photographs included with the history are upbeat and carefully chosen. The Navajos are not portrayed as victims. The account ends in 1974, with the following optimistic words:

The above is an assessment of material progress. This author is not qualified to judge its impact on Navajo culture, except to say that it has been—and is—changing. Only Navajos themselves can determine whether the altered lifestyles are for the better. Navajos are taking in their own hands the control of their future. This is as it should be. And they are fully able to determine their own destiny. (p.180)

Though Thompson did not discuss the impact of material progress on culture, this was an important topic to bring to the forefront, for it was one of the most verbalized rationales for Indian education interventions prescribed by white society, which included the LDS church's placement program. Poverty is a conceptualized, pejorative notion that connotes suffering and struggle. It is a term that is associated with reservation life, in general.

But Mary Crow Dog (1990) put this in perspective.

We kids did not suffer from being poor, because we were not aware of it. The few Indians nearby lived in the same kind of want, in the same kind of dilapidated shacks or one-room log cabins with dirt floors. We had nothing to compare our life to. We existed in a vacuum of our own. We were not angry because we did not know that somewhere there was a better, more comfortable life. To be angry, poverty has to rub shoulders with wealth.... TV destroyed the innocence.... As we had no electricity, we also had no "idiot box" and therefore felt no envy...I liked our shack. Its being overcrowded only meant womblike security to me.... I had food, love, a place to sleep, and a warm potbellied, wood-fed stove to sit near in the winter. I needed nothing more. (pp. 26-27)

Certainly, I am not suggesting that poverty is good or imaginary. I am suggesting that poverty is relative and its significance is embedded in value systems. The white world played a major role in bestowing "poverty" upon the Indian nations: We directly caused material and physical need in many instances and ways; we diagnosed their poverty within the context of a materialistic value system, then condemned them for being poor; we prescribed ways of fixing—alleviating, yet ironically perpetuating—poverty through allotments, government programs, and through education. Apple (2004) would assert that the education intended to help Native Americans "travel new roads" is a system that ultimately helps to maintain unequal cultural and economic power

dynamics; schooling acculturates “people to accept as legitimate the limited roles they ultimately fill in society” (p. 30).

*Reyner and Eder– Focus: A Broad  
Historical Inclusion/Conclusion*

Published in 2004, Jon Reyner and Jeanne Eder’s comprehensive book, *American Indian Education: A History*, steps both backward and forward in filling in the historical spaces of the other four already mentioned touchstone works. Starting with a discussion of colonial missionaries and their schools, the history begins as early as the 1400s and spans the history of education until the year 2003. Essentially, the book describes

the efforts of European immigrants to North America and their descendents to force the cultural assimilation of the continent’s indigenous peoples through schooling, and it chronicles their resistance to, as well as cooperation with, these efforts under extreme conditions. (p. 3)

Like Szasz and Thompson, Reyner and Eder looked to Native American effort and self-determination in gaining control of their own education processes:

Recent events in Indian education are indicative of the efforts by Indian people to reverse centuries of repression of their languages and cultures... Native Americans can learn to participate successfully in white society and at the same time retain their languages and traditional Indian values.... This must be the goal of Indian education. (p. 329)

The Reyner and Eder text is different from histories above in a very important way. Unlike all of the previously mentioned histories, there is a distinct message addressed directly to the education community:

In order for educators and policy makers to understand why the various programs in Indian schools exist and why certain curricula are more likely to lead to success, they must know about the past failures and successes of Indian education. They must know the roots of Indian resistance to schooling and the educational empowerment that Indians are striving for... The five centuries of white

ethnocentrism, cultural chauvinism, and insensitivity to Indian needs described in this book still exist. Teachers who go beyond teaching, who learn about their students' cultures, can change their students' lives for the better. Rather than justify a one-way monocultural "English only" education for assimilation that has dominated the historical record, this book documents the advantages of an "English Plus" education, one that involves mutual accommodation and a two-way exchange between Indian and white societies. (pp. 12-13)

Because current American Indian education histories end with a look toward self-determination, it is important to mention the work of McCarty (2002) and Senese (1991), who found her/his impetus for study in the Rough Rock Demonstration School.

*McCarty.* Teresa McCarty's focus in *A Place to be Navaho: Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-determination in Indigenous Schooling* (2002) is notable because this hard-fought-for school serves as a good example of what is generally hoped for by the historians above: a bilingual, accommodating and empowering, self-determining school administered by Indians for Indians—an educational defense and negotiation in the face of relentless hegemonic forces. The study of the school is both a critique and a celebration. Though not meant to be a specific critique of government policy and overt discrimination, the depicted struggles of this school and indigenous community as they tried to self-educate their children illuminate clear government resistance to Indian self-determination. McCarthy rightly believes that the "Indigenous issues and perspectives must penetrate the mainstream debates on education reform, bilingualism, multiculturalism, literacy learning, and language planning and policy" (p. xviii).

*Senese.* The heroic educational attempt at Rough Rock has generated much study and much frustration. Guy Senese's 1991 book, *Self-Determination and the Social Education of Native Americans*, was born of that frustration. He wrote:



As soon as I settled into my teaching [at Rough Rock], questions began to arise: Why was it so difficult to compete with the area Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools and the public schools for funding?... Why has it been so difficult for the community to successfully argue that its unique educational standards and goals count as fundamentals in an appropriate education? Why was so much pressure applied for the school to conform to federal and public school standards? These questions, as well as staff divisions regarding the purpose of the “demonstration,” led to a school where dedication was often met with frustration.... My allegiance of its fundamental principles led me to the study of which this book is a culmination. (pp. x-xi)

Senese looked to government policy and politics for answers and used Szasz’s history, *Education and the American Indian*, as a starting point. His book is an effort to extend Szasz’s interpretive effort—to begin where she left off—“to amplify the impact of current government education policy” (p. xii).

The above histories that look at Indian education from a broad, national level, will be considered below. As this dissertation moves to a more specific focus, however, it is important to note the literature that has been written concerning the Indian Student Placement Program itself.

There exists a curious dearth of information about the Indian Student Placement Service in the mainstream literature above, especially considering the estimation that over 5,000 individual students participated. Extrapolating logically, perhaps another 6,000 native fathers and mothers, 8,000 Anglo LDS foster fathers and mothers, and 3,000 LDS church workers and missionaries—perhaps 22,000 in all— were directly affected by the program. In addition, many people were indirectly affected: native and Anglo grandmothers and grandfathers, thousands of siblings, public school teachers, the entire campus of Brigham Young University, over 60 different Indian tribes, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the later progeny of the native students.

There are no existing comprehensive histories of the LDS Church's efforts to educate Native Americans; however, there are two abbreviated histories written specifically about the LDS Indian Student Placement Service by Allen (1998) and Bishop (1967).

### LDS Accounts

#### *Allen*

Allen's (1998) *The Rise and Decline of the LDS Indian Student Placement Program, 1947-1996*, does span the beginning of the program to the end. The work describes the program, offering, superficially, a program evaluation. His basic conclusion reads:

No matter how successful the program may have been, however, it was vulnerable to criticism, for the previous history of boarding schools, foster homes, and adoption programs for Native Americans had created an atmosphere of mistrust of any such program operated and controlled by white society. To some it looked too much like simply another manifestation of traditional efforts to Americanize the Indians and eliminate their distinctive cultural heritage.... In the end, the Indian student placement service performed exceptionally well in achieving the major goal it began with—to provide better educational opportunities for LDS Indian children. (p. 110)

Allen's words can serve as a summation of my earlier discussions and a reiteration of Clarence Bishop's measure of success: The program "offered" opportunity.

The paper's bibliography is of value, for it provides a basic roadmap for additional study and includes numerous types of resources.

#### *Bishop*

Bishop's (1967) history, "Indian Placement: A History of the Indian Placement

Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” is an overview written while the program was in operation, and it exists only in thesis form. Because the author was working as an administrator in the program when he wrote his paper, he had interesting “insider” details to include, most of which are found in the appendix and bibliography. For example, many of the forms and questionnaires used by program administration are included in the appendix, and unpublished church sources are identified in the bibliography.

Bishop was optimistic and hopeful. Acknowledging that no formal studies had been done at that time, he believed the number of students entering the program signaled success. His thesis ends with optimism concerning the future of “Lamanite” education:

As the crest of this new hill is approached, in five years one may again wonder what will appear on the other side and thoughts may wander to many million Indian children in Central and South America to which the church feels a strong commitment and with whom preliminary educational programs are already being developed. (p. 118)

## Conclusion

The organization of this literature review travels through time and stops at a critical moment: now. There are three major messages I am impressed with at this point which inform not only my study of the LDS church’s efforts at assimilation through the Indian Student Placement Program but also my understanding of education realities for minority populations today. These messages extend beyond a knowledge of historical facts and figures and a greater appreciation for the strength and beauty of the Native American culture. They are as follows.

1. “Safe” multiculturalism—Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) assertions that only safe cultural beliefs and practices have been allowable thunders truth. Native American art, music, food, and mythology are considered interesting, quaint, beautiful cultural expressions. It is logical, then, that these practices are deemed “safe”—they must not rock power structures in the same direct way native culture-based education and languages do. This theory extends to other marginalized cultures, as well.

There is a particularly haunting picture in the Archuleta and colleagues (2000) text. The caption noted: “There were some surprising exceptions to boarding school repression of Native cultures” (p. 28). In the picture, little girls have carefully recreated camp life during their playtime. Tipis are constructed from available linens—an Anglo gingham tablecloth is carefully, ironically, draped around one set of tipi poles. Children are sitting on the ground teaching each other, practicing, and perpetuating their cultural roles as American Indian women and children. This is a powerful scene of accommodation, resilience, and revolt, but it was allowed. To white eyes, one can assume, it was considered mere, simple, child’s play.

2. Assimilation is a lie—Historically, it became unpopular to kill Native Americans in order to solve the problem of their existence, so assimilation, turning them into pseudo-whites, would make the problem disappear. It, as Adams (1995) noted, was a simple matter of changing one skin for another. Even the LDS church believed that by assimilating into white LDS society, Native American skin would become white. But assimilation is a lie. The assimilation goal was never to remake minority people into being one of us—just being like us. The differences between “being” and “being like”

are huge. As Apple (2004) speaks of the social stratification that schools perpetuate, it becomes clear that in order to keep power structures intact, we need cooperation from minority groups; we need a similar moral and economic value system. Schools and churches work hand-in-hand to that end.

Boarding school photographs of Native American children dressed up in white fashions of the time—suits, petticoats, buckles, and bows—are haunting. These pictures illustrate sad, superficial, visual “remakes” of identity. LDS foster families, too, provided new “appropriate” clothing for their young charges. In foster family group pictures, they wear the same Sunday suits, ruffles, and bows as their white foster siblings.

3. The continuing efforts of the U.S government to assimilate all children—Senese’s end message is timely. He asks why funding is so difficult. He asks why there cannot be acceptable, culturally unique standards and goals. He asks why everyone must conform to federal and public school standards. Although he asked these questions over seventeen years ago, these questions stand at the forefront of education angst today. Now, today’s government is not only trying to create national common knowledge and values, but schools are instructed to create citizens who will serve as ensigns in a global community—children must step forth with global understandings and values to compete. As this study raged in my head and heart, I chaired accreditation visits at reservation high schools for the Utah State Board of Education. As I watched these students enjoy being children, as I listened to their Navajo language and watched shy smiles, as I listened to stories of sheep and hogans, I wondered what the future held for these students. And for their schools. The schools were not performing well; they were failing to reach NCLB

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals, and they would soon be threatened with restructuring. The schools were not fulfilling their purpose, for the students were not measuring up to standardized Anglo benchmarks. In addition to a visible Native American resistance to the assimilation of schooling, 80% of these students still did not have electricity or running water in their homes. That makes it hard to get keyboarding drills done for the next day.

When the students in the Indians Student Placement Program did not want to conform and assimilate, there was an “out”—they went home. With today’s education mandates, there is no place to run; there is no place to hide.

The literature above, plus other dissertations, studies, autobiographies, biographies, and interviews contribute to the cache of program information and discussions of acculturation and assimilation that are described in the following pages.

CHAPTER III  
HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Purpose

To explain what historians do, Henri Pirenne (1931) wrote:

Historical narrative is...a hypothesis. It is an attempt at explanation, a conjectural reconstitution of the past. Each author throws light on some part, brings certain features into relief, considers certain aspects. The more those accounts multiply, the more the infinite reality is freed from its veils. All these accounts are incomplete, all imperfect, but all contribute to the advancement of knowledge. Those whose results have passed out of date have served to elaborate others which are in their turn replaced. (p 32)

In studying education, historical research helps educators understand prior and present conditions by reconsidering and reconstituting practices and outcomes of the past in their historical context. Cohen (1976) drew a clarifying analogy: To Freud, neurosis concerns a repression of one's past and the failure to escape from the burden of that history. What is repressed returns distorted and is eternally reenacted. The psychotherapist's task is to help the patient confront that repression and reconstruct past events. In this respect the historian's goal resembles that of the therapist—"to liberate us from the burden of the past by helping us to understand it" (p. 299).

Cohen's "burden of the past" might include history's relationship with society's moral sensibilities. Bellah (1985) argued that present-day individualism and scientific rationalism provide little guidance for making sense of today's actions and for forming moral judgments; historical research provides a moral framework for understanding the present. From the very beginning, our educational institutions reflected particular values

and views of society, and a study of such can inform the way in which we view these institutions today.

Certainly there are other purposes of historical research in education. For example, if educational researchers did not conduct a literature review of past work in their area of study, it would be difficult to build on the work of others. Some educational historians do research to find evidence to support current reform efforts. Past practices that appear to have had unethical or discriminatory aims and effects but continue in some form today are typical targets of such attention (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

In a historical study of education, these purposes are not necessarily isolated and singular. In my present study, for example, past moral frameworks are pertinent. Past educational practices continue in the present, which should be investigated and reformed.

### Methodology

McCulloch and Richardson (2000) commented that historians and educationists have often disagreed on the purpose of their work: “This is a clash of outlook between scholars who seek to study the past for its own sake (albeit through a contemporary lens) and those who start from the issues of the day in order to uncover the lessons of a ‘useable past’” (p. 121). More generally, McCulloch and Richardson felt there is a distinction in practice between the characteristic working methods of historians and social/education researchers. This is the emphasis given by historians to sources that record sets of events in a chronology that can be reconstructed contrasted with the emphasis given by social researchers to procedures from which theories of social action



and structure, fixed often uncertainly in time, may be refined or freshly constructed.

All education researchers, however, are historians to some extent. The literature review is important to determine what past research has been done on a given problem, and the validity of those findings should be considered, particularly in view of changing educational contexts. This process, the search for relevant resources and the interpretation of their significance, concern and inform the work of both empirically-oriented educational researchers and more document-oriented historians.

That said, historiographers, those who study the various interpretations and procedures that historians use in their research, generally agree the following steps are involved in researching a project (Barzun & Graff, 1992; Brickman, 1982; Gall et al., 1996; McCulloch & Richardson, 2000; Shafer, 1980).

1. Define the problem or question to be investigated—Mark Bench (1969) suggested there are five main types of problems or topics that prompt historical inquiry: social issues which affect education; specific education-associated individuals or educational institutions; exploration of cause and effect relationships between events; syntheses of data; and reinterpretation of past events. My particular study notes social issues that affect Indian education, but the main focus is on the history of a program—the Indian Student Placement Program.

2. Search for sources of historical data—Researchers generally use three types of information sources: preliminary, secondary, and primary. A typical preliminary source is an index or bibliography of secondary or primary sources. A secondary source is a

document in which an individual gives an account of or explains an event that the researcher did not experience firsthand. Most reports of historical research are secondary sources because they are based on the researcher's current interpretations of primary and secondary sources. History encyclopedias, dictionaries, and textbooks are examples of other secondary sources. Primary sources are generated by people who personally witnessed a historical event. Almost any object or verbal record produced by a person who witnessed the historical event can be considered a primary source. Gall and colleagues (1996, p. 654) believe there are four types of primary sources: written documents or records (diaries, legal records, minutes, committee reports, etc.), quantitative records (census records, budgets, test scores, etc.), oral records (taped or transcribed interviews, ballads, myths, etc.), and relics/artifacts (technological, buildings, furniture, etc.). As mentioned earlier, my study also involves the use of preliminary, secondary, and primary sources: bibliographies, studies, histories, reports, documents, biographies, autobiographies, archived interviews, and direct interviews with program participants.

3. Summarize and evaluate the historical sources—Historical criticism, both external and internal, involves the evaluation of the authenticity of the historical sources and the validity of the information contained in them. External criticism prompts the question: Is the source genuine and not a forgery? Internal criticism questions the accuracy and importance of the historical documents. The literature review of pertinent aspects of this study and this resultant dissertation will provide several appropriate source summaries. The printed secondary sources I have used have been “accepted” by

publishers, universities, and scholars. My primary source material comes from communication acts with people who experienced the Indian placement program in varying contexts. The difference of opinion or interpretation varies greatly in some instances, particularly between how white, LDS participants may have viewed the same event as Native American participants. This “discrepancy” does not cast shadows on the “truth” of the conversations. Instead, it illuminates the very heart of the issue: The impact of the placement program, conceived and executed by a dominant white, LDS society, was often understood very differently by Native Americans.

4. Report the pertinent data within an interpretive/conceptual framework—  
Researchers engaged in historical study develop concepts—interpretive frameworks—to organize and interpret the data they have collected. As already discussed in chapter one of this study, a researcher’s conceptual framework, a chosen logic or approach to understanding, influences what data and patterns are deemed relevant and why. Norman Wilson (1999) stated, “Historians do not collect facts; they connect them into explanations of the past; thus historical analysis involves synthesis based on a logic or method of understanding” (p. 44).

As noted earlier, the theoretical lens through which I explore the placement program is that provided by the concept of assimilation—the process and results of a minority culture being changed, absorbed, or replaced by a dominant culture. I acknowledge a network of conceptual relationships between acculturation and assimilation. This relationship reflects a process of cultural change, a systematic cultural change of a particular society carried out by an alien, dominant society. The minority

culture moves toward integration—assimilation—within the majority culture.

### Personal Accounts and Life Histories

Wilson (1997) believed that a researcher, in order to truly understand the field of American Indian history, must consult native sources, such as artifacts and oral history. She emphasized that point by stating, “I see the incorporation and use of oral history, regardless of one’s specialty, as not merely that of another source, but as the greatest resource upon which the discipline of American Indian history will proceed” (p. 102). Speaking in general, Lancy (2001) wrote, “One of the most noticeable trends in the literature has been the incorporation of personal accounts in the data-collecting arsenal of the qualitative researcher” (p. 152). Much of the primary and secondary written material examined in this study falls into the category of personal history or personal account.

Many of the autobiographical and biographical accounts resemble “stories.” Lancy (2001) continued, “We find that humans use story or narrative to organize their understanding and memory of events” (p. 129). Some of these accounts are novelistic in nature; some resemble autobiographical essays and memoirs; some are embedded in the dissertation work of other researchers; and some accounts sit in oral history archives and take the form of transcribed formal interviews. Primary sources are written in first person, and secondary sources, quoting the participant, are written in third.

Although these accounts are gathered and presented in many different ways, Lancy categorized personal accounts into three main categories: self-generated accounts (autobiography: memoir, chronicle, diary, reminiscence, personal essay), accounts

produced through the collaboration of subject and scholar (assisted or compiled autobiography), and accounts generated by others (biography). He asserted that these personal accounts are not necessarily collected and bound by the “canons of scholarship” to address a larger issue or question—they may stand alone in unique significance (p. 129). These same accounts, however, may also be aggregated to discover general patterns that hold true for the group as a whole. This aggregation will take place in my study as a way of generating questions, forming hypotheses, and making general conclusions.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) also termed “personal account” as “life history”: Life history is any retrospective account by the individual of his life in whole or part, in written or oral form (p. 539). Lancy (2001) added, “Of course, a researcher may also collect life history from the living,” a sentiment which reflects the reason I also incorporate interviews in my particular study (p. 152).

### Oral History - The Use of Interview

Yow (1994) reminded us that “social scientists, in general, are trained to view manufacturing the evidence as the worst thing one can do” (p. 4). Yet, oral data collection/interview is just that—creating new information that did not exist before the communication act. This data-collection method enables the researcher to collect information that is not directly observable, such as feelings, motivations, attitudes, and past experiences.

A major advantage of the interview method is its adaptability. Interviewers can ask for additional, more focused, or clarifying data, thus yielding more complete information. This research act is fluid and dynamic; researchers examine the perspective of the other person as fully as possible and work toward a deeper understanding of the subtle and sometimes elusive dynamics of any given experience or phenomenon.

Another aspect of the interview method is that it often yields information that is difficult to standardize and quantify. Also, these qualitative results are often more open to interpretation because of the imprecision of the speech act itself, and the anonymity of the respondents is generally hard to maintain. This presents particular challenges to researchers.

Cutler (1983) added that oral history is limited by the human memory, which is sometimes fickle and unreliable. In defense of the method, however, he was quick to continue:

Historians—no matter how they gather their data—should, of course, be familiar with the written record, but, as any social science researcher knows, it is never complete. Memories must be tapped to supplement existing documents or even substitute for them where the written record is especially sparse. ( p. 95)

Cutler tied the method to education research: “To understand education, John Dewey believed, one must examine the learner’s experience. Oral historians of education...can investigate the role of experience better than historians wedded to traditional documentation” (p. 99).

According to Gall and colleagues (1996), the steps involved in using interviews are as follows.

1. Define the purpose of the study—My foremost purpose is to describe this

historic phenomenon deeply and to create a more unified, more correct understanding of the program. Additionally, it is hoped that this study contributes to a clearer understanding of the history of assimilating school practices that deny and devalue applications of ethnic contexts and understandings. This purpose determined the main aspects of the interviews, such as the types of questions and the selection of informants.

2. Select a sample—Key informants were interviewed; I collected information from 31 participants who had special knowledge or perceptions concerning the research topic. This type of sampling was purposeful, not random; I communicated in some form with every available, assenting source. Hence, perimeters of convenience affected who was interviewed. I began my sample pool by identifying the names of local families/individuals whom I know participated in the program as foster families/parents/siblings/students, and they, in turn, identified others whom they knew were participants. Online searches also yielded contact information of people who have authored written accounts of program participation.

3. Design the interview format—The type of interview format I employed was not rigidly designed, although guiding questions were predetermined to prompt the flow of the interaction and provide loose parameters to the data topics. This open-ended structure afforded respondents more opportunity to elaborate and, perhaps, even change the direction of the interview questions in order to “match” their knowledge base and experience to the interview topic. According to Patton (1990), there were three basic approaches to collecting information through open-ended interviews: (a) the informal conversational interview that is based on a spontaneous generation of questions in a

natural setting; (b) the general interview guide approach during which a set of predetermined topics are explored with the participants, although the questions are spontaneous; and (c) the standardized open-ended interview during which the participants are asked the same set and sequence of predetermined questions. Communication media influenced the specificity and formality of the questioning process. Impromptu, fortuitous interactions with participants prompted the use of the informal conversational interview that is based on a spontaneous generation of questions in a natural setting. The general interview guide approach during which a set of predetermined, though seemingly spontaneous, topics were explored with the participants seemed most appropriate when participants were nervous about “official” interview formats. The standardized open-ended interview when participants were asked the same set and sequence of predetermined questions was appropriate in a few instances when participants responded to written questions posed in electronic email. Casual settings and conversational approaches allowed me to interact with more participants; however, the written emails provided the most specific detail.

4. Develop questions—For more unstructured interview situations, as during an informal conversational interview, the formulation of good questions depends on the interviewer’s ability to respond appropriately and spontaneously to the cues offered by the respondent as the communication act unfolds. For more structured interview situations, an interview guide provides a general framework for the research event. The guide contains the topics or questions the interviewer will pursue, but the interview is not intended to be limited by those items, for the interviewer should have the freedom to ask



clarifying questions or probe for additional information. During more formal standardized interview situations, the interviewer is to be careful to adhere as much as possible to the guide's pre-established questions with all the participants. The targeted topics and questions of my study were as follows.

*Topic: Getting Involved in the Program*

1. Describe how you first became acquainted with the Indian Placement Program.
2. Describe what the process was like when you first became involved.
3. Describe the nature of the placement (who? what? when? where?) and how the experience unfolded.

*Topic: Specifics of the Placement Experience*

1. Describe specifics concerning foster family related, church related, and school related events.
2. Describe how you (and your immediate family) felt about the events at the time.

*Topic: Program Outcomes*

1. Describe both positive and negative outcomes concerning school-related learning and achievement.
2. Describe what you feel are both negative and positive outcomes of the experience, generally speaking.
3. Looking back, describe how you feel about the events now. Was this an overall positive experience or negative one? Did the "goods" outweigh the "bads" or

vice versa?

4. The interviews were intended to further “flesh out” the Indian Placement experience by adding human feelings, emotions, and attitudes to the collected data. Although there are some recorded participant interviews that already exist, more are needed that provide a broader view over time of the experience and outcome.

5. Select and train interviewers– Certainly, in order to maintain consistency, to control variables, and to maintain validity/reliability, this is an important step when the size or nature of the study requires additional interviewers. In this particular study, I was able to conduct the interviews without assistance.

6. Do a pilot test of the interview procedures– Indeed, during a controlled study, pilot testing will help hone the questions and procedures. With relatively unique, open-ended research events, contexts, and questions, appropriate pilot tests are difficult to devise. Already, at this stage of my research, unplanned for, fortuitous interactions with past program participants taught me the importance of flexibility and a sensitivity to culture-related verbal inhibitions. I also learned the importance of memory-prompting notes “on the fly” and of recording the events on paper as soon as the situation allows.

7. Conduct the interviews–The interviewer needs to decide what type of personal image to present to the participants (i.e., researcher, teacher, and/or friend). Other considerations such as dress, gender, age, and ethnicity can also influence the interviewer/respondent relationship and the productivity of the communication. Rapport and trust should be established, particularly for the more informal interview situations. Certainly, the interviewer should have a good understanding of the respondents’ language

and culture and pay close attention to nuance and nonverbal communication such as body language. In this case, everyone spoke English; I do not speak Navajo or other Native American languages.

Past experiences working with Native American students in educational settings taught me they are generally very sensitive to every nuance of the communication exchange and I needed to be also. I knew I must:

- a. Listen intently and be comfortable with pauses, silence, and a slower-paced conversation;
- b. Understand when the person does not respond to my queries in European/Anglo-Saxon linear ways. Responses are often indirect and some topics/queries are “ignored” altogether;
- c. Demonstrate a humble, casual, friendly demeanor. Gentle humor is helpful; and
- d. Avoid making intense eye-to-eye contact and/or close body proximity.

My interviews took place in different settings: In schools, over the telephone, via email, and in restaurants. I found that the face-to-face interviews were usually very upbeat and positive. Email provided the most impersonal communication context, and it was through this medium that I received the most critical comments concerning the program. Email provided an instant transcript. I wrote abbreviated transcript notes during telephone conversations. I took written notes during some in-person discussions or wrote down mental notes immediately following the interactions when I left the scene.

8. Analyze the interview data—Shafer (1980) stressed that analysis and synthesis

go together when using historical method. He wrote,

Analysis and synthesis...proceed together, often overlapping or merging; it is, however, generally true that emphasis will shift from analysis in the early and middle stages to synthesis in the final stages of the work.... Analysis is a systematic attempt to learn about a subject or problem by looking at its elements, breaking it into components. (p. 172)

As for synthesis, he acknowledged that some synthesis will be made in the course of the research task, but the historical endeavor ultimately culminates in the terminal processes of synthesis. Shafer (1980) continued,

Adequate synthesis at any level will not be attained without proper *digestion* of the evidence. This means sufficient reflection on and manipulation of the evidence to permit its meaningful synthesis. This requires pouring over the evidence, reading and rereading it, making preliminary generalizations and combinations and recombinations.... The evidence, or facts, do not speak for themselves. (p. 187)

To organize the data for this study, I used a topic system that paralleled the question topics. Responses were either similar in fact and/or tone or not; I recorded both similarity and variance as to participation perspectives: Native American past-student or relative, foster sibling, foster parent, educator, and church official. Perspective bias and a reluctance to criticize the LDS church by active members was noted—and accepted as a somewhat predictable outcome. A failure to be able to access or communicate with the natural parents of the now-grown students was acknowledged and regretted. The analyzed, then synthesized, data supported much of what was concluded by historians who wrote about boarding school experiences, particularly concerning assimilation/acculturation issues, resistance, accommodation, and resiliency. Although data was first organized by question topic, soon over-arching themes began to emerge. Those themes and similarities will be further discussed in concluding chapters of this dissertation.

Once the data were analyzed and synthesized, two major tensions surfaced concerning the reporting and documentation of this information, both a result of the interdisciplinary nature of this study. Foci, interpretation, and reporting styles differ from History, English, ethnography, and/or Education vantage points and approaches. Education is my determined orientation.

That choice impacted my second dilemma, documentation. Depending on discipline, there is a differing emphasis placed on the interview transcript as an artifact. Archived historical transcripts are generally not anonymous, yet most Education-mode interviews are reported anonymously and the Informed Consent process required by institutional research review boards (IRBs) concerned with human subject protection dictate confidentiality—not an archival display. I was required to submit confidentiality assurances to the IRB. Fixico (1997) urged that the act of rethinking American Indian history is important.

Rethinking American Indian history must be accomplished in order to reconstruct a true picture of the historical realities of tribal nations and their cultures. Rather than writing “about” American Indians...[new scholars should] seek to understand the dynamics of exchange between Indians and whites, as well as the inside narrative of Indian communities, in forming a new history, in addition to attempting to understand history from an Indian point of view. All this, perhaps, can be done by utilizing the same historical documents and examining new evidence that has been previously neglected, and including a wider range of factors that influenced and shaped American history. (p. 8)

Indeed, the data collected for this study provides another piece of historical reality. In the following chapters, this interview data will be over-imposed, juxtaposed, and synthesized with additional primary and secondary source historical documents in a search for new information about this effort at assimilating Native Americans people.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESCRIPTION OF THE INDIAN STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM

This chapter is meant as an exposition of the history of the program using the notion of assimilation as a conceptual framework. It provides a historical and LDS theological context and traces the program's religious roots, early beginnings, rise, and decline. Though I seek a balanced perspective and no argument or bias is intended in this telling, almost all the retrievable histories which describe the program's beginning were told or written by LDS members and historians. Their voices are directly heard in the quotations, and, at times, Mormon language and attitudes are noticeable, as well. More balancing, alternative, non-LDS voices become apparent, however, when the decline and demise of the program is discussed and contributing factors and pertinent critiques are noted.

#### Religious Context: The LDS Church and Native Americans, 1830-2005

According to LDS belief, it all began with genealogy: Jacob, and 12 plus two sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Benjamim, plus Ephraim and Manasseh who were adopted. Jacob's sons became the heads of the ancient tribes of Israel (McConkie, 1966).

Latter-day Saint doctrine defines most of today's Mormons as literal descendants of one of the ancient tribes of Israel, primarily the tribe of Ephraim. This genealogy is considered part of a divine plan that divides lineages into favored to least-favored categories. Descendents of Ephraim stood at the top as most favored. American Indians,

descendants of both Manasseh and Ephraim, also stood near the top in favored status, as did the Jews, who were descendants of Judah. According to LDS belief, the tribes were scattered as they “forsook the Lord and turned to unrighteous” (McConkie, 1966, p. 305). Both a temporal and spiritual gathering of the tribes “unto the Gospel of Christ” will occur during the last days before the second coming of Jesus (McConkie, p. 305).

According to the LDS *Book of Mormon*, Lehi, a great Hebrew prophet, led his family and friends on a great journey across the ocean to the Promised Land on the American continent in about 600 B.C. Before they arrived, a sharp division occurred within the group, and the rebellious, those calling themselves Lamanites—after their leader, Laman—fell in opposition to the faithful group, who called themselves Nephites—after their leader, Nephi. The group labels were originally used to identify true believers from apostates. After the separation occurred, the Lord placed a curse upon the Lamanites, a curse that included a dark skin. “After they had dwindled in unbelief, they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations” (*Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 12:23). Later, because of their righteousness, they became a “chosen” people. The name labels now identified matters of ancestry. According to the *Book of Mormon*, these Lamanites, descendants of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, are the progenitors of today’s Native Americans.

The *Book of Mormon*’s message is also reflected in the 1845 “Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” The following is an excerpt.

We also bear testimony that the “Indians” (so called) of North and South America are a remnant of the tribe of Israel; as is now made manifest by the discovery and

revelation of their ancient oracles and records [referring to the *Book of Mormon* which reads as a history of the early people on the American continents].

And that they are about to be gathered, civilized, and made one nation in this glorious land.

They will also come to the knowledge of their forefathers [through the *Book of Mormon* and missionary efforts], and of the fullness of the gospel; and they will embrace it, and become a righteous branch of the house of Israel....

The sons and daughters of Zion will soon be required to devote a portion of their time in instructing the children of the forest [Lamanites]. For they must be educated, and instructed in the arts of civil life, as well as in the gospel. They must be clothed, fed, and instructed in the principles and practice of virtue, modesty, customs, dress, music, and all other things which are calculated in their nature to refine, purify, exalt, and glorify them, as the sons and daughters of the royal house of Israel, and of Joseph; who are making ready for the bridegroom [the coming of Christ]. (Clark, 1965, p. 256)

According to church belief, the Lamanites were to play an integral part in the preparation for the coming of Christ and the ensuing millennium. The church was to serve a supporting role by bringing to the Lamanites, and all other remnants of the tribes of Israel, the lost knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church was also to assist politically and materially in the gathering process at divinely chosen Zions: Jerusalem in Palestine for the Jews and the New Jerusalem located in Jackson County, Missouri in America for the Lamanites and the rest of the scattered tribes of Israel. Upon the fulfillment of this great plan, the divine destiny promised in scripture and sacred history would again belong to God's chosen people (Mauss, 2003).

There was a lot at stake in civilizing, assimilating, converting—and controlling, as historian Peterson (1984) contended—the Native American Indians, and Joseph Smith moved quickly. The LDS Church was organized on April 6, 1830. In September and October of that year, Joseph Smith sent out four missionaries to take the Gospel and the



*Book of Mormon* out to the Indians. They traveled hundreds of miles under trying conditions to preach to the Catteraugus Indians near Buffalo, New York, the Wyandot Indians of Ohio, and the Delaware Indians in Missouri. The Indians were not receptive (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996).

At about that same time, Latter-day Saint people were being harassed, discriminated against, and driven from their homes in New York to Ohio, to Missouri, then to Illinois where Joseph Smith was killed in the Carthage jail. Brigham Young, the next president of the church, led the members through Iowa, Nebraska, westward toward the Rocky Mountains, and ultimately to the Salt Lake Valley. Their exodus was long, difficult, and many died. Not only were the Indians alarmed by the number of whites migrating across the plains, both Mormon and non-Mormon, but other whites were alarmed by the Mormons, as well. Rumors spread quickly along the Oregon Trail of threatened Mormon depredations or Mormon alliances with the Indians. The potential for violence was high, but there was amazingly little bloodshed. For both settlers and Indians, disease and the elements claimed the most lives (Mauss, 2003).

Once the Mormons began settling in Utah, however, they found the Native Americans to be much less accommodating than those in the East or on the Plains. At this time the federal government was moving toward the containment of Indians on reservations. Brigham Young was appointed both territorial governor of Utah and the federal superintendent of Indian Affairs in 1851. Aligned with current federal opinion, Young and the settlers favored the reservation concept; although, the policy was not implemented in Utah until after the Civil War. In the meantime, the Mormons and

the Indians lived side-by-side. Partly for maintaining peace and partly because of the continuing belief that the Native Americans were still Lamanites who needed to be redeemed for the building of Zion, the policy under Brigham Young was “generous,” especially when compared with white governmental policies and practices. Young asked his followers to

feed and clothe [the Indians] so far as it lies in your power. Never turn them away hungry from your door, teach them the arts of husbandry, bear with them in all patience and long suffering, and never consider their lives as equivalent for petty stealing. (Mauss, 2003, p. 59)

Pavlik (1992) termed this time of relationship building “trading and raiding” (p. 25). He saw the peace efforts of the Mormons settlers also prompted by trading needs, which generally benefited all involved. During those first contact years there was little emphasis on conversion.

According to Peterson (1984), Brigham Young laid out an initial Mormon-Indian policy in 1848, when he declared he had no intention to “take them in his arms until the curse be removed” (p. 42). Using an irrigation analogy, Young is quoted as saying, “[We must] cut channels” for water to run in “and gradually lead it where we want it to go. . . . Just so we must do with this people...by degrees we will control them” (p. 43). Peterson, when writing about this period, called it a time when “Mormon relations with native Americans were at once an expression of faith and a conquest” (p. 40).

In 1852 the territorial legislature passed an act that allowed slave trade in the Utah Territory. Though the Mormons were not, as a group, advocates of slavery, this act allowed Mormon families to buy Indian children who had already been enslaved by a long-standing slave trade between various Indian tribes and Mexican slavers. According

to Peterson (1984), hundreds and possibly thousands of Paiute and Goshiute children were bound over to “some useful avocation” in Mormon families. A rhetoric of benevolence accompanied the practice. Purchased Indian children were to be brought up as “civilized” Mormons. Peterson quoted Brigham Young as saying, “The Lord could not have devised a better plan for Indian redemption” (p. 44). Although the intention was “Christian” and there were “success” stories, the church “assimilated few of the unfortunate children, while disease or despair brought untimely deaths to many of them” (p. 44). Many ran away.

This Mormon intervention is considered either positive or negative, depending on who reported the practice—Mormons or non-Mormons. Without the intervention, however, a cruel fate most assuredly awaited the children at the hands of the slavers. In some ways, this phenomenon could be considered a “dry run” for the institution of the Indian Student Placement Program in 1947. Successful assimilation of the purchased children was so limited that the event should have given the later organizers pause.

From a white, LDS perspective, raiding was commonplace and one-sided. In 1859, Daniel Leigh Walters of Maughan’s Fort [Wellsville] wrote:

We had a pretty hard time for three or four years to make a living we had many times to gard [sic] the fort at nights and herd our stock in the day so the Indians would not steal them [sic]. In the summer of 1859 the Indians stole every horse that was out on the range. (Wellsville History Committee, 1985, p. 39)

Concerning “raiding” from the Indians’ perspective (according to a Mormon settler), the whites were trespassing on Indian rights by scaring away or taking the valley’s game. The settlers’ animals were the only game left (Wellsville History Committee, 1985, p. 39).

Despite the raiding, there were only a few serious outbreaks of Indian-Mormon hostility. In southern Utah Valley, tempers flared and fighting occurred as Mormon settlers moved into the area in 1849-1850. Mormon expansion and their impact on local resources prompted another conflict known as the Walker War of 1853-54. The outbreak of this war prompted a more forceful Mormon-Indian policy. In addition to directing settlers to “fort up,” to form fort-like communities, church authorities created five Indian missions between 1854 and 1856. All were located on important trails. Although Mormons lived with the Indians, taught them the LDS gospel, and baptized them, conversion was minimal. By the end of 1858, four of the five missions had failed (Peterson, 1984).

The Bear River Massacre of 1863 was one of the first serious and bloody battles in Mormon country. Although complaints from Cache Valley settlers helped spark this event, this was not considered a Mormon attack (Heaton, 1995). This brutal action led by U.S. Army Colonel Patrick Conner resulted in the slaughtering of more than 300 men, women, and children. He justified the massacre as being necessary for the safety of the travelers along the Oregon Trail (Peterson, 1984).

Another devastating war, the Ute Black Hawk war of 1865 (not to be confused with the 1832 Sauk Black Hawk war in Illinois and Wisconsin) began after the major chiefs in Utah signed a treaty that conveyed title to lands the white settlers inhabited in exchange for a large cash settlement. They also agreed to remove themselves to the new Uintah Reservation. Chief Black Hawk did not agree. He pulled together a coalition and began guerilla warfare against the Mormons’ Nauvoo Legion, an LDS citizens’ army.

Colonel Patrick Connor, who disliked the Mormons, refused to help. After three years of warfare and many losses to both Indians and settlers, Black Hawk agreed to peace after Brigham Young worked for reconciliation. At this point, few Indians remained in the area. Most were relocated on the Uintah Reservation (Mauss, 2003).

The Mormons tried to “help” Indians who were rejecting reservation life and who were open to learning both white life ways and a white religion. A Shoshone band was baptized in 1873 after an ambitious effort to educate and assimilate them. The Mormons sent farmers, craftsmen, and teachers to work with the Shoshones in clearing and irrigating land and building local industries, houses, a school, and a church. By 1889, over seven thousand acres of land had been cleared for farming and living in northern Utah near the Utah-Idaho border. According to the white participants, however, “the Indians never really internalized the whites’ work ethic” (Mauss, 2003, p. 62). Eventually they were formed into the Washakie Ward, and, by 1892, over 200 members plus their own Indian church leaders attended. By then, most of the children could read and write in English. This project lasted until about 1950, and a few other attempts at Indian agriculture settlements were based on this experiment (Mauss).

The 1880s brought renewed missionary effort prompted by John Taylor, who became president of the church in 1880. Taylor told members he had received a revelation to the importance of Indian missionary work.

The work of the Lord amongst the Lamanites must not be postponed if we desire to retain the approval of God. Thus far we have been content to simply baptize them and then let them run wild again; but this must continue no longer; the same devoted effort; the same care in instructing; the same organization of the Priesthood, must be introduced and maintained among the house of Lehi as amongst those of Israel gathered from among the Gentile nations...treat them

exactly as we...treat our white brethren. (Mauss, 2003, p. 66)

That year, new Indian missions were opened and work intensified, but by the 1890s, dedication to this effort waned again. Three particular missions are noteworthy for their longevity and impact, however. An entire surviving tribe of 200 Catawba Indians was converted to Mormonism in South Carolina in the 1880s. The church invested heavily in education and employment, and this effort helped the tribe attain relative independence from the government. The church also focused on issues such as drug and alcohol addiction and suicide. Jacob Hamblin, in Southern Utah, spent the last 30 years of his life living among the Paiute, Navajo, and Hopi Indians. A few Indians remained converted, but he greatly impacted the physical aspects of their lives through his education and assimilation efforts. The Ramah Mission was opened in New Mexico in 1876. After about 1880, the main focus of the church in Arizona and New Mexico gradually changed from missionary work to colonization, based on irrigated agriculture. Released missionaries stayed there and continued to convert, fellowship, and educate the local groups of Zuni, Navaho, and Spanish Americans (Mauss, 2003).

Peterson (1985) described these efforts differently:

Although Hamblin and his associates continued to expect the Indians to throw off the curse and worked hopefully to teach them the gospel, the chief success of Indian missionaries was as managers of a peaceful conquest.... Peacemaking was thus the capstone of Mormon-Indians relations. In the final analysis, Mormons, like other frontiersmen, met the Indian more as conquerors than as benefactors. (p. 45)

By the beginning of the twentieth century, various Mormon missionary efforts could not be considered very successful when counting the number of earlier-baptized Native Americans and their families who still continued to actively participate as LDS

church members. By 1932, for example, only five small Indian branches of the LDS church remained organized, although a few Mormon Indians could still be found scattered throughout Utah, Arizona, and Idaho (Peterson, 1985).

Berkhofer (1978) puts this disappointing conversion data in a meaningful, broader perspective. This was not just a Mormon disappointment. He wrote: "Earlier Americans acted as they did for the same reason that Indians reacted as they did. Both groups behaved according to their own cultural systems" (p. *xi*). He added:

The eventual and complete assimilation of the American Indian...was not to happen.... Rather, greater fragmentation followed acculturation, and Americans always have refused final acceptance of the Indian because of racial prejudice.... After thousands of dollars and hundreds of missionaries [of various denominations], the managers and patrons of the missionary societies had to account their eight decades of effort among the Americans as unsuccessful. Although the modern analyst can see only the inevitable failure of the missionary enterprise given the participants' cultural assumptions in the contact situation, the religious observers of the time never saw clearly the extent of their failure or the reasons why the Lord's promise remained unfulfilled.... Missionary directors and patrons saw millennial hopes dashed upon the stubborn reality of culture conflict and misunderstanding. (pp. 151-153)

Hindsight indicates there were probably plenty of clues hinting that this culture-changing missionary endeavor was not working well for anyone and that the premise and process needed to be rethought. Yet, when the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 ended individual allotments and the government refocused on the reservations, the LDS church again considered special reservation missions. Eventually and years apart, two missions were formed. The first was to the Navajos and Zunis in Arizona and New Mexico in 1943. This formation corresponded closely to the year Spencer W. Kimball became an apostle, as is discussed below, and the year the Indian Placement Program was organized for Navajos in 1947. The second reservation mission was created in 1964 for the Indians

located in South Dakota. By 1965, efforts produced results: As many as 15,000 Indian LDS members were members in those two missions. By 1970, more than 50 branches of the church had been organized for the Native American people (Mauss, 2003).

Spencer W. Kimball, who became an apostle in 1943 and president of the church in 1973, was responsible for much of the “re-renewed” vigor. Kimball’s family associated with Native Americans in their home community while he was growing up and had sympathy for their struggle. When called to be a LDS apostle, he was also called to be the head of the church Indian committee, where he was in a position to implement several important programs, including the Indian seminary program, the Indian Student Placement Program, Brigham Young University (BYU) education programs, and BYU off-campus Indian services. Mauss (2003) believed, “The rise and decline of these programs follow a track that corresponds closely with the waxing and waning of Kimball’s career as apostle and president” (p. 82).

The social and political climate in the 1950s was changing in regard to attitudes concerning the civil and human rights of racial and ethnic minorities. In the 1960s and 1970s, federal termination policies were replaced by self-determination policies, and many federal and state programs were implemented to relieve discrimination and disadvantage. Although the Indian Placement Program was still using assimilationist methods during self-determination times, public relation pamphlets printed by the LDS church during this time changed tone. They stressed a respect for native cultures and the importance of program “graduates” to return to help their people on the reservations (Mauss, 2003).



After a rededication of missionary work to the Native Americans in the 1940s, Kimball began to initiate programs aimed at the retention of the new converts, especially the youth, and to keep them from falling from church ways back to Indian ways. Of the four main programs mentioned above, the Indian Seminary Program was the first to be implemented in 1949 at the Intermountain Indian School, a boarding school located in Brigham City, Utah. Beginning with six students at the Intermountain school, by the end of 1975 there had been 17,000 students, kindergarten through high school age, served by the seminary school program at various locations, involving over 40 tribes in 25 states and five Canadian provinces. In the beginning, elementary school children were included in the instruction, and three-fourths of the instructors were full-time missionaries. As time passed, secondary students became the targeted audience, and Indian parent volunteer-teachers and professionally trained teachers involved in the church education system took on the responsibility. Most Indian seminaries met only once a week, but several locations met more often. The students at the Intermountain Indian School were offered daily religious instruction. According to an article in the LDS magazine, *Ensign*, the “ultimate goal of Indian seminaries [was] to help students to develop sound testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Jones, 1975, p. 21). The church’s Indian seminary program was phased out in 1980. Thousands of placement students were recruited from youth participating in LDS seminary programs (Mauss, 2003).

Kimball made several Indian education proposals to church committees as early as 1951, but it was not until about 1965 that most programs were fully operational at Brigham Young University. The *Lamanite Handbook* (1969) described the “correlated

program for Lamanites” as 10 interrelated programs or services, namely: ecclesiastical missions; Lamanite seminary programs; the Lamanite student placement program; ecclesiastical stakes/wards/branches; general church auxiliaries (Priesthood for men; Relief Society for women; Mutual Improvement Association [MIA] for teens; Sunday School for all; Primary for children); the BYU Lamanite education program; the BYU Institute of Lamanite Research and Services; the BYU Center for Latin American Studies, Research, and Development; the church College of Hawaii Institute for Pacific Island Studies; and church schools in the Pacific Islands and Latin America.

The church budgeted about \$700,000 annually for Indian scholarships, and other Indian scholarships came from public, private, and tribal sources. Brigham Young University’s recruiting efforts managed to boost the Native American enrollment to 500 or more students throughout the 1970s, giving the university the largest Native American enrollment of any university in the country. A 1972 enrollment report declared that approximately half of the Indians students had entered through their participation in the Indian Placement Program and another 43% through seminary programs (Mauss, 2003).

Besides BYU’s on-campus academic programs for students, the university and the church created out-reach programs designed to improve Native American situations economically, technologically, and physically. By the mid-1970s, these programs and projects had aided 43 different tribes. Efforts included literacy instruction, leadership development, small business development, alcoholism education, teacher training, counseling, scholarships, water reclamation, and agriculture assistance (Mauss, 2003).

Despite the hopeful plans of Kimball and the church for Lamanites in general, the

limited success of the programs—success being defined as long-term, sustained life-style changes and church activity—coupled with the demands of a quickly growing church elsewhere, prompted a lessened emphasis on the Native American programs. Mauss (2003) noted that by 1979, “President Kimball was further incapacitated and could no longer be the strong Indian advocate that he had once been in church councils. His decline and actual demise in 1983 was thus a metaphor for the parallel fate of the church’s Indian program” (p. 98). Theories as to causes and effects will be further explored and explained in conjunction with the description of the demise of the Indian Placement Program in this chapter.

#### Pre-1947: Spencer W. Kimball

In 1884, Andrew Kimball, Spencer W. Kimball’s father, was called to leave his family in Utah and head for the Indian territory in Arizona to serve as a missionary for the LDS church. Although allowed to return to his family in 1887, he still served as the President of that same mission from 1887 to 1897. In 1897, Andrew was directed by the church to move again to Arizona to serve as a stake president of the area, build up the community, and proselyte among the Indians. The family moved in 1898 when Spencer W. Kimball was 3 years old to Thatcher, Arizona. At age 9, Spencer received his patriarchal blessing, which told him he would “preach the Gospel to many people, but more especially to the Lamanites” (Kimball & Kimball, 1977, p. 236). LDS patriarchal blessings are believed to be inspired blessings given by “called” patriarchs, which identify ancient lineage, blessings, and challenges for members who remain faithful.

Years later, in 1945, the then-president of the LDS church, George Albert Smith, asked the adult, 49-year-old Spencer W. Kimball to assist in supervising the Navajo-Zuni Mission, which was the church's first modern mission, established in 1943. President Smith broadened the request, saying, "I want you to look after the Indians—they are neglected. Take charge and watch after the Indians in all the world" (Kimball & Kimball, 1977, p. 237). In 1947, the mission area was expanded to encompass all the Indians in New Mexico and Arizona.

Kimball was very concerned by the impoverished conditions of the Indians. He lamented in his diary that there were just 365 hospital beds and one dentist serving the Navajo reservation. Average Navajo adults were fortunate if they ate 1,200 calories daily. Some 55,000 had been relegated to the desert reservation of 175,000,000 acres, but only 27,000 of those acres were irrigable. The government had drafted 3,600 young men to serve in World War II, but none of them were allowed to vote. There were few schools. Two-thirds of all Navajo children had never stepped inside a school. On a trip to Blanding, Utah, that same year, Kimball found a one-room schoolhouse that could hold 27 Indian children, but 14,000 Indian children in that area could not get into any school at all. He stopped at a small school near Teas Toh Trading post. Of the three thousand children in the area, only 75 (males) could fit into that school. He watched the mothers come in wagons to take their sons home. Behind them trailed the brothers and sisters not allowed to attend school, "dirty and sore-eyed and scared like little rabbits" (Kimball & Kimball, 1977, p. 243). Kimball worried about how he and the church could make schools and education available.

### Pre-1947: Helen John, the First Placement Student

After the Navajos were settled on the reservation in 1868, these former hunters turned to the breeding, herding, shearing, and exchanging of sheep in order to become self-sufficient and self-sustaining. By the 1920s, the sheep enterprise was becoming successful, herd sizes were increasing dramatically, and that worried government officials who felt the land was not able to support such growth. Overgrazing and erosion concerns prompted the passing and implementation of a government sheep reduction plan that was implemented between 1934 and 1944. Nearly half of the Navajos' stock was eliminated. The policy was a major blow to the reservation economy, and many individual families were severely impacted. For this reason, for survival, many Navajo children were placed by parents in federal boarding schools in the West in order to receive free room and board. This was the case for Helen John, the catalyst and first participant in what would become the Indian Student Placement Program (Birch, 1985).

As a 6-year-old, Helen hid with her sister when their mother saw cars on the highway not far from their home. The family suspected the cars belonged to Indian agents who were kidnapping children to send to various boarding schools in the West. Helen's family remembered the sadness surrounding the disappearance of 12-year-old Uncle Clarence—he disappeared while herding his sheep and surfaced at the Phoenix Indian Boarding School. No one saw him for 5 years, and then he did not want to return home (Birch, 1985).

That same summer in 1935, when Helen was 6, the Indian agents reduced the family's herd to just a few sheep. This act was in accordance with the new government

reduction policy designed to protect fragile desert land from overgrazing. For the John family and many others, this meant financial disaster. Becoming so poor that the parents could not feed their children, Helen was voluntarily taken by her parents to the boarding school in Tuba City. She attended school there for five years, missing one school year because of a heart ailment. When nearly 12, her parents decided she should stay home from school to learn cooking and weaving. One of the younger children took her place at boarding school (Birch, 1985).

#### 1947–1953: Program Beginnings

In the spring of 1947, when Helen was 17, she and her family were hired by John Avery, a sugar beet farmer living near Richfield, Utah. According to J. Neil Birch (1985) who interviewed her personally, “She heard the disparaging comments about squaws from white people in Richfield...and deeply sensed the discrimination and poverty of her life” (p.121). After watching the white teenagers come and go from school, she asked her father for permission to attend the public school there in Richfield. Her father, Willie John, responded gruffly,

You ought to be happy with your life...be proud you are a Navaho. You don't need any more of the Bilagaanas' [whites'] education. Besides [your sister] Ruth needs to go to school...it's her turn. I can't have you both away leaving the rest of us to do all the work. Don't talk to me about it again! (p. 121)

Disappointed and angry, Helen ran across the fields, away from her father to the shelter and seclusion of the porch of the Averys' farm house. The farm wife, Amy Avery, heard her crying, invited her in, and asked for an explanation. At Amy's prompting and instruction, they prayed together about going to school, Amy in English and Helen in

Navajo. While Helen stood there, Amy telephoned Golden Buchanan, who had just been appointed coordinator for Indian Affairs in the Sevier Stake of the LDS church, to ask for help. Mrs. Avery also arranged for LDS missionary lessons to be taught in the tent Helen shared with her parents and eleven brothers and sisters (Birch, 1985).

The John family returned to their hogan and sheep in Moenavi, Arizona, for the summer of 1947. A severe summer drought and a winter of starvation lay ahead. Sensing the potential hardship of the local Indians, Spencer W. Kimball wrote two articles for the *Deseret News* to rally political and civic help and mounted personal efforts to intervene with charitable acts on the Navajos' behalf. He criticized the federal government in his articles for violating its 1868 Treaty of Bosque Redondo (Ft. Sumner), putting special emphasis on the lack of schools, for he believed that schooling was the key to Indian self-sufficiency. The 1868 treaty was a negotiation between Navajo leaders and federal officials for the return of the Navajo to their old lands in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. This treaty followed a brutal, failed experiment conducted by the government, which was meant to create a Navajo utopia of farming, education, and civilization in the New Mexico desert. Once back in their home territory, the tribe was promised sheep, staples, and schooling until the population became self-sufficient (Nies, 1996). As Kimball pointed out 80 years later, the Navajo people were still suffering in poverty, and the children had little access to education. The Navajo population included approximately 24,000 school-age children at that time. Over 19,000 were still without schools, and 75% of the Navajo population were still illiterate (Allen, 1998; Kimball, 1947).

The John family returned to the Avery farm in October of 1947 to harvest beets.

Helen immediately approached the Averys again for help, and again Golden Buchanan was called. Mr. Buchanan went to the fields to find Helen, hoping to visit with her about the situation. He related the following memory of the scene to Clarence R. Bishop in 1966.

You never saw a muddier girl. It was snowing and all the Indians had gone home except a few that were staying to dig out the remaining beets that were frozen in the snow. There were Helen, Helen's older sister Bertha, and Lois Begay. Bertha didn't speak English at all and Lois had been to school only one or two years. These three girls were living in a tent way out in the field in six to eight inches of snow. They were muddy as could be from the waist down. They were all three typical Indian girls with long hair. Mrs. Avery introduced me to the girls and we talked. Helen said, "I am just going to stay. I am not going home. I am going to get an education. (Bishop, 1967, p. 32)

According to Birch (1985), Buchanan was thoughtful and responded optimistically.

We can find someone to take this girl in and even dozens and hundreds and even more families will be willing to take in other Indians into their homes. They could live in LDS homes and be treated exactly as sons and daughters. Not only would they be trained in scholastic affairs in the schools, they would learn to keep house, tend to a family, learn to manage a house and a farm. The boys could learn to work on the farms and learn to operate modern machinery. If they live in the homes of Stake Presidents, Relief Society Presidents, bishops, and other leaders they could see the church at work and learn the blessings of service to God and fellow man. I can see them going on missions, attending and graduating from college. After all this training what an immense help they would be to their people! They would teach their own people by precept and example all they had learned from the Latter-day Saints. This ought to cut down the time it takes to restore this people to their former blessings by a generation or two. (p.125)

Buchanan wrote Kimball, and in 2 days, Kimball was standing on the Buchanans' doorstep asking them to take Helen into their home. Mrs. Buchanan, as related in an interview with Clarence Bishop, told Elder Kimball that it would not work because "I had never had a daughter and I never really liked Indians" (Bishop, 1967, p. 33). According to Birch, she continued, "Many of our friends just do not like the Indians and if we were



to take one of them into our home there would be no end to the cutting remarks” (Birch, 1985, p. 125). Their two unmarried sons were present. Thayne, the oldest, replied, “Being I’m going on my mission in a few weeks...if you want to keep her it’s okay with me” (p. 126). Dick, the younger son spoke up, “It isn’t okay with me. If you bring her here, just consider that I’m leaving because I won’t be teased and kidded about having an Indian sister” (p. 126). Despite concern about the neighbors and her sons’ attitudes, after a sleepless, prayerful night, Thelma agreed. Golden Buchanan commented to Clarence Bishop about the prevailing bigoted attitudes: “The [LDS] congregation wanted the Indians to work for them, but they did not want to do anything for them. They were too nice to have them ride in their cars” (Bishop, 1967, p. 31).

These attitudes are a primary concern of Mauss (2003), who found the changing Mormon conceptions of Indians worth noting. When located in the white LDS world, cleaned and cooperative, these dark-skinned people were Lamanites—mythic, childlike people of the *Book of Mormon*. The students involved in the program really were children, and that fit their Lamanite depiction as innocents. Identified as Lamanites, LDS people showed interest in the individuals and in their physical and spiritual well-being. Outside of the personal LDS world, covered in mud, laboring in the beet fields during the severest of weather, these people were savage Indians to be avoided or used for labor. Mauss is quick to point out, however, that the savage Indian identity concept was the one generally shared by most white Americans, in general, at the time.

Mauss’ (2003) discussion of the acceptableness of the Lamanite identity coincides with and can be applied to Lomawaima and McCarty’s (2006) “safety zone”

assimilation/acculturation theory discussed in Chapter I of this paper: Cultural differences perceived as dangerous needed to be eradicated. In this case, Native Americans were introduced to LDS families as a repackaged, safe product—complete with a name change, “Indian” to “Lamanite,” that further erased the American Indians’ cultural distinction.

The beginning attempts at building a relationship between Thelma Buchanan and Helen were difficult. After just a few days, Helen disappeared, taking her new clothes with her. The Buchanans assumed she had returned to the reservation. Wanting to live up to their agreements with Elder Kimball, Golden and Thelma arranged the placement of several other Navajo children who also wanted to attend school—all relatives of Helen. They took in a male teenager, Johnny Kaibetoni, who insisted on staying in Richfield even after his family returned to the reservation. The Buchanans reported to Clarence Bishop (1967) that this was an agreeable situation and that Johnny adjusted well.

A letter arrived from Helen in December. Birch (1985) quoted the contents:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Buchanan,

I had to leave your home because my family needed me to go to Enterprise to talk for them and help make arrangements to dig potatoes there. We are now snowed in here in Cedar City. The government bus will take my family and relatives back to Arizona as soon as the weather clears up which may be tomorrow. We are out of money. Could you send me a bus ticket to Richfield so I can come back to your home? Just send to me in care of the bus depot here.

Love, Helen (p. 127)

The Buchanans sent Helen a ticket. She arrived with two more Navaho girls who also wanted to go to school. Both spoke no English. The Buchanans believed the language barrier would be too difficult to overcome, and they sent the two girls back to

Arizona (Birch, 1985). This account conflicted with Clarence Bishop's (1967). He related that Helen brought three girls back, her sister Bertha, Lois Begay, and Garnet Lewis. Bertha decided to return home; Garnet went to live with the Augustus family; and Lois found a home with the Warner family. Both families lived in Richfield.

Johnny was placed with another family, and Helen began living with the Buchanans. Communication was difficult, and Helen would cry in her room from homesickness. All were committed to making the experience work, however. Though Helen was 18 and much older than the white girls in seventh grade, she was enrolled in junior high school as a seventh grader, and she was baptized a member of the LDS church. The following year, when Helen was 19, the Buchanans took in Helen's younger sister, Ruth. She had been in school, and though younger than Helen, was much farther advanced. She was placed in high school. This was too much for Helen's pride, and she dropped out of school (Bishop, 1967).

When Garnet, Lois, and Johnny Kaibitony returned again for their second year, others came as well: Helen's other sister Ruth, her cousin Regina Acothley, Pattie Lane, Carol Begay, and Rex Singer, all from Coppermine, Arizona. The children were coming faster than Golden Buchanan could arrange placements. He began to look to Miles Jensen in Gunnison, Utah, for help (Bishop, 1967).

It was Miles Jensen's responsibility as an employee of the Gunnison Sugar Company to recruit and coordinate migrant workers, many of whom were Indians. At a LDS Gunnison Stake Leadership meeting called for the specific purpose of discussing the needs of Indian children, Buchanan suggested the Jensens take one of the children into

their home. Miles Jensen related the following experience to Clarence Bishop in 1966:

Of course, we didn't know what kind of a student we would be getting.... We were told that most of them spoke very little English and had experienced practically no exposure to our way of life. However, he did make it clear that we were to accept the child that came and give her the family life and education we offered our own children.... (1967, p. 36)

Two weeks passed and no child arrived. A call to Buchanan determined that the intended placement had fallen through. The girls decided to remain with her parents; however, another girl would soon be there. When the Jensens went to the bus station, two girls got off, both asserting that they were assigned to the Jensen home. Jensen continued:

There was the girl who should have come originally and another who was sent as a substitute. We couldn't decide which one to keep because both seemed to be equally in need of assistance. They had neither clothes nor supplies other than what was on their backs and in their purses. We decided we couldn't choose so we took both of them. (Bishop, 1967, p. 36)

In April of 1951, Mr. Buchanan was appointed Mission President of the Southwest Indian Mission, leaving Mr. Jensen fully responsible for coordinating the placements.

During this period of program development, the Indian parents generally provided transportation to the home of the white foster parents. In some cases, the white families went to the reservation hogans and made arrangements for helping the children. According to Buchanan, placement was entirely an individual choice, and the LDS church gave no official, public approval of the program or offered any inducement to participate (Bishop, 1967).

It must be noted, however, that there was both pressure and inducement to

participate. In Mormon doctrine, obedience is essential to passing the mortal “test” on earth, obedience to God’s commandments, obedience to promptings of the spirit through prayer, and obedience and respect to those in positions of church leadership and authority. For example, if Kimball or Buchanan suggested that a child be placed into a home, the LDS family would most likely agree to the placement. In every case, the foster parents I interviewed agreed to participate after a direct request from a church authority. Most LDS foster fathers held significant leadership positions in the local church hierarchy, as well. These families were very aware of the *Book of Mormon* scripture and gospel teachings concerning the destiny of the Lamanites and the responsibility of the church members toward the Lamanite people. In essence, approval and rewards for their obedience and charity would come from Heaven.

Virtually no records were kept concerning the numbers and identities of students in those early years. Interviews conducted with Golden Buchanan, however, led Bishop (1967) to estimate the following: 1947–48: 3 participating; 1948-49: 9 participating; 1949-50: 21 participating; 1950-51: 30 participating; 1951-52: 40 participating; 1952-53: 55 participating; 1953-54: 68 participating (pp. 38-39).

James Allen (1998), an LDS church historian, asserted that these early beginnings reflect at least three significant aspects of the Indian Student Placement Program as it developed. First, he believes that from the perspective of the Navajo students involved, this was an opportunity, a way of breaking away from poverty and ignorance. For example, When Helen first approached the Averys and Buchanans, she desired to attend white schools; she viewed public schooling as an opportunity. Second, Willie John, a

Native American parent, initially reacted negatively—he worried about Helen losing her cultural connections and understandings. He worried about all that she would lose. Eventually this cultural loss becomes one of the strongest criticisms of the program, which will be discussed later. Third, from LDS perspectives, the motives of those who initiated the program were generally selfless (p. 92).

Golden Buchanan was called to the position of Coordinator of Indian Affairs for the LDS church, and his family relocated to Salt Lake City where Helen followed to enroll in beauty school. She fulfilled a mission for the LDS church and married a returned LDS missionary, Kenneth Hall. The Halls were the parents of four daughters. Helen remained an active member of the church until her death in 2003, at age 75 (Birch, 1985).

The only lengthy written records of Helen's perspective concerning the program were produced in two accounts, in 1985 and 2001; both transcribed by J. Neil Birch, both reflecting the beliefs, memories, and language of an "older," very assimilated Helen. One can not help but wonder more about what the 17-year-old Helen thought as she entered the white LDS world of the Buchanans.

Miles Jensen left his position with the sugar beet company and opened a bread franchise for Fisher Baking Company. In an interview with Clarence Bishop in 1966, he continued with the program's history:

Because of the fact that I had trucks going back and forth and up and down the highway from Salt Lake to Southern Utah, I was able to provide transportation for some of the students to their foster homes after they got off the bus in Gunnison. My wife would generally take the children home, give them a bath, something to eat and a good night sleep before they would go to their new homes. We had very little help from doctors, as we had no budget, so it fell to Mrs. Jensen, a registered nurse, to be sure the children were well enough to be placed. At that time most of the children who were coming were non-LDS. Immediately they began to study

the gospel and became acquainted with the Church. The foster parents were most considerate of the children, taking time to teach them of the Church and our culture to make the adjustment of the children easier. (Bishop, 1967, p. 39)

By the fall of 1951, the number of placements and the geographical spread of those participating became hard for Jensen to manage. Buchanan commented to Bishop:

Sometimes we would just put them on buses and call the people at the other end to tell them they were coming. They would meet the bus and report to us that the children had arrived safely. When it was time for them to return home in the spring they would call the mission office to tell us they were putting them on the bus and we would be there to meet the bus and take the children to their homes. (1967, p. 40)

#### 1954–1956: Sanction and Development

By the spring of 1954, the number of recorded placements had grown to sixty-eight students, and children were also being placed in Southern California, Idaho, and Oregon. Kimball, who had monitored the program closely and watched participation grow, periodically reported the expansion to church leaders. In July of 1954, when about 68 children were participating, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve voted to sanction the program, making it an official church program (Bishop, 1967).

The placement of Indian children in Utah homes was also being reported to the Utah State Department of Public Welfare. The program was without official legal sanction and existed without outside monitoring or accountability. John Farr Larson, director of the Bureau of Services for Children, corresponded with Belle S. Spafford, the General President of the LDS women's auxiliary, the Relief Society organization. The social service department of the organization did hold a state license at the time to place minor children in foster care and to facilitate child adoption services for LDS members.

In order to protect the program's legal status, Larson recommended that the placement program should be put under that social service/foster care umbrella, and henceforth, each child must be assigned a social worker and case manager. The Native American children would then become official foster children through the eyes of the state. Larson also suggested,

Community attitudes are also an important consideration. Ordinarily, children should be placed with foster parents having the same racial background. However, because of difficulties this department has experienced in attempting to place Indian children in Indian homes, we believe this principle cannot be adhered to if an appreciable number are placed. This emphasized the importance of selecting foster parents who will be able to accept and adjust to the racial and cultural differences. (Bishop, 1967, p. 45)

Nationally, there were difficult child welfare issues to address, and a crisis was brewing. It is important to see the placement program in that historic context. Mary Crow Dog (1990) commented on that past and present difficulty.

Many Indian children are placed in [white] foster homes. This happens even in cases where parents or grandparents are willing and able to take care of them, but where the social workers say their homes are substandard, or where there are outhouses instead of flush toilets, or where the family is simply "too poor" ...so the kids are given to *wasicun* [white] strangers to be "acculturated in a sanitary environment." We are losing the coming generation that way.... (p. 17)

Byler's (1977) comments add detail:

In 16 states surveyed in 1969, approximately 85% of all Indian children in foster care were living in non-Indian homes.... 99% of the cases were argued on such vague grounds as neglect and social deprivation.... Indian communities are often shocked to learn that parents they regard as excellent care-givers have been judged unfit by non-Indian social workers. In judging the fitness of a particular family, many social workers, ignorant of Indian cultural values and social norms, make decisions that are totally inappropriate in the context of Indian family life and so they frequently discover neglect or abandonment where none exists. (pp. 2-3)

At that same time, 90% of the BIA school population on the Navajo Reservation



in grades K-12, lived at boarding schools. Byler (1977) termed this situation, the mass removal of children from their families, “an Indian child-welfare crisis” (p. 2). This paralleled federal policy, stated Byler, since “the main thrust of federal policy since the close of the Indian wars has been to break up the extended family, the clan structure, to detribalize and assimilate Indian populations” (p. 7).

It may seem odd that the Indian Student Placement Program, a program of assimilation, would start to grow during a time when self-determination was a growing concern among minority communities. It was, however, an alternative to boarding schools and government mandated foster situations, and it eased the limited access to reservation day schools. Also, the timing of the program coincided with the then-current, federal child-welfare policies and trends. Under that umbrella, the program might be considered a contributing part of the “Indian child-welfare crisis.”

There were already plans for 253 children to be placed the upcoming fall in comparison to the 68 placed in 1954. A series of organization meetings were held to set up goals, protocols, guidelines, recordkeeping procedures, and report forms. Richfield would serve as an incoming processing center. Both foster homes and the students would need a screening process. In July of 1954, the following general regulations, rules necessary for church accountability and control, were approved. The first tenet became of utmost importance, and its passing accomplished more than one thing: It was thought that the likelihood of a common cultural ground, albeit a religious culture, would lessen foster adjustments, and the church would further its *Book of Mormon* directed mission of baptizing Lamanites into the LDS fold. Hence,

1. The child must be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. A physical examination must be given each child before placement to make sure the child is not infected with tuberculosis, venereal disease or other illnesses which might endanger family members in the boarding home.
3. The child is to be of school age; in other words it is not to be under six years of age.
4. Legal consent for placement, signed by natural parents and witnessed by the mission president must be obtained before placement is made.
5. Special consideration should be given to children who have some knowledge of the English language. (Bishop, 1967, p. 48)

Getting the Richfield reception center up and running was another challenge. For several days in late August, an average of 60 children per day were bussed to the center for processing. Beginning at 6:00 a.m., the children were given breakfast, a shower, an x-ray, and a hair treatment for lice. An orientation program was prepared for the children and for the foster parents who would travel to Richfield to pick them up.

The somewhat idealized account of child processing was offered by Spencer W. Kimball (Bishop, 1967). Though lengthy, it is helpful to “hear” Kimball’s perspective as he explains the procedures.

Just a few hours and the buses are in Richfield, Utah. The kindly chaperon has kept them happy and looked after every need. It is very early in the morning at the reception center, but it is already a hive of industry and keen expectancy is in the air. Sevier Stake becomes the host, and the stake presidency, members of the priesthood and the Relief Society sisters are waiting. There is a smell of bacon in the air, and the young redskins, some of whom have been here before, file out of the buses and into the church dining room for bacon, eggs, milk, fruit, and cereal, prepared kindly by the Relief Society.

Soon breakfast is over. The processing is begun. Tenderly the women take the girls in one building and understanding priesthood brethren the boys in another, where they are bathed and shampooed and made ready for the clinic. The food, soap, shampoo and other things are furnished free by the church. All who assist are volunteer workers, doing this like all other of their church work, without remuneration. Six hundred towels are furnished free by a generous linen company, typical of many other contributions. The children line up for the clinic

where several physicians, employed by the United States Health Service, senior medical students, technicians, and several nurses loaned by the Utah State Health Department will go to work. The little folks' chests are x-rayed; their hearts, eyes, skin, ears, teeth, and temperatures are checked and a complete record made. Their fears are quieted by sweet, sympathetic women when tears of unhappiness follow the needle-jabbing of immunization and the blood test. They come to know this is for their good. Lunch time comes, and another appetizing [sic] meal is enjoyed from welfare supplies. There is some rest and supervised play and a movie.

Then come the foster families, hundreds of them, from all over Utah. Unpaid families whose only desire is to unselfishly provide for the child and to "mother" and "father" him and train and guide him [sic]. They are driving from Kanab and Salt Lake City; from Moroni and Escalante; from Saint George and the Uintah basin—unselfish families anticipating the new arrival to their family. There are stake presidents, bishops, mayors, editors, doctors, farmers—the finest people in the communities of Utah and of the world—each family to receive for the school term an Indian child accepted by the members to become a real part of the family. The white children present, excitedly speculate as to which of the Indian youngsters, so hungrily eating luncheon, is to be their new brother or sister. In the stake tabernacle films are being shown on Indian culture and a talk is given on the part that each is to play in this glorious human drama. Four days of this processing follows. (pp. 50- 51)

George P. Lee (1987), a LDS church authority and student participant, provided another perspective of recruitment and processing into the Indian Placement Program:

When the Bloomfields moved to Mancos Creek, they resumed missionary efforts among the...families that lived close to the trading post....

"Father, it's the Bloomfield Mormons again!"

"Quick, son, tell all your brothers and sisters to run over the hill to hide. Tell them the Mormons are coming again. Hurry up before we get caught here and have to listen to more white man's religion!"

We scurried over the hill near our Hogan. We must have looked like a bevy of frightened quail. The children's legs really churned the dust, and their black, unkempt hair flowed behind them like wild ponies' manes....

Afterward, when their first attempts failed, they began leaving food to get our trust....

Mr. Bloomfield began to bear his testimony, "This church and the *Book of Mormon* we've been telling you about is true. By the spirit, we know it is. Jesus

Christ is real, and He is looking over your family under the direction of his father, whom you call the Great Spirit. This same Jesus, the Son of God, has inspired our church leaders to begin a program whereby your children can go live with Anglo Families and attend excellent schools in Utah. It is called the 'Indian Placement Program.'”

...George and Lucy [Bloomfield] were certain that I and one of my cousins should take advantage of this opportunity. My close friend and cousin, Roger Lee, who was staying with us at the time, was invited to go too. Roger was one year younger than I was.... My parents were confused. This placement program was something so new and foreign.... It soon sank into my parents' minds that they would be sending one of their much-loved children hundreds of miles away from home, that he or she would attend a strange school and live with an Anglo Mormon foster family they had never seen.... Finally, after a lengthy pause, Father and Mother looked at Brother Bloomfield and nodded their heads in approval. Both Roger and I would be going....

All I had was what was on my back—a frayed pair of Levi's, a dirty, ragged T-shirt, and worn tennis shoes. My hair hung down to my shoulders. Roger did not look any better....

I cried as we drove southward. It was sad to leave my family with no work, food, or clothing...with no relatives to turn to. My only solace was my faith in the Bloomfields.... As we drove to Shiprock, I was uncomfortable and restless.... We passed my family's summer Hogan. I saw a dim, lonely light coming from the open doorway. I thought of my brother, Bob, who had stayed home to look after the sheep while the rest of us searched for work....

After what seemed like hours, we arrived at Shiprock. We went straight to the missionaries' quarters where Brother Bloomfield put a bowl on our heads and gave us quick haircuts. We were then given a quick bite to eat, and we rushed over to where the bus was waiting.... Many Indian families had gathered to see their children off to Utah. I thought I was coming to a funeral. The parents, especially the mothers, were weeping and trying to say good-bye.... The huge bus slowly began to move out. The sobs increased, and it seemed like there was not a dry eye on the bus—even the driver was sniffing. I could not stop crying and I wanted to get out....

Brother Bloomfield's words kept coming back to my mind: “God will be with you, and all will be well.” At that time I really did not know God very well. I had been baptized just that summer and had not been taught the gospel except in Primary and Sunday School classes. I was steeped in Indian tradition and understood little about the gospel and the church. Like my parents, I put all my faith in the Bloomfields.

As the bus was leaving, one girl my age ran to the front and desperately tried to open the locked doors. She cried bitter tears and beckoned her parents from the window in pleading Navajo.... With my cousin, Roger, beside me, I had a little more security. At least I knew someone. We cried together in silence.... Roger and I looked at each other with tears streaming down our cheeks, and away we went into the night.... The sobbing children and their sniffing noses made a fog inside the bus.... As the bus drove by our hogan, both Roger and I collapsed... My little brother, Bob was in that hogan, all alone. He did not even know we were on the bus. Tears rolled down into my outstretched mouth. Bob. How I would miss him...there he obediently slept in our Hogan....

Before the sun moved into midmorning position, our bus arrived in Richfield, Utah.... I had never seen so many white men. A short man strode around giving commands to everyone...I was told he was Miles Jensen.... “Okay, kids, its time to meet the doctors,” he warned as he started walking down the aisle.... Everyone followed Brother Jensen into the Richfield tabernacle like lonesome puppies....

The first thing I learned about the Mormons in Utah is that the women could sure cook! Things were not beginning so badly after all—at least until our names were called off to meet the doctors.... The rumors of shots traveled rapidly among the children. We grew very silent as we watched the first few victims leave to be fixed up by some Anglo doctor... The tuberculin shots didn’t really hurt at all; they went just barely under the skin. After that, we had lice checks, showers, blood tests, haircuts. I couldn’t believe the fistful of lice that was extracted from my hair....

After the medical examinations were over, we were given a...lunch and then led in play and fun activities designed to keep our attention while the foster parents arrived to take us to our new homes. After the foster parents had arrived, they attended an orientation meeting in which they were given advice, direction, and encouragement about being foster parents of an Indian child. Elder Spencer W. Kimball spoke to the gathering of foster parents, and the Indian children were brought in to listen.... [He] began by telling the audience of his great love for the Lamanite people, the Indians and their cousins. He commended the foster parents for their contribution to the great work. He blessed the congregation and asked the Lord’s blessings upon all the missionaries sent to the Lamanite people. He also asked the Lord to help all church members to be nursing parents to the Lamanites. Finally, he asked the Lord to bless the Lamanite people, saying that the Lamanites were a great people, intelligent and receptive to things of the Spirit. Elder Kimball said the difference between Lamanites and those sitting in the audience was opportunity. Through education, employment, and other means, the Church could assist in the development of the Indian people....

The foster parents were ushered into the room where we waited. The name of the

child was called; a brief...introduction was made; and then the family, along with the new addition, retrieved the student's luggage and left for home....

Usually the child was nearly petrified by...responses on the part of tearful Anglo parents. This affection from white strangers was new, and they did not know what to do. Nothing like this was done at home. Back home, the white man and the Indians related to each other at a distance. Each lived in his own separate world....

As each name was called, that individual found it very difficult to leave whomever he had come with—sister, brother, relative, or friend. Many just sat there, refusing to move until those whose names had not been called persuaded them to go. Others cried uncontrollably. Through the windows, I saw some of the students drive off with their newly acquired foster families. One girl was framed in the car's rear window. I will never forget the picture of her sobbing into the palms of her hands....

After Roger left, I wept in my loneliness. Most of the children were now gone. Alone and forlorn, I sat in the lounge area.... A volunteer came toward me with two adults and a child.

“George,” the volunteer said, “this is your foster family, Brother and Sister Glen Harker. And this little one is your new brother, Michael.” Joan Harker embraced me and tenderly placed a kiss on my tear stained cheek. I just looked at the floor. A flood of emotion swept through me. I had never been kissed before. It was embarrassing....

On the way to Orem, where the Harkers lived, I didn't say a word. From Richfield to Orem, it was about a three hour drive....

“Hey George, where is your war paint?” asked little Michael. “Don't you have any bows and arrows...how come you've got shoes on . . . where are those moccasins Indians are supposed to wear...you're not supposed to have on a shirt or pants either...where are your feathers...are you really an Indian?” I just stared out the window and thought of home. I wondered what Nellie, Mike, Joe, and the rest of my brothers and sisters were doing....

We spent several hours shopping.... In one store, the Harkers thought it would be nice to dress me as a cowboy. They purchased western shirts, pants, a big ten-gallon hat, sharp-toes boots, spurs, and two silver six-shooter cap pistols with the Hop-a-Long Cassidy holsters. Michael convinced his parents that I should wear the outfit home. I did not know it was popular to play cowboys and Indians among the white kids....

I had just opened the car door and placed my spurred boot in the driveway, when

the front door of the Harker home was flung open. It was Brent, Joan Harker's brother. His freckled face was covered with layers of war paint. An Indian war bonnet sat on his head. He carried a skinny bow in one hand and an arrow tipped with a red-rubber suction cup in the other. He looked like an Indian in full regalia. Somehow I felt ambushed. (pp. 100-122)

This was the age of Hollywood "Westerns." Berkhofer (1978) reminded us that "Indian" was a white invention, a concept that still persists as a white image or stereotype. This stereotype denies the social, linguistic, and cultural differences among the peoples so labeled and provides an identity, a packaged Hollywood product, that is easier to understand and is, thus, less threatening. He continued:

The Indian was generally depicted as a person of little culture and less language. Speaking how! and ugh! dialog and wearing combination, if not phony, tribal dress. Whites and Asians frequently acted the Indian leading parts, and those Native Americans hired for background action had to play any tribe because all Indians looked alike to movie and television directors. (p. 102)

And to the Harkers—the above depiction is thought-provoking: Were the Harkers trying to find a way to understand and relate to this Native American child? Critiquing this through Lomawaima and McCarty's (2006) "safety zone" theory, did they feel they had to repackage George into a safer form, a cowboy, in order to bring him into their home?

Berkhofer (1978) also reminded us that in the Westerns, White civilization prevailed: "The Indian either posed an immediate threat to the [White] hero who then wiped him out or he vanished shortly before the advance of civilization when it finally came in all its fullness" (p. 98). Certainly, that comment can be viewed literally or figuratively. Assimilation was less bloody.

Bill Brown, a counselor and social worker for the LDS church in Logan, Utah,

participated in similar scenes at a Logan Stake reception center used to process Indian students coming to Cache Valley. He stated that, though the church volunteers and professionals tried to be gentle with the children, the event was traumatic. The prevailing sadness and fear of the children affected him, too. He was glad when the church stopped the processing center practice in Logan and other areas in about 1984. After that time, according to Brown, social workers, missionaries, foster and natural families, and the church organizations in general, divided the responsibility of screening and preparing the children in more private and individual ways (personal interview, October 15, 2006).

When the church assumed responsibility for the placement of the Indian students, it meant that students could only be placed in Utah where the program would be protected by state-issued social service licenses. Consequently, the Indian students in California, Idaho, and Oregon could not currently be church sponsored. These students needed to be transferred to families in Utah or not participate in the church's program. This caused a dip in enrollment for the 1954-55 school year. The increased enrollment of 253 students planned for the coming year made it necessary to seek foster families from a larger Utah area, not just primarily from central and southern Utah (Bishop, 1967).

In all cases, the former foster parents I have spoken to in the Cache Valley area said the stake and ward church leaders solicited their participation from the pulpit or they were asked directly by a church authority. Later, I also witnessed stake and ward leaders ask for member participation from the pulpit. The leaders themselves were also asked to participate. My husband and I were called into a small-group meeting with the Bishopric and Stake Presidency along with several other young families in our ward. We were



presented information concerning the program and asked if we would take Indian children into our homes to rear with our own children. Because of pressing financial concerns at that time, we felt unable to participate.

Definitions are needed in order to understand my organization and location descriptions. Church membership is divided geographically, generally according to the capacity of local church facilities, or in some cases because of geographical features affecting travel. States are divided into regions or districts; regions are divided into stakes; stakes are divided into wards. Usually one-to-three wards occupy a single church house. Generally no more than twelve wards constitute a stake. Stake presidents preside over stakes; bishops preside over individual wards. Most members, then, belong to a stake and a ward (or “branch” in the mission field). All areas of the United States, plus international regions, are also divided into missions. A new missionary might be called to work in areas such as the Central States Mission, the Southwest Indian Mission, or the Finland-Helsinki mission. In similar fashion, LDS Church caseworkers are assigned to particular geographical areas where in particular families and children become their responsibility. To help organize placement program operations, for example, in 1956, it was decided that only children from the Southwest Indian Mission area be accepted into the program at that time (Bishop, 1967).

#### 1957–1961: Problems and Program Refinement

A number of government agencies, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the U.S. Children’s Bureau, started receiving complaints about the Placement

Service. In 1956, for example, the Phoenix BIA office received negative reports from the Hualapai Indians in Northern Arizona charging that the Mormon church was holding mass baptisms on the reservations. According to those opposed to the LDS proselytizing and program recruiting activities, the church was destroying family relationships, depriving parents of the right of caring for and teaching their children, employing poor casework practices, and removing children from the community—the best and brightest children—when there were adequate educational opportunities on the reservation (Allen, 1998; Gottlieb & Wiley, 1986).

It was asserted that the church was using the program to increase baptisms. That observation was not surprising. One of the main purposes of the program was to “save” the Lamanites, both spiritually and physically. The reality of living in an LDS home included church indoctrination for all the children in the household.

The church already knew, however, that baptism did not mean conversion. Some Native American families who were baptized to qualify their children for the program did nothing more to become familiar with church doctrine or participate in LDS programs. A former placement student who later served on a reservation as a missionary said that missionaries did baptize children, knowing that they were being baptized to make them eligible. “As a result,” he commented, “a lot of the kids who were on Placement would go home and [not] have anything to do with the church.... We run into a lot of them even now that say, ‘Oh, I used to be LDS’.”

In 1957, at a contentious meeting in Kanab with a number of government agencies, several church representatives worked to dispel what they felt were mostly

rumors and misunderstandings. The following changes were recommended at the conclusion of the meeting for all.

- a. Greater effort should be made to keep in touch with the representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, so they will better understand the placement program and its objectives. Future meetings with the reservation caseworker and representatives of the Arizona State Department of Public Welfare would be helpful.
- b. Plans for evaluating the results of the program should be developed and a frequent evaluation program should take place to determine if the objectives are being met.
- c. Greater care should be exercised to accept only children of school age and to follow other directives given by the First Presidency.
- d. The present method of accepting releases from natural parents should be reviewed and unapproved practices corrected.
- e. Further consideration should be given to the basis upon which Indian children are accepted.
- f. Indian students must return to their natural parents during the summer months and also at the time their schooling is completed. Great care should be exercised to deal with children in such a way that the adjustment to the natural home will not be too difficult. (Bishop, 1967, pp. 58-63)

The meeting prompted the recognition that as long as the mission president and missionaries—people whose church-jobs were to proselyte and baptize—were selecting children for the program, the pressure for baptism would continue to be felt. It was decided that the LDS caseworkers would travel to the reservation and interview children and families as to their qualifications to participate in the program and that student selection would be a staff decision. The caseworkers would confirm that the Indian parents were already members of the church and that the children were participating in the program with complete knowledge and consent of their parents. Additionally, each LDS foster home would be investigated by the caseworkers to certify that they were

living the standards of the church (Bishop, 1967).

A follow-up meeting was held a year later, in 1958. The main outcome of this meeting was to determine that children should be at least 8 years old before participating. Eight is considered the age of accountability, baptismal age, by the church, and baptism would occur before placement; the children were more independent at eight; and observable school/learning abilities were emerging by then. Justification for placing a younger child could be heard if needed (Bishop, 1967).

The experiences leading to the Kanab meetings reinforced to the church's Indian Committee that the program's scope and size should grow in pace with its refinement of practice and policy. This new caution resulted in a slower growth rate from 1957-1962. The data in Table 1 reviews and compares figures of the approximate participation rate since 1947. The numbers were reported by Clarence Bishop in his 1967 thesis, which he retrieved from placement files in Salt Lake.

In January of 1957, the problem of "inter-dating" between the Indian children and their non-Indian friends was brought to the attention of the Indian Committee. It was a

Table 1

*Participation Rate by Year (1947-1962)*

Year	# of participants	Year	# of participants	Year	# of participants
1947-48	3	1952-53	55	1957-58	307
1948-49	9	1953-54	68	1958-59	339
1949-50	21	1954-55	68	1959-60	365
1950-51	30	1955-56	253	1960-61	418
1951-52	40	1956-57	242	1961-62	423

concern that this dating would eventually result in interracial marriage, and it was “suspected that neither natural nor foster parents would be happy with this situation” (Bishop, 1967, p. 70). It was determined that interracial dating would be less likely if there were more opportunities for the Indian students to socialize with each other. In response, caseworkers expanded their recreation programs for the placement students, particularly the teenage students.

In general, segregation and interracial marriage were sensitive issues of the time. Logically, intermarriage would be an effective way of assimilating Native Americans into white society and the LDS church. Even 10 years later, McConkie (1966) wrote:

[I]n a broad general sense, caste systems have their root and origin in the gospel itself, and when they operate according to the divine decree, the resultant restrictions and segregation are right and proper and have the approval of the Lord. To illustrate: Cain, Ham, and the whole negro race have been cursed with a black skin, the mark of Cain, so they can be identified as a caste apart, a people with whom the other descendants of Adam should not intermarry (Gen.4; Moses 5.). The whole house of Israel was chosen as a peculiar people, one set apart from all other nations (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2); and they were forbidden to marry outside their own caste (Es. 34:10-17; Deut 7:1-5). In effect the Lamanites belonged to one caste and the Nephites to another, and a mark was put upon the Lamanites to keep the Nephites from intermixing with and marry them (Alma 3:6-11). (p. 114)

There is an interesting tension between the disapproval of interracial marriage, of two adults of different races becoming a family, and the approval of fostering Lamanite children to be reared as members of the family. LDS verbiage does not treat them as visitors. Why, then, are children different? According to the quote below, it is about “expedience.” Kimball (1982) wrote:

When I said that you must teach your people to overcome their prejudices and accept the Indians, I did not mean that you would encourage intermarriage. I mean that they should be brothers, to worship together and to work together and

to play together, but we must discourage intermarriage, not because it is a sin. I would like to make this very emphatic.... But it is not expedient.... The divorces increase constantly, even where the spouses have the same general background of race, religion, finances, education, and otherwise.” (p. 302)

In 1957, partially in response to accusations that the program was alienating students from their Indian families and that the church was aware of a lack of church and foster family communication with the natural families and Indian tribes, the Indian Committee instructed the caseworkers to make sure that all of the foster students and foster families were writing and sending pictures to their families on the reservations. Not surprisingly, they were also instructed not to expect any responses, since most of the Indian families did not read or write in English or their native languages (Bishop, 1967).

In 1960, the caseworkers systematically “covered” the reservation, meeting with the parents individually and in small groups. The main objectives were to “maintain communication with them, learn how they felt about what was going on, and report to them on the progress and achievement of their child” (Bishop, 1967, p. 72). The church Information Service and the program staff also began showing public relation slide-show presentations at the annual Navajo Tribal Fair held in Window Rock, Arizona. In 1960, an informational public relations film was produced by BYU, entitled, “Upon Their Shoulders.” Though aired nationally, it was produced mostly for the Navajo Nation.

The first program handbook was published in 1959, entitled *Handbook of the LDS Relief Society Social Service and Child Welfare*. It spelled out the requirements of foster parents; placements processes; services to foster parents, natural parents and students; requirements of student applications; provisions for continued participation in the program for both students and foster parents; and the responsibilities of the natural

parents (Bishop, 1967).

Through a concentrated effort led by LDS congressmen, a tax exemption was passed for foster parents in 1959. After January 1, 1960, the amendment allowed the foster parents a charitable contribution deduction for amounts paid to sustain the students in their homes (Bishop, 1967).

The reception center processes and practices continued to be honed throughout the latter 1950s and early 1960s. Arrangements for expensive or extensive dental work were made with the Intermountain Indian School in Brigham City. Serious medical problems of children under the age of 13 were referred to Primary Children's Hospital and those over 13 were referred to the Crippled Children's Service (Utah Department of Human Services), both located in Salt Lake City. By 1960, the reception center was moved farther north from Richfield to BYU's campus in Provo (Bishop, 1967).

By 1961-62, the placement students represented 13 tribes from the Southwest and a small number of Sioux and Assinboine from the northern Indian tribes. Approximately 43% were males and 57% were females. Caseworkers handled just over 70 students each for that school year (Bishop, 1967).

#### 1962–1967: Expansion

Even after the church worked to answer criticism and improve public relations, the civil rights concerns of the 1960s continued to frame the program's efforts. At that time, nationally, at least 25% of all Indian children were either in foster homes, adoptive homes, or in government boarding schools. That situation became a constant point of

discussion and criticism at the meetings of Indian organizations. A recurring charge was that LDS missionaries were enticing young children by contrasting the material benefits of living in a middle class Mormon home with the poverty on the reservation. As mentioned, others argued the program was taking the best Indian students away from their communities, thus draining the reservation of its most valuable resource. Mormons were criticized for practices believed to be hypocritical—for separating children from their families when they asserted that they stood for family values and unity. Perhaps the loudest protest concerned the intense assimilation-type indoctrination experienced in LDS homes. Native Americans charged that it left their children in potentially destructive cultural limbo (Gottlieb & Wiley, 1986).

Despite the pointed criticism, the program experienced rapid expansion. Not only was the Utah agency to see growth the next few years, but consideration was given to other states, as well. In 1962, students were placed in Arizona; in 1963, students from the reservations in the north and northwest began to participate; in 1964, the first Canadian students were placed in Canadian homes; in 1965, the program moved into Idaho; in 1966, students from Oklahoma were given the opportunity to participate; and in 1967, plans were being made to place students in Washington and Georgia, and students were to come for the first time from Alaska and North Carolina. Reception/processing centers were established for each state as it began participation. In 1966, the Provo center was decentralized and divided into three sites: Provo, Ogden, and Richfield. By 1966-67, there were only 19 caseworkers and 1,569 students—approximately 85.5 students per load. The student breakdown by state is shown in Table 2. In 5 years (1962 to 1967),



Table 2

*Student Breakdown by State*

Year	Total N	Utah	Arizona	Canada	Idaho
1962-63	514	460	54		
1963-64	570	490	72		
1964-65	978	809	162	7	
1965-66	1,359	978	221	48	103
1966-67	1,569	1,000	293	93	183

Table 3

*Demographics of Students Enrolled in the Program*

Tribe	# of participants	Tribe	# of participants	Tribe	# of participants
Acoma	7	Crow-Gros Ventre	1	Peigan	13
Ahouset	6	Gros Ventre	12	Pima	24
Apache	58	Guillayuet	4	Rosebud Sioux	57
Apache-Mexican	1	Haida	13	Santee	2
Arapahoe	2	Hedista-Mandan	1	Sechart	1
Assiniboine	18	Hopi	51	Shoshone	14
Assiniboine-Soux	7	Hualapai	19	Shulus	3
Blackfoot	13	Kiowa	3	Sioux	57
Blood	30	Kiowa-Caddo	1	Sioux-Cheyenne	1
Cayuse	3	Kwaguti	3	Snohomish	2
Cayuse-WallaWalla	2	Laguna	10	Spanish-American	2
Cheyenne	24	Laguna-Zia	2	Stony	6
Chippewa	16	Lummi	2	Supai	3
Chippewa-Cree-Assiniboine	3	Muckleshoot	2	Tewa	5
Chippewa-Sioux	2	Navajo	1,002	Tulalip	2
Choctaw	2	Okangan	1	Uintah-Ouray	11
Choctaw-Ponca	1	Oglala-Sioux	4	Wichita-Cheyenne	1
Coldwater Band	3	Omaha	12	Winnebago	7
Cree	1	Opetchesaht	1	Yakima	3
Crow	31	Paiute	20	Zuni	9
Crow-Cheyenne	2	Papago	3		

participation grew approximately 305%, with Utah contributing the most students (Bishop, 1967, p. 95).

The demographics for the 1,569 students enrolled for the 1966–67 school year indicated participation from 62 tribes (see Table 3). As shown, although there was great tribal diversity, 64% of all student participants were Navajo.

The program continued to expand (see Table 4). From 1967 to 1971, a 4-year span, there was another 237% rise in participation; however, growth finally peaked during the 1970-1971 school year (Taylor, 1981, p. 86).

For the next 10 years, from 1970 to 1980, program enrollment dropped to pre-1968 levels. Several factors account for this, which is discussed further at the end of this chapter. They include enforcement of public school nonresident tuition fees, a greater social and political movement toward Native American self-determination, tribal resistance and concerns over assimilation issues, church foci on other arenas of missionary effort, and greater educational opportunity on or near the reservations (Taylor, 1981).

Table 4

*Participation Rate by Year (1967-1980)*

Year	# of participants	Year	# of participants	Year	# of participants
1967-68	2,147	1972-73	3,833	1976-77	2,697
1968-69	3,132	1973-74	2,917	1977-78	2,563
1969-70	4,467	1974-75	2,350	1978-79	2,747
1970-71	4,997	1975-76	2,298	1979-80	2,852
1971-72	4,730				

Public History: 1965-1982 -LDS Orientation and  
Public Relations Materials

Starting in 1965, in order to soften the initial cultural impact for the new foster parents, the foster parent orientation was expanded into six meetings and conducted in smaller group settings. The meetings were comprised of activities such as lectures, panels, discussion groups, and movies. Topics such as Indian culture, family strengths and weaknesses, the student participant and his or her responsibilities, personal cleanliness, initial adjustment, and the program's policies and procedures were discussed (Bishop, 1967). When interviewing Bill Brown, an LDS social worker, I asked if any of these materials might still be accessible. He said many of the "talks" were created by those asked to deliver them. He knew the local files (Logan, Utah) had been discarded long ago—once passed from the church reception center to his office—because they were considered outdated and no longer useful. I believe these dated materials could provide insight to LDS beliefs concerning assimilation, and the depictions of Indian culture might prove interesting (personal interview, October 15, 2006).

Also at this time, a series of pamphlets, brochures, and booklets were also produced by the church to better prepare the foster students, the foster parents, and the natural parents. A "public history" of the Indian Student Placement Program can be followed through these printed materials. An early *Foster Parent Guide* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965) guide provided a snapshot of the program at that point in time by mentioning the current program advisors (Spencer W. Kimball, LeGrande Richards, and Boyd K. Packer) and coordinating committee (Belle S. Spafford, Marianne

C. Sharp, and Louise W. Madsen). Participating states and areas were also mentioned: Utah, Arizona, Idaho, and the Alberta province in Canada. The preface, authored by Clarence R. Bishop, Program Director, stressed that “fully licensed church agencies for child placement” oversaw the activities, but the participants were reminded that this program was, ultimately, “Heavenly Father’s program” and that “fasting and supplication to the Lord combined with determination [would] make His program successful” (p. i).

The goals of the placement program were stated explicitly: “The objective of the program is to provide educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities in non-Indian community life for Latter-day Saint Indian children” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965, p. 2). The guide’s message continued,

It is felt that through the exemplary living of selected Latter-day Saint families, these Indian youth will be motivated to use their experiences now and later for the benefit of themselves and their people. These experiences may provide a springboard to positions of great leadership for some students, for others they will be a means for becoming stronger, more adequate parents to their own children. In any case, the experiences of the Indian child in the foster home can provide a bulwark of intellectual and moral values which will assist him to meet the challenges of his life.... It is recognized that immediate conditions of poverty and deprivation of individual children may be relieved as a result of some placements. However, it should be understood that long-term educational goals leading to the general development of Indian people for generations yet unborn cannot be sacrificed in the interest of immediate welfare assistance.... The Indian student placed in your home has earned the opportunity to participate in the Placement Program. He, with others, has been selected from many applicants. He has been selected on the basis of academic achievement, religious attitudes, and social adjustment. As a group, the Placement Program students are the outstanding Indian children in the tribes from which they come. (p. 2)

Certainly, it is recognizable that this was written before language evolved to reflect more gender-sensitive times. The before-mentioned attitude of deficit is also clear. The educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities that are spoken of are white

LDS educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities. The assumption is there that Anglo LDS parents appropriately educated their foster children, instilling in them superior intellectual and moral values and providing a model for parenting roles and responsibilities.

It is not clear how the chosen students “earned the opportunity to participate in the Placement Program,” but clearly the placement program students were the outstanding Indian children academically, religiously, and socially in their tribes. Indian leaders have charged, as already mentioned, that the very best of their children were recruited, and the “culls” were left behind (p. 2).

The *Foster Parent Guide* mentioned the roles and responsibilities of those involved and talked the foster parents through the “first 60 days” and longer. Anxiety felt by the student was acknowledged.

Foster home placement is an anxiety-producing event even for returning students, and often the student is under greater emotional stress than he shows.... It may be well to schedule frequent friendly discussions with him alone about the rules and patterns of your family life. This can save many moments of anxiety and eliminate disciplinary problems.... It should be remembered that often the thoughts and frustrations experienced by the Indian child are due to his own personal conflicts. Such feelings as his self importance, his attitudes toward Indians and non-Indians, his ability to live a good life, his acceptance by others, etc., may often be anxiety producing.... Each student will react differently to pressures and conflicts with which he is struggling. He may be inconsistent, over-active, or under-active. He may tell unbelievable stories about his home, use shocking words, eat poorly, or strike other children. He may be afraid to play with other children, threaten to run away, lie, steal, wet the bed, or in some other way express his confusion and emotional strain. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970, pp. 7-9)

A short section on “cultural implications” was meant to help the new foster parents better understand Indian culture. This section stated:

Many aging and a few younger Indians attempt to carry on the religious customs of their fathers; however, in varying degrees the younger generations are seeing these religious events merely as recreational activities. Thus, many are caught in a world which today is neither white nor Indian. (p. 9)

Reading that above sections now at this place and time is unsettling. The psychological manifestations of separation-related confusion and grief were deemed short-lived and “personal.” There was no program ownership of these issues, and the cure was to “schedule frequent friendly discussions with him alone about the rules and patterns of your family life.” (p. 8). In Byler’s (1977) report on the destruction of American Indian families, he asserts that Indian “children separated from their parents may suffer such severe distress that it interferes with their physical, mental, and social growth and development” and that Indian children who commit suicide have usually “lived with a number of ineffective or inappropriate parental substitutes because of family disruption” (pp. 8-9)

The Native American culture was also trivialized in the *Foster Parent Guide*— “younger generations are seeing these religious events merely as recreational activities” — and no ownership of causing children to be “caught in a world that is neither white nor Indian” was mentioned (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965, p. 9).

Similar conclusions and descriptions are made while discussing what Native American people think and feel. One bit of irony, again, stands out because of the intense “brother’s keeper” attitude of the LDS church toward the “Lamanites”:

In Indian society, interference of any form is forbidden, regardless of the folly [of the person’s action]. Consequently, when the whiteman is motivated as his brother’s keeper, he rarely says or does anything that does not sound rude or even hostile to the latter. Ironically, when this situation occurs, the Indian cannot tell the whiteman his feelings because that, in itself, would be interference with the

whiteman's freedom to act as he sees fit. (p. 12)

In 1970, this same booklet was reissued with the newer date/year; however, the contents remained essentially the same. Between 1970 and 1980, the LDS Social Services issued another *Foster Parent Guide* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980). The format changed, then appearing computer-generated instead of typewritten. Much of the content remained the same as the 1965 and 1970 issues, though it was honed to avoid wordiness. A little more information about Native American culture was added, as were a few more endorsement quotes attributed to LDS general authorities.

*A Natural Parent Guide* was printed by the church in 1968 (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968). It stated that the object of the program is "to make it possible for Latter-day Saint Indian children educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities" (p. 1). To participate in the program, applicants

must be at least eight years of age and baptized members of the church...must be in physically good health, capable of participating in a normal home and school situation...must be receiving average grades in school...must be comparatively free from emotional disturbances...must demonstrate their desire to participate in the program. (p. 2)

It was made clear that the students were expected to stay the full year, and not return home for Christmas. However,

the student and his parents should do their utmost to maintain close family ties. This can be accomplished through letters, pictures, cards, or other communication.... Natural parents should not call their children too frequently as it will only make them homesick. (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968, p. 4)

Natural parent/foster home visits during the first year were particularly discouraged. Natural parents were also instructed that "students and their families [are

to] attend church during the summer months” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968, p. 5).

Bill Brown noted during our discussions that few natural parents could read English, few LDS materials were available in Navajo, few placement children could read Navajo, and reservation mail delivery systems were unreliable. In other words, mail did not work well as a mode of communication, nor did the exchange of handbooks. In addition, most Navajo families did not have telephones or cameras. A phone was usually available on major trading posts. Most often the main form of “maintaining close family ties” was through photographs taken by LDS people. Foster parents could take photographs and send them to reservation trading posts. LDS social workers, like Bill Brown, could take photographs and exchange them at the foster homes or on the reservations when they made periodic visits (personal interview, October 15, 2006).

An updated natural parent version, *Parents’ Guide to the Indian Student Placement Service*, was printed in 1979 (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979). This time the program objectives were altered: “The purpose of this program is to help your child in school and church, to help him make friends, and to help him learn to be a leader” (p. 1). Church standards were included:

Since the goal of the Indian Student Placement Service is to help Indian children to someday become good parents and leaders in the Church and among their people, your child must live by Church standards. He must be honest and chaste, keep the Word of Wisdom, and obey his foster parents’ rules. If your child does not want to live by Church standards, he may have to be taken home. (pp. 5-6)

The Word of Wisdom is LDS doctrine proscribed in the 89<sup>th</sup> section of the *Doctrine and Covenants* by Joseph Smith (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,



1981). Alcoholic beverages, coffee, tea, and tobacco are prohibited and meat is to be eaten sparingly.

This 1979 version “feels” like it may have been responding to particular negative situations that were arising, such as a difficulty in following church standards and doctrine. Also, certain criticisms concerning assimilation were addressed. George P. Lee, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, a Navajo Indian, and a public relations icon concerning Indian affairs, was quoted:

Placement did not rob me of my culture, as a few critics seem to fear. Instead, I gained a true perspective of myself—a true sense of identity. I learned I could be proud of my heritage and rise above the problems that have kept my people from progressing. One of my greatest discoveries was that the gap separating Indians from whites could be bridged and that I could compete, excel, and be accepted in a white community while retaining my uniqueness and identity as an Indian.... My parents had struggled all their lives. I wanted to be able to help them. I wanted to come back prepared to help my people as well. (pp. 7-8)

This booklet was expanded into a fully illustrated version and titled *The Indian People Have Much to be Proud of* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982).

Full-page illustrations were accompanied by opposing side captions of a few words, much like in children’s books. The text began:

The Indian people have much to be proud of. The *Book of Mormon* tells of their great heritage and a proud past. It also tells of even greater promises for the future. The destiny of the Indian people depends largely upon their children. They will become tomorrow’s leaders in their communities and the nation. For this reason The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints created the Indian Student Placement Service.... The Indian Student Placement Service has been a blessing to thousands of young Indian boys and girls and to their families. They have returned from the program to their people with greater spiritual insights, improved leadership skills, pride in their Indian heritage, and educations that lead to better jobs and better lives for all Indians. Do you want this for your child? (pp. 1-23)

Certainly, the guide booklets had moved from being informational handbooks to

being commercial, public relation tools, as evidenced by sophisticated layouts of text and art and the omnipresence of George P. Lee. Commercial, persuasive sounding verbiage is noticeable; there are entreaties made to native parents that play on emotion and cultural sensibilities. Such statements and questions include the quote just mentioned above:

“They have returned from the program to their people with greater spiritual insights, improved leadership skills, pride in their Indian heritage, and educations that lead to better jobs and better lives for all Indians. Do you want that for your child?” (p. 23)

In 1973, the LDS Social Services printed the *Indian Student Guide* for the Indian students themselves. The Indian students were reminded: “Remember, the people with whom you associate at home, at Church, at school, or wherever you will be, may judge all Indian people according to what you do and say” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973, p. 1). The students were admonished to:

1. Work honestly and seriously to make a contribution to your foster home.
2. Study regularly and work hard to keep up good grades in school.
3. Take part in school activities....
4. Attend and take part in all Latter-day Saint Church activities....
5. Live the standards of the Church. These standards are the things you have already learned or will be taught in Church and by your foster family.
6. Have a good relationship with your foster family.... Learn to accept discipline and control from your foster parents. They do it to help you.
7. Participate in [white] community activities....
8. Take part in and help plan the district activities of the Indian Student Placement Program.
9. Your social worker and Lamanite Assistant are special friends and counselors whose main responsibility is to help you accomplish your goals. Please cooperate with them. (pp. 1-2)

The students were also told to “Be cheerful and friendly.... Show respect for authority” and to

refrain from speaking in your Indian language with other students when there is

someone present who does not understand unless you are trying to teach them the language. We encourage you to speak in your own language when the situation is such that no one will be hurt. (p. 3)

How others could be hurt by the students' use of their native languages was not clarified.

Mary Crow Dog's words echo as I relate the above. In *Lakota Woman* (1990) she quoted an old poster given to her grandfather by missionaries:

1. Let Jesus save you.
2. Come out of your blanket, cut your hair, and dress like a white man.
3. Have a Christian family....
4. Live in a house like your white brother.
5. Learn the value of a hard-earned dollar. . . .
6. Believe that property and wealth are signs of divine approval.
7. Keep away from saloons and strong spirits.
8. Speak the language of your white brother.
9. Go to church often and regularly.
10. Do not go to Indian dances or to the medicine man.

After her list, however, she concluded by adding, "The people...were stuck upon 'solving the Indian Problem' by making us into whites..." (p. 31).

#### 1968–1997: Controversies and Closure Factors

Scanning year and participation trends in Allen (1998), Pavlik (1992), Taylor (1981), and Mauss's (2003) work, the following general enrollment figures and chronology can be constructed: The program's peak years were 1970-1971 when almost 5,000 students participated. The numbers began to decline in 1972 when church leaders decided to withdraw missionaries as recruiting agents.

Roughly 2,500 students participated each year between 1979-1984, but there was another dramatic decline in enrollment starting in 1984. That year the church further

limited the program to children ages 11-18. One grade was eliminated each year until only students in grades 9-12 participated. Overall, according to Pavlik (1992), by the school year 1985-1986, more than 70,000 children had entered the program since its beginning.

By 1992, only 350 to 400 Indian students were participating. It was this year that the State of Utah began to enforce a rule that required nonresident students to pay out-of-state tuition. At that time, tuition averaged about \$2,500 per year, depending on the school district. An exemption was made for children in 1992-1993, and those already in the program were allowed to graduate from Utah schools, a decision which would extend the program's existence for another 4 years. This action by the church, according to a 1992 *Deseret News* article, resulted from a 1990 lawsuit pressed against Washington County School District by the Raindancer Youth Services from New Mexico, a program that provided treatment foster care services for emotionally and behaviorally disturbed youth. Raindancer brought Indian children from New Mexico and Arizona to St. George for private and public education. The Washington County schools educated the group's students for free in 1989, the program's first year, but when their directors tried to enroll 43 students in the already crowded Washington County schools the next year, school officials asked for tuition to help them pay the educational costs. Raindancer's suit challenged the state, asserting that if they had to pay, so did all the LDS Indian placement students coming from different states, as well as out-of-state students participating in two federal (BIA) housing/boarding programs (Pavlik, 1992). Douglas Bates, the coordinator of school law at the Utah State Office of Education in 1992, was quoted as saying,

“Looking at all the programs across the state, we’ve probably had between 500 and 700 Indian students from other states in our schools this past year” (Funk, 1992, B1).

There are several contributing factors that have been blamed for the program’s decline. The Raindance suit is certainly a specific one, and others have been mentioned or alluded to earlier. The factors can be grouped into three basic categories or perspectives: political/social contexts, tribal accusations, and church explanations.

*Political/Social Contexts: Indian Self-Determination*

By the 1970s, Native American organizations were working hard to determine their own existing and future worlds. In 1968, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in Minneapolis by urban Indian activists. The purpose of the new organization was to protect the traditional ways of Indian peoples and hire legal counsel to intervene in cases relating to treaty and aboriginal rights to hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering wild rice. From 1969-1971, Indians of All Tribes, a pan-Indian group, occupied Alcatraz Island under an 1868 Sioux oral agreement granting Indians first rights to government surplus lands. They sought to draw attention to the treatment of Indians throughout the United States. In 1970, the Paiute Indians of Nevada protested the draining of Pyramid Lake and sued the Interior Department. They were supported by the Alcatraz demonstration. That same year, Native Americans demonstrated in Littleton, Colorado; Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Illinois; Gallup, New Mexico; Fort Lawton, Washington; Ellis Island, New York; and Mount Rushmore, South Dakota. Demonstrators wanted recognition of Indian rights based on treaties, protection of

traditional ways, and a curbing of abuses by BIA offices. In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon formally brought the termination policy to an end, announcing a new federal policy of Indian self-determination without a termination of federal services (Nies, 1966). In his “Indian Affairs” address to Congress on July 8, Nixon stated,

This, then, must be the goal of any new policy toward the Indian people: to strengthen the Indian’s sense of autonomy without threatening his sense of community. We must assure the Indian that he can resume control of his own life without being separated involuntarily from the tribal group. And we must make it clear that Indians can become independent of Federal control without being cut off from Federal concern and Federal support. (Prucha, 2000, p.258)

In 1971, The Five Civilized Tribes petitioned the BIA for the direct election of their own chiefs. This was the first time since 1902 that they had the right to elect their own leaders and reconstitute their own governmental systems.

In 1972, AIM organized the Trail of Broken Treaties march and the occupation of the BIA offices in Washington, D.C. In 1973, more than 200 AIM protestors occupied Wounded Knee, resulting in a ten-week standoff. The International Treaty Council was founded in 1974 by representatives for 40 Indian nations to gain United Nations representation for Native peoples in the United States and Canada. Women of All Red Nations (WARN) was also established that year by Native American women activists. An affiliation of AIM, they sought to draw attention to the traditional leadership roles women played in Native American culture. In 1975, the Council of Energy Resource Tribes, CERT, was founded in Denver to help protect tribal mineral resources. In 1979, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act became law, guaranteeing that Indian religions were protected under the First Amendment. Following the largest nuclear accident ever to occur in the United States—occurring on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico—

white and Indian activist groups formed the Black Hills Alliance that same year in South Dakota to educate people about the dangers of nuclear mining and milling, water depletion and contamination. Also in 1979, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act was passed which was designed to protect Indian archaeological sites (Nies, 1996).

By 1980, Indian people had gained significantly more political power and control of their lives and futures. The publicity and controversy of Native American issues during this time also prompted many Native Americans, particularly urban Indians, to seek a rediscovery and reevaluation of their traditional Native American lifeways. In general, this was also the time that the “generation gap” became a focus and many young people across America questioned and rejected the conservative mindsets of their 1950s parents. Mary Crow Dog (1990) wrote:

The early AIM people were mostly...from tribes which had lost much of their language, traditions, and ceremonies. It was when they came to us on the Sioux reservations that they began to learn about the old ways.... The traditional old, full-blood medicine men joined in with us kids. Not the middle-aged adults. They were a lost generation which had given up all hope, necktie wearers waiting for the Great White Father to do for them. It was the real old folks who had spirit and wisdom to give us. The grandfathers and grandmothers who still remembered a time when Indians were Indians, whose own grandparents or even parents had fought Custer gun in hand, people who for us were living links with a great past...they still knew all the old legends and the right way to put on a ritual, and we were eager to learn from them. (pp. 76-80)

In the late 1960s and 1970s, following renewed interest in the value of native languages, there were many strides made toward bilingual and bicultural education. A significant example of such, The Rough Rock Demonstration School, was established in 1966 as a War on Poverty experimental project, a joint effort of the Office of Economic Opportunity and the BIA. The school was/is based on two basic premises:

First, the Rough Rock Navajo Demonstration School...is guided by the philosophy that the Indian can, and should, be educated to retain his identity with his native values and culture while, at the same time, learning to master the Anglo culture and to take his place in the Anglo world, if he so desires.... Second, the Rough Rock school is controlled and directed by the Navajo people themselves; and the supremely important aspect of this local control is to prove that the Indian has the interest, desire and capacity to provide real leadership, direction and self-determination in education. The school is founded on the thesis that the Indian is best able to determine the content and direction of Indian education. In other words, the school is demonstrating that education of the Indian must be given to the Indian. (Johnson, 1968, p. 15)

Following Mary Crow Dog's remark above, it is interesting to note that the School Board was comprised of community people. For example, the founding School Board members, except for the president, were not bilingual; they spoke Navajo. They were also life-seasoned elders, the youngest being 55 years old, and the oldest, 80. The Board of Directors members were also Navajo (Johnson, 1968)

It was in this time and climate of civil rights activism and political support for Indian self-determination that the Bilingual Education Act, better known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary School Act, was passed in 1968. The report, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge* was issued in 1969, and the passage of the Indian Education Act followed in 1972. This act dictated that all public schools with ten or more Indian students were eligible to receive federal funds for supplemental programs for Indian children designed to meet their special needs, including the use of culturally relevant and bilingual curriculum materials. This act also established the Office of Indian Education in the U.S. Office of Education and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education with fifteen members appointed by the president from nominees presented by the tribes and Indian organizations (Reyhner &



Eder, 2004).

The BIA set up procedures for protecting students' rights in 1974 and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act was passed in 1975. This important act gave tribes the power to contract with the federal government to run their own education and health programs. Indian majorities were to control school boards, site-based governance committees and/or governing community councils. In 1988, the Tribally Controlled Schools Act was passed, which provided grants to tribes to support the operation of their own schools. The passage of the Native American Languages Act of 1990 committed the government to preserve the rights and freedoms of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages (Spring, 1997). This political empowerment, offering validation, protection, and resources, laid a foundation for an Indian-led movement that sought control of native education.

### *Tribal Accusations*

At this time when dissenting voices were finding forum, tribal leaders registered complaints and leveled accusations toward the Indian Student Placement Program and the LDS church. One of the loudest assertions made by Indian activists and tribal leaders was to describe the program as another white attempt to assimilate Indians (Allen, 1998; Gotlieb & Wiley, 1986; Keane, 1982; Mauss, 2003; Pavlik, 1992; Rainer, 1976). Worded differently, it was charged that participation caused a loss of Indian culture, which included a loss of Indian language, values, and religious orientation. Tribal leaders feared that Indian families were being pressured to give up their children. This cut young people off from their cultural heritage, resulting in harmful psychological confusion

about their identity. It is during the winter months when most of the history and legends—oral cultural literacies—are passed from tribal elders to the youth on reservations, a time when the placement students are residing in LDS homes. Also, tribal leaders asserted that the program skimmed the ablest youth from the reservations and that many never returned after experiencing affluence and the broader effects of assimilation (Mauss, 2003).

On November 2, 1972, American Indian tribal leaders and educators attending the National Indian Education Association Conference in Seattle, Washington, passed the following resolution regarding the placement program, which sums up many of the above complaints.

WHEREAS the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints endeavors to uplift the status of the American Indian by initiating large-scale child placement of Indian children.

AND WHEREAS the result is the wrong upbringing of Indian children in a wrong society, by the wrong people.

AND WHEREAS Latter-day Saints do not consider the Indian religion anything other than pagan and considers itself, LDS, the religion.

AND WHEREAS the LDS program tends to assimilate and destroy the Indian child's sense of relationship to his people.

AND WHEREAS the LDS program is based on considering the Indian people inferior LET IT BE RESOLVED that the National Indian Education Association strongly disapproves and opposes this program and asks that it be discontinued on behalf of our brothers and sisters.

LET IT BE RESOLVED that until the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints considers the Indian religion as first and valid and the Indian way of life, the National Indian Education Association will not endorse the child placement program. (Rainer, 1976, pp. 32-33)

On April 11, 1974, The American Indian Movement organization also prepared a

similar declaration, one of stronger language, which states the above and adds additional grievances.

The American Indian Movement and its followers and sympathizers have met in prayer and ceremony and have come to one mind. The Great Spirit has spoken to our hearts and minds. Because of [the LDS church's] insensitivity to our religion and traditions.... Because of your racist attitude regarding our skin color. Because of your divisive practices, of pitting Indian against Indian. Because of your attempts at cultural and religious genocide. Because Native Americans have approached you...to resolve these matters and you have turned them away. You are hereby ordered to recall all your missionaries from the reservations and the areas where Native Americans frequent.... (Rainer, 1976, p. 126).

Earlier, AIM held a demonstration at Temple Square in Salt Lake City during the April 1973 general conference, demanding a million dollars from the church to help “rehabilitate” suffering Indians (Kimball & Kimball, 1977).

As mentioned, a nationwide concern for Indian child welfare peaked at this same time. The LDS church was not the only cause or the only foster program involved; however, the tribes saw the church as a significant contributor to the crisis. The American Association of Indian Affairs in New York estimated in 1975 that one third of all Indian children were living apart from their families either in foster homes, group homes, institutions or boarding schools. By 1978, 100,000 Indian children were in placements other than their own homes (Keane, 1982). That same year, approximately 2,700 native students were enrolled in the LDS placement program (Allen, 1998).

For 4 years, tribal and non-Indian activists lobbied for the Indian Child Welfare Act 95-608, which was designed to protect the rights of the Native American child when placed out of home. As part of that lobbying effort, the Association on American Indian Affairs published a powerful collection of essays, *The Destruction of American Indian*

*Families* (Bergman, 1977), that examine the Indian child welfare crisis in detail. The following are two excerpts from that collection:

William Byler (Association Director) - The main thrust of federal policy, since the close of the Indian Wars, has been to break up the extended family, the clan structure, to detribalize and assimilate Indian populations.... Because the family is the most fundamental economic, educational, and health-care unit in society and the center of an individual's emotional life, assaults on Indian families help cause the conditions that characterize those conditions of poverty where large numbers of people feel hopeless, powerless, and unworthy. (pp. 7-8)

Carolyn Attneave (Delaware-Cherokee; PhD, University of Washington) - How are children to become whole people if they are removed from any chance to learn from their elders or their peers? What of those placed as adopted or foster children in families of different race, different language, different religion? Well-meaning though some of these foster parents may be, they seldom know the difference between the television western and the real life of people from which their ward comes.... The boarding school reared adult at least has group support for his identity, even though he may be short-changed in life experiences. (pp. 31-32)

In 1978 the act was passed, mandating tribal jurisdiction of all Indian child custody cases, priority placement in Indian homes, the right to intervene in state custody hearings, and the right to reverse adoption and foster placements when duress or fraud occurred (Keane, 1982). The LDS church lobbied to be excluded from the act, which resulted in an amendment that protected the program. Because LDS program placement guidelines stated that the foster placements were educational, voluntary, and the child could be returned to the native parents at any time, the program was generally exempt from the regulations (Gottlieb & Wiley, 1986).

It is interesting to note that the 1972 resolution from the National Indian Education Association corresponds with the beginning of the downward turn of student placement numbers. The AIM censure occurs shortly thereafter, in 1974, when numbers

were continuing to drop. However, when the Indian Child Welfare Act was passed and the LDS program was exempted, there was a bump in enrollment of about 300 students between the end of the 1977-1978 and 1979-1980 school years. The 1990 Raindancer suit occurred late enough to serve only as a prompt for a final conclusion.

### *Church Explanations*

According to Clarence Bishop,

The program received unusually positive acceptance by local Church leaders and members alike. Though starting with just a few students, the program grew beyond our expectations. In time, however, conditions changed and the program became less needed and more challenging to manage. In 1992, the decision was made to accept no new students and to discontinue the program as existing students graduated from high school. (Shumway & Shumway, 2002, p. x)

His remark, political sounding and general in nature, leads to speculation: What conditions changed? Why was the program less needed? Who decided to end the program?

George P. Lee, a Native American LDS General Authority, wanted answers to these questions, too. In an infamous 1989 letter to LDS Church President Ezra Taft Benson and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Lee asked several pointed questions concerning the curtailment or cessation of several Lamanite programs, one of which was the Indian Placement program:

1. Who is phasing out the Church's Indian Student Placement Program?
2. Who got rid of the Church's Indian Committee?
3. Who terminated Indian Seminary and all related curriculum materials?
4. Who fired the Indian Seminary teachers and sent them out in the cold?
5. Who terminated the BYU Indian Education department?
6. Who terminated the BYU Indian special curriculum, which helped Indian students succeed in College?
7. Who is phasing out BYU American Indian Services?

8. Who pulled the full-time missionaries off Navajo and other Indian reservations?
9. Who is teaching that the “Day of the Lamanite” is over and past?
10. Who is trying to discredit or downplay the role of Lamanites in these last days and downplay the role of Lamanites in the *Book of Mormon*? (Lee, 1989, pp. 17-18)

George P. Lee, the first Native American General Authority and a past Indian placement student, was definitely at odds with decisions made by the church priesthood leaders. The church was also at odds with him. On September 1, 1989, the church announced that Lee had been excommunicated for “apostasy and other conduct unbecoming a member of the church” (Lee, 1989, p. 1) According to Lee, this action resulted from his disagreement with other church leaders over the role of American Indians in the religion and from other questions and charges he had presented in his twenty-three page letter, quoted from above. According to the church, the reason for Lee’s excommunication was for sexual misconduct with a young girl, and the letter was his retaliation. Lee was later convicted of sexual abuse of a child in criminal court proceedings (Laphahie, 2001).

Earlier, Spencer W. Kimball, himself, expressed worries concerning the program, specifically noting a lack of spiritual progress made by Indians who converted as they entered the program. Not only did he note the “lack of faithfulness” of the Indians, he also worried about the prejudices and shortcomings of the white members that may have contributed to superficial conversions (Kimball & Kimball, 1977).

Mauss (2003) suggested that comparisons of spiritual growth between North American Indians and Latin American and Polynesian Lamanites were too compelling for church leaders to ignore. Accordingly, resources that once went exclusively to Native

American Lamanites were then channeled to support the other Lamanite groups. That observation is supported by a very direct speech given by Boyd K. Packer, then the senior apostle over Lamanite affairs for the church, during an annual Indian Week observance on the BYU campus in 1979. Packer spoke of other Lamanites: In contrast to the relatively few North American Lamanites (1.3 million), there were many millions in Mexico, Yucatan, Guatemala, and throughout South America. “In all...there are seventy-five million six hundred thousand who share your [Lamanite] birthright, of whom thirty-one million nine hundred ninety thousand are pure Indians” (Mauss, 2003, p. 95). He openly expressed his disappointment in the accomplishments of the North American Indian converts in recent decades. The church leaders had high expectations that the North American Lamanites would convert others, but, according to Packer, they have not done so.

[T]he Lord has said, “Where much is given much is expected”.... If all you come away with is a degree, and the ability to make a living, if all you have come here for is to get, then you may well have failed.... [There are] countless millions of your people waiting for your ministry. Now you may say, ‘Well, I don’t feel comfortable. I’m a little reticent to speak. I feel backward.’ And I ask the question: Are you ashamed to be an Indian? Are You? If not, why are you not there?... We’re not interested in [your] being comfortable. We’re interested in your service. (Mauss, pp. 95-96)

No doubt, this chastisement must have created a stir in the crowd that day.

Packer’s message of disappointment was clear: These young Native American beneficiaries of church attention and resources were not living up to spiritual expectations nor were they fulfilling missionary responsibilities to their own culture.

Greater educational opportunity evolving for children near their homes was another stated reason for curtailing the program (Allen, 1998). According to the 1988

BIA report on Indian education, the number of BIA boarding school students declined from 24,051 in 1965 to 11,264 in 1988, and from 1968 to 1986 BIA funded school enrollment declined from 51,448 students to 38,475. Indian non-BIA school enrollment almost doubled, however, due partly to the BIA's encouragement of public day school attendance over boarding schools. By 1987, government contract schools enrolled 27.8% of the students. By 1978, there were seventeen tribal community colleges in operation (Reyhner & Eder, 2004).

There were social reasons as well as education-related reasons offered by the church to explain the decline in program participation. Though heralded as a positive endeavor for foster families, the church did acknowledge that the foster placement situation could cause emotional strain on LDS families. Some families gave up after a few months, others after the first year. Because of cultural barriers, some families never gained an understanding of their foster child. Students, as well, had adjustment problems in the white home and at school. The placement students and the foster families' attitudes and lack of preparation for the experience often added to the difficulties. Approximately 40% of the foster students chose to drop out; another 15% left at the request of their natural parents; about 8% were sent home by their foster parents; and another 2% left for miscellaneous reasons. Totaled, only about one-third of the students stayed in the program until high school graduation (Allen, 1998).

Much was invested by both cultures in this education or re-education venture. Although the assimilation process generally evolves over generations, tremendous change was expected from all involved, particularly the Native American students, in a short



period of time. But was the end goal clear? What were Native Americans to change to?

Statistics above indicate a problem, and perhaps that problem lies at the very base of the program's inception: Much like the Harkers who quickly dressed George P. Lee in a Cowboy outfit, the LDS church invested much on perceived notions of Indian-ness.

The body of underestimation in the power and sustainability of Native American culture/ethnicity/identity was monolithic.

There were also perceived notions of assimilation that were problematic. What, really, were the Native American students to become? According to McConkie (1966), Lamanites were marked by dark skin to remain separate. He wrote, "Deity in his infinite wisdom, to carry out his inscrutable purposes, has a caste system of his own, a system of segregation of races and people" (p. 114). Perhaps, then, Lamanites were never to be "as" white LDS people, only "like" them.

The history of Indian-white relations also prompts suspicion of the program. The "Indian Problem" could only be solved in a few ways: to kill, conquer, subdue, or neutralize the people. Acculturation and assimilation conquers, subdues, and neutralizes cultural power bases by imposing a different value system, in this case, a typical white, middle-class, Christian system.

Do I think the service was prompted by malicious, genocidal intent? No, my life-long associations with the church and church members do not support that conclusion nor do any of the interviews with LDS foster parents. Naively, myopically—ironically—the idea was to "save" the Indian physically and spiritually. In some cases, however, the outcomes of the placement program intervention were not positive. Mary Crow Dog

(1990) admonished her readers to look out for the white churches' "Indian-lovers" and "do-gooders," for Native Americans suffered greatly from those paternalistic attentions (p. 30).

What I do believe is what Berkhofer (1965) believed:

There is a failure to see that earlier Americans acted as they did for the same reason that the Indians reacted as they did. Both groups behaved according to their own cultural systems. Americans of the past were victims of [and they victimized others because of] their cultural values.... (p. vi)

But that does not make it right. Diamond (1999) asked,

If [historians] succeed in explaining how some people came to dominate other people, may this not seem to justify the domination? Doesn't it seem to say the outcome was inevitable, and that it would therefore be futile to try to change the outcome today? This objection rests on a common tendency to confuse an explanation of causes with a justification or acceptance of results. What use one makes of a historical explanation is a question separate from the explanation itself. Understanding is more often used to try to alter an outcome than to repeat or perpetuate it.... [Historians] do not seek to justify murder, rape, genocide, and illness. Instead, they seek to use their understanding of a chain of causes to interrupt the chain." (p. 17)

As I discuss in Chapter VI, we can learn from this attempt at assimilation.

## CHAPTER V

### PARTICIPANT VOICES

In Chapter II of this study, a review of Native American education histories, only two abbreviated, specific histories of the placement program are noted—those written by Allen (1998) and Bishop (1967). Chapter II's conclusion states: "These two sources, plus numerous dissertations, studies, autobiographies, biographies, and interviews that contribute to the cache of program information are described in the following study." Chapter IV provides quantitative data and offers both direct and indirect qualitative assessments of the program's success or failure as the rise and fall of participation is noted. Descriptions originating from LDS sources are generally optimistic and supportive; some Native American criticisms are harsh.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a more in-depth understanding of how the Indian Student Placement Program pursued the goal of assimilation by considering the responses of individual participants, responses which could be plotted on a wide continuum—or related as being simultaneously both good and bad.

I have categorized and reported interview resources as to type (professional evaluation, autobiography, biography, personal interview, etc.). The respondent remarks are then synthesized and analyzed by topic (reasons for becoming involved, education outcomes, etc.)

#### Program Evaluations

There were several unpublished evaluations of the Indian Student Placement

Program conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. All were embedded in university work and took the form of sociological and/or opinion surveys which focused on different aspects of the program at various times of its development as seen through the eyes of participants. There were two studies conducted during this time period, however, that have been considered to be professionally conducted. In the late 1970s, an evaluative study was conducted by Martin D. Topper, who represented the Department of Anthropology at the University of California and the Indian Health Service. Topper interviewed and followed Navajo Indian students through their placement experiences which occurred between 1966 and 1973. In 1981, Brigham Young University sociology professors Bruce A. Chadwick, Stan L. Albrecht, and Howard W. Bahr conducted a study that was funded by the church's Presiding Bishop's Office/Presiding Bishop's Research and Evaluation Services. It was an evaluation that attempted a standard questionnaire design that compared the responses of past program participants to responses of nonparticipant, control group subjects. The two studies represent two distinctly different screening perspectives, those of the "secular" Indian Health Service and the "sacred" LDS church (Allen, 1998; Gottlieb & Wiley, 1986).

As mentioned earlier, other more narrowly focused studies, both qualitative and quantitative in design, have been conducted by university students during roughly the same time period as the above two reports. The results lie scattered in university archives and library stacks. For this study, I add for consideration the unpublished graduate studies of Adams, Higley, and Campbell (1977); Barclay (1972); Bishop (1960); Hangen (1992); Lindquist (1974); Pavlik (1992); Schimmelpfennig (1971); Smith, J.M. (2003); Smith,

R.D. (1968); Staheli (1984); Taylor (1981); Valberg (1973); and Willson (1973).

Interviews with program participants provided the database for these studies.

### Autobiographies, Biographies, Life Stories

An important, personalized body of information concerning the history and description of the Indian Student Placement Program is available through autobiographic and biographic accounts. There are two published works that relate program experiences through Navajo perspectives: *Silent Courage: An Indian Story*, an autobiography of George P. Lee (1987), and *Beyond the Four Corners of the World: A Navajo Woman's Journey*, a biography written by Emily Benedek (1995) about, and in collaboration with, Ella Hathathlie Bedonie.

A novel, *The Coming of Elijah*, has just been published by Arianne Cope (2006), who is not a Native American. Cope's book was based on the experiences of her grandparents, Heber and Fay Wolsey, who were contemporaries of Golden Buchanan in Richfield, Utah. She has chosen to narrate her family's story through a Native American main character, however. I have interviewed Cope for this study. Two other books have been written about Native American participants by LDS people involved in the program. The first, *Without Reservation*, was written by Kay Cox (1980). A past-foster mother in the program, she tells of her experiences, her opinions, and introduces the readers to the struggles of the students who stayed in her home. The second, *The Blossoming*, was written by Dale and Margene Shumway (2002). Dale was a LDS Social Services caseworker who was assigned to work with the placement program. In the Shumways'

book, only Native Americans who were “successful” in the program are included, and this work is written as a testimony of the program’s success.

Interviews were conducted by various LDS Native American college students at BYU with other local Native American past-program participants (circa 1990). These interviews, part of a “LDS Native American Oral History Project,” are housed at the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at BYU. These interviews also have a definite LDS perspective and are, in effect, collected testimonies of the program.

Several published autobiographic/biographic articles written by or about former placement participants have appeared in Mormon-oriented or Mormon-published magazines or journals. Ones appearing in the LDS *Ensign* (published primarily for LDS adults), *Era* (published primarily for LDS teens), or *Friend* (published primarily for LDS children) are usually written from a church leadership or foster family position, and they are meant for a general LDS audience. In all cases, the articles provide faith-promoting religious testimony to the successfulness of the program. Lacey A. Harris (1985), an LDS Ute/Paiute Indian, has written a particularly thoughtful article for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* concerning the Indian placement program. Harris’ article was geared for a more academic audience.

### Personal Interviews and Communications

I personally conducted 31 interviews and conversations: 11 face-to-face, 11 via email, and nine telephone communications with people who participated in the program in different capacities, some individuals having participated in more than one role. The

perspectives of past foster parents (8), foster siblings (10), program administrators (2), foster students (6), children of fostered students (1), and those with related roles or interests (4) were included in this data-collection process. Because of Utah State University's IRB confidentiality requirements, I have used pseudonyms in reporting the data. Real names are listed and held in my research files.

In order to make meaning of the vast amount of information contained in these evaluations, studies, and life stories, I have organized the data by pertinent topics that were targeted in my interview questions, namely:

1. Information concerning how participants became acquainted with the program and why they became involved.
2. Information related to educational/occupational/economic-related outcomes.
3. Information concerning religion-related beliefs and practices.
4. Information concerning culture-related beliefs and outcomes.
5. Information concerning emotional/psychological impacts and implications.
6. Assessment information: basic general conclusions as to the value and significance of the program. This last topic will be addressed in the concluding chapter of this study, Chapter VI.

#### *How Participants Became Acquainted with the Program*

Ella Bedonie tells in her biography (Benedek, 1995) that she noticed program information pinned to a bulletin board while she was at boarding school. Nancy Clark told me she attended LDS seminary classes while at a Utah boarding school, even though

she was not a member of the church, and her seminary teacher encouraged her to go on placement (email interview, July 5, 2006). George P. Lee (1987) wrote that LDS people involved with the program approached his family on the reservation. According to most written and verbal reports, LDS missionaries and church officials who were stationed on the reservations played the strongest role in recruiting Native Americans into the program. Bill Brown showed me a card that featured basic demographic data, likes and interests, school achievement data, and a charming picture of a young teenage girl who was wishing to be placed in an LDS home. These cards were used to persuade LDS families to become involved and accept the child into placement. According to Brown, education was verbalized to both LDS and Native American families as the main emphasis of the recruitment drive (personal interview, October 15, 2006).

Information and requests for foster family participation were issued from the pulpit by local LDS church officials. Pamphlets were disseminated in the church houses. Program information was printed in church magazines that reached thousands of LDS homes. The most powerful recruitment tool, however, was direct request. Members, particularly leaders of wards and stakes, were approached by church authorities and asked personally to take Indian students into their homes. As an adult, active member of the LDS church, I personally experienced these methods, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Most of my foster family informants related similar experiences. One informant, Helen Smith, was recruited as a foster mother by Spencer W. Kimball. He visited many wards and stakes, bearing his testimony of the program's significance, with the purpose of recruiting LDS faithful to serve as foster parents. "We were friends with



the Kimball's," Smith related, "and we supported President Kimball's testimony of the placement program" (telephone interview, October 15, 2006).

### *Why Participants Became Involved*

As for the reasons for involvement, Topper's (1979) findings tended to agree with and sum the conclusions of other studies and interviews. Topper and others asserted pertinent factors surrounding the decision to send a child on placement; each are discussed below.

1. *The economic situation of the child's family.* A prevalence of response indicates that placement was one of the few ways poor Native American families could find immediate financial and social service support. As was the case depicted earlier with Helen John, the children in Navajo families often took turns being on placement to alleviate financial stress. The youngest children too young for baptism stayed home and older children often stayed to help with tending sheep, gathering wood, doing farm work, and so forth. Jenny Maughan, a past foster mother, related,

It was funny how [our foster student, Eddie] would eat those first few weeks. He would eat very fast, like there would be no food tomorrow—especially corn on the cob; he loved that. I think it was because he was so poor that he and his brothers and sisters didn't have enough food. There were five kids for the mother to care for. The dad ran off with another woman when the kids were small. The placement program really helped the mom financially by giving her one less mouth to feed. (telephone interview, October 30, 2006)

Leslie Ellis' family experienced poverty in Los Angeles, not on the reservation. She said, "You have to keep in mind my mom was a single parent with four kids and no family out there in L.A. and no child support from our dad.... I went because I felt this would take the financial burden off my mom. She struggled much to keep a roof over our

heads” (email interview, July 20, 2006).

2. *The level of acculturation/assimilation of the child's parents.* The more accepting, trusting, and knowledgeable the native family was of the white culture, the more likely they were to consider program placement as a positive step toward a better life. Cathy Bankhead, a past foster sister, related, “Some in [our foster sister's] family were traditional and some were not—judging by dress and speech.... Her dad had a good job, and I think he made more money than we did.... I think she went on placement to get a better education” (telephone interview, October 25, 2006). Cathy's mother, LuDene, added, “Her dad worked for the forest service as a fire-fighter, but they still wanted her on the program so she could go to a better school, and maybe find opportunities that she would otherwise miss” (telephone interview, October 12, 2006).

Conversely, during the early, pre-“official” years of the placement program, it had been charged that many children ended up on placement because isolated, traditional families were naïve to white recruiter approaches. This was documented by George P. Lee's depiction of interactions with his trading post manager, as related in the previous chapter. Naïve trust was mostly responsible for Lee's participation.

Two LDS past program administrators whom I interviewed, Bill Brown and Clarence Bishop, indicated students were chosen and recruited for their potential. Those students were already school attenders who were reasonably literate in the English language and did relatively well in an educational setting. Bill Brown noted, “Because the placement students read, wrote, and spoke English and were screened grade-wise, the placement students generally did okay in school” (personal interview, October 15, 2006).

The more isolated, traditional children having little experience with Anglo schooling and the English language did not generally do well in the program and were often screened out or they were not interested in participating at all. Lewis Singer, who was not screened, had a very rocky start. “My biggest problem was that I knew very little English, but I did not want to tell my foster parents I didn’t understand what they were saying or they might think I was dumb, so I would bluff it” (Shumway & Shumway, 2002, p. 81). Gerald Singer added, “Initially, when I first arrived, it seemed like I was totally lost, academically, due to my lack of academic preparation up to this point” (email interview, February 22, 2005).

3. *The eligibility of the child for placement in a BIA boarding school.* The likelihood of attending boarding school was usually affected by how much contact the family had with both Native and Anglo society and the perceptions the family held concerning the quality of life in boarding schools. Bedonie related that she became interested in the program because it would help her escape boarding school (Benedek, 1995). Smith’s study (2001) reported that opinion as well: Program placement was an escape or alternative to boarding school. Lewis Singer described his experiences at boarding school when he was six,

We were given many jobs in the dorm like making beds, mopping halls, and cleaning bathrooms. The discipline was very tough. If a student fouled up in class the teacher would punish him and then the dorm aide would punish the young person again. The students who misbehaved got whippings, stood at attention, scrubbed walls, or re-cleaned the bathrooms. (Shumway & Shumway, 2002, p. 80)

Singer noted he spoke almost no English when he entered, and he spoke little English when he left.

The LDS program provided an alternative choice. Lee (1987), for example, related that he and his family believed participation would provide a better education than could be accessed otherwise. Jed Cottle served as both a foster sibling and foster parent to Native American siblings from one family—a family of nine children who could have attended local schools in Shiprock, N.M. He related that the oldest son made sure the rest would follow on placement: “He made sure they all went on placement so they would have opportunities and education” (personal interview, August 26, 2006).

4. *The degree to which the parents accepted the Mormon missionaries and their religion.* Native American families who found the LDS faith to be acceptable or those who were truly converted were more apt to send their children on placement, and some children were sent to learn more about the LDS religion. Helen Smith received three foster children from the same family. Their mother was LDS and “she wanted her kids to go to a good LDS home and to attend school” (telephone interview, October 15, 2006). Nancy Clark chose to go on placement because she wanted to learn more about the LDS religion. This choice went against her parents’ wishes: “My parents objected at my becoming part of the Indian Placement program at the onset.... On my end, I wanted to learn more about the gospel of Jesus Christ and my parents sensed that was very important to me” (email interview, July 5, 2006).

According to my interviews, most LDS foster parents reported they participated in the program because they had been directly asked by a church leader to do so. Because it is believed by LDS faithful that church leaders are inspired by God, it was felt that obedience to this challenge was important as a demonstration of faith. Other reasons

discussed by Chadwick, Albrecht, and Bahr (1986) included that LDS foster parents were concerned about the plight of Native Americans, they wanted to share their well-being with others, they wanted their family to have an intercultural experience, and/or they wished to provide companionship for their own child.

*Educational/Occupational/Economic-Related Outcomes*

In Chadwick and colleagues' study (1986), 44% of the participant group reported they ultimately completed 12 years of schooling, and 44% of the control group reported the same achievement. Fifty-nine percent of the participant group obtained some type of post-high school training in contrast to 45.5% of the control group. The researchers looked at grade point averages as an indicator of educational success. They concluded that the participants' average GPA was 2.48, whereas the control group's GPA was 1.96, a difference of .52. The researchers asked each participant to name a friend of the same sex to participate in the control group. The reasoning was that such friends would have similar backgrounds.

Schimmelpfennig (1971) added that placement students reported that they were relatively happy in their public school surroundings. Lindquist (1974) asserted that the placement program has not made a difference in the number of years of formal education a participant received compared to nonprogram participants. Cox (1980) commented that every child who applied for a Navajo Nation/BYU scholarship in her area received one. One of her foster children received a substantial scholarship in the fall, but forfeited it before Christmas because of school moral code issues.

Again, according to Chadwick and colleagues (1986), placement participants were employed in significantly higher status occupations than were non-placement controls, and no economic indicators showed that participants were worse off than the control group. A long-term translation of educational advantage into economic advantage was not found. These researchers also noted that only 14% of Native American parents reported that their children became better educated; however, they concluded that the Placement Program did, overall, enhance the educational achievement of the Native participants.

Barclay (1972) asserted that most participants wanted an occupation that would help their people. Nestor Begaye, a past foster student, related,

Most of the local [Monument Valley] Navajo people, including those who had been on placement, wanted to be educated enough to find local work and successfully support themselves and their families, but they did not necessarily want to have an education and career that would take them away from the reservation and their clans. (personal interview, April 20, 2006)

Nestor was a secretary at Monument Valley High School, which is nested inside the southern Utah Navajo reservation. At this school 40% of the licensed professional staff were local Native Americans; about 70% of the total staff were locals. Nestor pointed out that this employment—working with the local Navajos, living among her own clan, and receiving good pay—was the perfect scenario. Although it was not appropriate for me to poll the other employees for data at that time, Nestor told me she had had a very positive student placement experience and had attended BYU for a while on a Native American scholarship. She said that most of the other licensed, Native American teachers had attended BYU, although there were a couple who had attended

college elsewhere (personal interview, April 20, 2006).

Willson (1973) wrote that education data prompts questions concerning the educational validity of the placement program, in general. According to that study, there was a tendency for a yearly decline in achievement scores in mathematics, reading, and language. Overall achievement for all students in the program averaged almost a year below grade level expectations. Cox (1980) noted that most of the placement students she received were seriously lacking academic knowledge and skills when they arrived and that English as a Second Language (ESL) issues were a barrier to school success. She related that a LDS caseworker told her a full 90% of the students who applied should have been turned down for purely academic reasons.

#### *Religion-Related Beliefs and Practices*

According to Topper (1979), the later rejection of the LDS religion and majority of participant opinion indicates that placement was not a successful missionary practice. Chadwick and colleagues (1986) stated that only 15% of those they interviewed reported the program helped the Native American family members become more religious. Foster parents reported that foster students and their families generally retained beliefs in the power of witchcraft and efficacy of “pagan” ritual according to Schemmelfennig (1971). Cox (1980) noted that most of her foster children were baptized in order to be put on placement, and that they still feared witchcraft. Bill Brown commented, “Grandmothers would often send peyote back to Anglo homes with the students—to keep their minds “straight” (personal interview, October 16, 2006).

George P. Lee’s (1987) family became involved in Peyotism, and they pressured

him to abandon his Mormon beliefs while at home and participate with them. Lee wrote, “My mother and father consented to baptism.... I soon realized, however, that they might have joined the Church only to please their son, for later they became inactive.... My parents soon went back to their own Navajo ways” (p. 264). He continued,

The spiritual world of the Indian becomes confusing when the material aspects of the white world are infused with it (p. vii). Many of the childhood teachings I’d always taken for granted did not fit into the greater understanding. I began to move into my own world of understanding rather than claim citizenship in either Navajo or Anglo cultures.... From the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I internalized the great truths taught about God, his creations, our purpose in life, and life after death. I began to see the traditional Navajo teachings as incomplete, and, in many cases, too negative about life. (p. 237)

Later, after rising to the position of a general authority for the LDS church, Lee became openly critical of church policy and other church leaders. He was later excommunicated from the church, as mentioned in Chapter IV.

Lacey A. Harris (1985) moved into an LDS Caucasian home when he was 15 years old, graduated from high school, served a Southwest Indian mission, and graduated with a B.S in history through BYU’s Indian Education program. Though a placement student “success” story, Harris wrote poignantly about the religious questions he pondered. The following quote, though lengthy, captures the tensions of such questions:

The more I learned [about the Lamanites], the more I felt that the Church really had no place for us as “Indians.” We only belonged if we were Lamanites.... Were those people *my* Indian people? My people were good, deeply spiritual, in tune with the rhythms of the earth and with their own needs. How could I be descended from a wicked people? How could I be a descendent of wickedness and still be good without repudiating the heritage that made it possible for me to accept Mormon goodness? These were difficult questions...ironically, it was in the mission field, serving the Lord full time that I first became fully aware in the center of my being of some of the cultural differences between Indian and Anglo Mormons. Some of my Anglo companions left me with bitter memories of patronage, of being left out of decisions, of being told in subtle ways that I wasn’t



equal in ability or capacity. A pattern of occasional comments and offhand judgments began to take shape about the [Navajo] people we were teaching and working with: “lack of commitment,” “Indian standard time,” “a reservation Indian.”...

When people asked if I was Mormon, I would say, “Yes, but I’m Nuchee, Northern Ute, first, then Mormon.” ...My faith in Mormonism is still strong. Fasting and prayer are ways to spiritual power in both cultures. Yet many of my questions are still there, too. When LDS people tell me that my traditions developed from the *Book of Mormon*, I ask, “Then why do I have to give up those traditions to be a Mormon?”

A problem for me is that I see the LDS culture as a separate structure from LDS teachings. With all my heart I accept those LDS teachings and want them for my children; but the LDS culture has become more alien, not more familiar as the years have passed.... As I have talked to many Indians, they too feel that the culture of the Mormons gets in the way of the teachings....

Many of my Indian brothers and sisters have given up their cultures to become Mormon—to be acceptable to their Anglo Mormon brothers and sisters. How long do they last? ...Some feel they must choose between being Mormon and being Indian.... I remember my grandmother, the first Indian member of the Relief Society in the Uintah Basin. After years of faithful service, she went back to the traditional ways. For her, the gap got wider and wider until she had to choose. (pp. 147-152)

Benedek (1995) quoted Ella Bedonie, saying, “I don’t know. I guess I really wanted to be a Mormon. I wanted to live that life. A life that was comfortable” (p. 131). Although she was an “active” Mormon in her foster home and wanted to work in the church after graduation, Bedonie married a Catholic. This action barred her from being married in the LDS temple, which is a required ordinance that paves the way, according to Mormon belief, to a higher degree of glory in the afterlife. After her first husband was killed, Bedonie was married a second time the Navajo way and consequently embraced the Native American Church.

During interviews, religiosity surfaced as a noteworthy issue. Of 25 placement

students mentioned by 13 foster parents or foster siblings, only one male was described as a now-devout Mormon and one female was trying to live LDS mores. One foster mother, Helen Smith, was particularly saddened by religion-related outcomes. None of the six placement students who lived with her remained in the church (two of these students died while on the reservation). She commented, “I don’t know that we really did something good for their futures church-wise...” (telephone interview, October 15, 2006).

Of the seven Native American past student participants I interviewed, one described herself as being a devout Mormon; three were not in the church, and three gave “un-committed” responses. Julie Clark wrote: “[While on placement] I had a once in a lifetime opportunity to...gain a deeper testimony of my Savior and Heavenly Father’s teachings...” (email interview, July 5, 2006). Bahe Reck cursed the Mormons: “I hope those mormenz [sic] get cursed and turned “dark and loathsome” for what they did to us. Anyway, their hearts surely are dark” (email interview, July 26, 2006). Leslie Ellis said,

First of all, I’m not a “Lamanite” ...I didn’t like the term when I HAD to go to church.... I never really agreed with the way the LDS teachings were/are.... The LDS church is just trying to do what the government has been trying to do since the beginning of time. The LDS church is trying to get rid of the Indians, and make them like them.... Indians that I went to church with are no longer affiliated with the church anymore either. (email interview, July 26, 2006)

A preponderance of evidence from primary and secondary sources support the conclusion that long-term conversion to the LDS faith rarely happened, even after a successful placement experience and an LDS mission.

*Social/Family/Culture-Related Beliefs  
and Outcomes*

Several of the LDS Native American Oral History Project respondents said that,

as young children on the reservation, their daily companions were the sheep they tended, their siblings, and their extended families. Generally, grandparents played a large role in their lives. For example, James Dandy related,

I was born in about 1940. I was raised by my grandparents. My grandmother used to do a lot of weaving rugs all through the winter.... One summer my grandmother was out there. We were out shearing sheep. It was a hot day. That's the first time I remember seeing a white man come to our home. He was working with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He was doing livestock reduction.... I remember not going to the trading post until I was about nine years old. (interviewed by Jessie Embry, October 2, 1990)

Mary Crow Dog (1990) explained,

[T]he center of the [Indian] society was the *tiyospaye*, the extended family group, the basic hunting band, which included grandparents, uncles, aunts, in-laws, and cousins. The *tiyospaye* was like a warm womb cradling all within it. Kids were never alone, always fussed over by not one but several mothers, watched and taught by several fathers.... Grandparents in our tribe always held a special place in caring for the little ones.... The whites destroyed the *tiyospaye*, not accidentally, but as a matter of policy. The close-knit clan, set in its old ways, was a stumbling block in the path of the missionary and government agent, its traditions and customs a barrier to what white men called "progress" and "civilization." And so the government tore the *tiyospaye* apart and forced the [Indian] into the kind of relationship now called the nuclear family. (p. 13)

On placement, many students were first introduced to the nuclear family way of living (two parents and a few siblings living in one home). The "*tiyospaye*" for many of the placement students was not as idyllic as Mary Crow Dog described, however.

Because some of the students' parents were alcoholic, died early, were divorced, or could not support their families, past students commented that they learned about "functional," albeit white, roles of parents and siblings in their foster homes, and they were patterning their own families after their foster home dynamics. For example, Ludene Bankhead's foster student told her she learned how to be a mother and run a household from her

example (telephone interview October 12, 2006). Both Tonia Halona and Helena Hogue, respondents for the LDS Native American Oral History Project, made similar remarks during their interviews. Tonia Halona said she “learned what it is like to be a family” (interviewed by Jim Dandy, April 10, 1991). Helena Hogue spoke of learning skills like cooking, sewing, cleaning, and dressing (interviewed by Ernesteen Lynch, August 21, 1990).

Certainly family models and values are central aspects of cultural practice, and the movement from a matrilineal clan to a patrilineal nuclear family model is a polar adjustment. I questioned Clarence Bishop during a telephone conversation (October 4, 2004) about these radical changes. Because the program had been accused of robbing the students of their culture, I was interested to hear his comments on this topic, but I was not quite prepared for his response. He asked in return, “What culture? A culture of poverty? A culture of alcoholism and drug abuse?” He communicated a “deficit” view of the Native American culture. I soon realized, however, he was suggesting that poverty, alcoholism and drug abuse had robbed the Indians of their culture. According to him, education and the LDS church were poised to fill the void—offering salvation (spiritual and temporal), new lifeways, and an education. “Assimilation,” as a negative, term hung heavy in my mind as we spoke, but he did suggest that Native Americans should retain what was noble and best about their culture. He did not elaborate on what that was.

Both in the interviews I collected and in the studies of others, past placement program students often reported that they were reasonably competent in both white and Indian worlds, but they belonged to neither and were left straddling both cultures.

Chadwick and colleagues (1986) concluded that participation did foster some degree of assimilation of the Indian children. The children's families also learned more about white society. Smith (2003) asserted that a cultural transition from a so-called primitive society to a so-called highly advanced society was made by some individuals in one cultural leap, but the program generally failed to completely assimilate the Native American children. Hangen (1992) interviewed past Native participants who recognized the possible acculturation/assimilation outcomes, but they felt that that purpose and effect was incompatible with Native American lifeways. Hangen quoted a participant, "I believe we had to be indoctrinated into the LDS Church for us to forget our traditions and whatnots. Because the Navajos' traditions and the way of life, the culture, they all tie together, you can't separate it" (p. 28). Hangen commented,

Through placement, a missionary program, Mormons attempted to teach Native American children about the error of their previous ways. Some of those children, now grown, look back on the experience and identify the process of moving away from their traditional culture as being the most essential to the placement experience, the most memorable, the most "important" effect of placement. (p. 28)

Hangen quoted another participant,

When I came back to school here [on the reservation] for tenth, eleventh, and twelfth, I was considered a white Navajo. Kids used to tease me, say I was a white Navajo. I would associate more with the whites at school than my own people, the Navajos. And now I know it is because of my upbringing in Utah. (p. 42)

According to Hangen (1992), other ways of coping were reported:

1. I really had to struggle with it and I found out in order to be happy I had to accept both part [sic] of me...I'm not Utah Mormon, and I'm not brown-skinned Utah Mormon and I'm not a Navajo Indian. You know, I'm just who I am. (p. 43)

2. I know that others have felt [placement] wasn't good in the sense that it took away our culture. See, that bothered me, because I really didn't have—I don't speak Indian, I was never into the culture. I mean, I love my culture. I would not be ashamed of it, but it is just something I wasn't into. So I did have a problem as far as—what's the word, identity? I wasn't sure if I should be white or I should be Indian... Because I wanted to be an Indian, but live the white man's way. I wanted an education. I didn't want to ever go back to the reservation. I wanted something good for myself. That's when I started thinking, "Okay, I have the skin color, do I give up everything else and become white?" And it wasn't until later that I finally realized it doesn't matter. I am a child of God, and that's the way I should see myself, and just take it from there and live my life as such. (p. 50)
  
3. In my mind it's not to retain the culture, but to survive, to learn about traditions. More than anything else, we want to survive as a people. We don't want to blend in to the point where people say, "Oh, they were Indians once upon a time here." To me, survival means being able to articulate, function, analyze, as an attorney, a doctor, a MBA graduate, going back to the reservation to negotiate for ourselves. One of the ideas of the program was to be able to see the dominant culture, the opportunities in the Anglo culture, develop an awareness of who you are, and be able to take the best of both. Being an Indian is not to run around in a breechcloth, saying, "The white man screwed me." But to sit down and communicate with the banker or the lawyer and to know what he's talking about so you can't be fooled. (p. 52)

Hangen added, "[My subjects] seriously questioned successful biculturalism—Mormonism and 'traditional Navajo culture' were seen as irreconcilably different. You could be 'functional' in Anglo-Mormon life, but not bicultural" (p. 48).

Lee (1987) commented,

I came to see that I could adopt the good things and reject the bad things of both cultures, but at times it was necessary to mentally switch to a set of values that applied to only one culture or the other.... If I had not had sufficient self-esteem in the Anglo culture, I would have not been able to function in it. . . . Somehow, with the help of my foster family and the Lord, I was able to make the transition from my own Indian culture to the Anglo Latter-day Saint way of life without any serious emotional trauma, and without sacrificing my Indian nature. (p. 148)

Bedonie stated in her biography (Benedeck, 1995), "I don't think...I forgot the language of Navajo. I knew what was expected of me when I got home, and I just went

right back into that role. When I got on placement, I was able to make the transition back into that role” (p. 125). Emily Benedek, Bedonie’s biographer, wrote,

For nine years, Ella went back and forth between the reservation in the summer and her foster parents in California for the rest of the year. In summertime, she butchered sheep, hauled water, participated in ceremonies, caught up on family news, gossiped, laughed, went to the swap meet, visited her relatives, wove, and did bead work. In winter, she followed the ways of the Mormons, went to school, traveled, attended theater and saw movies. She played the role that was required of her in each world, though she found it a strain. (p. 129)

LDS Native American Oral History Project stories echo many of Lee’s and Bedonie’s remarks: Respondents reported they were able to separate Indian culture from native religious practices. They could find balance by participating in their Indian culture, though not in participating in particular Indian religious practices. All reported being accepted without prejudice in their foster homes, the LDS churches, and in the Utah public school system, although some reported that they were elected to leadership positions because they were a novelty.

Jim Curley commented,

Reflecting on the good and the difficult times as a participant in this program does not necessarily mean one has to assimilate to be successful. What it comes down to is finding you own inner peace.... I have always kept a distance and I knew my place, who I was and who I was coming from. For a while it seemed as if I didn’t fit in either surrounding until I went off to BYU.... There was no training for families and students to help them make the required adjustment and how to deal with problems.... I needed mentors. I needed someone to show me the way.... I question the belief that the church took careful consideration for the Navajo culture and other tribes being preserved for future generations. (email interview, April 20, 2005)

Stress existed on both side of this foster dynamic, affecting the LDS homes, as well. In Chadwick and colleagues’ study (1986), about 20% indicated that the husband-wife relationship had been strained, primarily due to disagreements about how to handle

the Indian child. About 20% of the foster mothers and 8% of the foster fathers reported they had experienced stress in their relationship with their natural children. There were positive outcomes, however: Approximately 33% of the foster parents reported that they valued the exposure to a different culture. A warm relationship with the child was mentioned. Several LDS parents stated that they had grown personally, gaining more patience and enlarging their capacity to love. Valberg's study (1973) also mentioned that the foster parent enjoyed watching the placement children grow and develop spiritually, academically, and socially.

Chadwick and colleagues' study (1968) reported that the children of the white foster families reported more stress in the altered family relationships than did the parents, 25% reporting that their relationship with their parents had been adversely affected. Additionally, 33% said their relationships with their natural brothers and sisters had suffered as a result of the placement student in the home. Cox (1980) noted that the natural children would "make or break" the foster placements (p. 64.)

There was often resentment concerning what they viewed as an unfair sharing of family resources. Cathy Bankhead commented,

I know it sounds petty, but I guess we were in competition for the same resources.... [Her dad] made more money than we did. It always made my sister and me feel bad. Our family barely had enough to get by. We pinched pennies, made our own clothes, and lived off our garden and farm animals. We were expected to share all our things with her, but she was very protective of herself and her things, and she didn't share with us.... She impacted my sister and me the most—it's like we were supposed to take care of her as a sister and friend, but we didn't feel that way towards her. She didn't have much to do with our brothers at all. She acted downright suspicious of us. I remember one time she came back from summer, she pulled out of her suitcase the most beautiful store-bought red and white gingham dress I had ever seen. My sister and I just melted with jealousy. (telephone interview, October 25, 2006)



Jealously can be destructive; however, the problems encountered by Sandra Mickle were devastating. Sandra was sexually molested by the placement siblings assigned to her family. They were nephews of George P. Lee, and they were placed there by him (personal interview, October 30, 2006).

Sibling problems were sometimes instigated by placement students. An anonymous informant interviewed by Smith (2003) confessed,

A lot of arguments, a lot of fighting, I constantly tested my brothers and sisters. I think I was very abusive in respects to the way I manipulated them. I didn't manipulate verbally, but if I saw the opportunity to cause conflict, I did it without doing it obviously. So nobody really knew—I don't think people, except for us kids, knew it was me—my mom and my dad didn't ever grasp it. . . . I think I was just acting the best way I knew how for people who were trying to love me and [I was] trying to say, "I don't need this! Go away! I wasn't a verbal person. For a long time I was an introverted, non-verbal, non-aggressive person in respects to my behaviors and mannerisms and voice. And so it was my only outlet of saying, "I'm not happy" by causing fights and causing trouble.... I enjoyed making one of my brothers as mad as he could get just to see how mad he could get and how far I could push him. (p. 28)

But the predominant attitude toward their foster siblings was one of unconcern. No interviewee said he or she loved their foster sibling. There were few memories to relate, and few informants knew *any* information about these past-siblings who are now adults. Shirley Hester, whose parents fostered a placement student, commented, "I didn't really get to know her well. I don't even remember her last name. I'd have to ask mother..." (personal interview, October 28, 2006).

Generally speaking, the behavior of the foster children was perceived by the foster parents as similar to that of their natural children. Chadwick and colleagues' study (1986) reported that the behavior most often disapproved of by foster parents was the placement children's reluctance to do homework. The most serious impact concerned the

foster children's violations of middle-class values: lying, stealing, profanity, and premarital sex. Other negative behaviors included a lack of communication, poor personal hygiene, and the misuse of money. Approximately 25% of the parents and siblings believed that the placement student had a negative influence in the other children in the family by teaching them forbidden behaviors. Despite the inappropriateness of refusing church leaders' requests, only 85% of those who participated said they would again open their home to Indian Placement youth. If they could go back in time and if they had a choice in the decision, 33% of the former foster siblings said they would not choose to repeat the experience. Now-adult foster siblings repeatedly expressed that they regretted the inappropriate behaviors to which the placement students had introduced them. Also, they were upset by the severe culture shock and trauma they felt the Indian children had undergone as they shifted back and forth between cultures and families.

#### *Emotional/Psychological Impacts and Implications*

This topic logically follows the previous one because so many respondents gave answers that intertwined the concepts of society, family, culture, and psychological impact. Though quotes above indicate that living in a white, LDS world was not easy and at times very stressful, Chadwick and colleagues (1986) stated that there is no evidence of long-term, severe psychological trauma resulting from participating in the program. Smith (2003) concluded that participants successfully incorporated new values they deemed worthwhile and adapted other white/LDS values to fit native spiritual and cultural belief systems.

Topper's study (1979) discusses significant psychological damage, however, asserting that program participation disrupted the normal adolescent development of Indian children. He concluded that the return home in the summer often produced severe emotional stress. According to Topper, adolescents exhibited three major defensive styles for coping with the psychological stress of the summer return: (a) the denial or partial denial of their Indian identity; (b) the temporary rejection of their Mormon foster families and the Mormon religion; and (c) the permanent rejection of the foster families and the refusal to return on placement. Topper believed that emotional attachments, sympathy, and affection to foster parents did form during placement, but the students did not consider the foster family as their family. The attachments formed because the students were generally treated well, and they were given attention and material things.

Topper asserted that emotional conflicts were acted out through behavioral syndromes, the most prevalent of which were binge drinking done mostly by males, and "hysteria" (agitation, hyperventilation, and hallucination) exhibited mostly by females. He concluded that participants were damaged by the realization that they must grow up Navajo, not white/middle class. Schimmelfennig (1971) concluded that Indian students showed overt hostility concerning whites' rules and regulations of control, their lack of trust, and their punishments for Indian resistance. They were placed in "frantic schizophrenic roles" as they tried to accommodate two value systems, two concepts of time, and two languages (p. 35). Staheli (1984) found that LDS caseworkers spent much of their time dealing with adjustment problems of the students while at the foster homes.

Lee (1987) commented,

Those who lack confidence in both cultures might be classified as lost between two worlds. Some Indians may completely reject their traditional upbringing in favor of living or mimicking the dominant culture. Often they encounter severe emotional difficulties when returning to the reservation. (p. 223)

Lee wrote several times of the difficulty of adapting to the initial and summer changes in placement. "I cried in the solitude of my room as I thought about my family back home... I longed for home, sheep, unruly goats, skinny herd dogs, and happiness" (p. 127). "It did not take me long to learn that the more I thought about the reservation, the more lonely and homesick I became" (p. 134). In his biography, Lee wrote of his cousin, Roger, who thought he'd "go crazy" that first year (p. 152).

According to Lee, one of the biggest adjustments was getting used to time schedules and the worry of planning for the next day or setting goals for the future. Other initial social adjustments included restricted space, constant talking, pressures to compete, material accumulation, and a focus on tidiness and personal cleanliness.

Loneliness was a problem. Bedonie is quoted as saying,

I think when I first got there, I was lonely. I was lonesome for my family. I remember crying sometimes. I guess sometimes I was quiet, I got too quiet or something.... And then when I came home, I guess through the years I looked forward to going back. And it didn't bother me after that. I don't think I was homesick after that, after going home for the summer. (Benedek, 1995, pp. 124-25)

Bedonie said she felt particularly left out by the "chatter" of white people who continually talked about things to which she could not relate.

Cox (1980) noted the same pressure of bridging the gap between the two cultures and two families. She told of one girl who bathed in Clorox to try to get rid of her brown skin. Girls, in particular, reminded her of "whipped pups" and many were afraid to be

alone with the LDS fathers. Cox repeatedly mentioned misbehaviors such as lying, running away, hiding food, hiding kitchen knives in bedrooms, fighting, drinking, stealing, sexual misconduct, and bedwetting. One of her foster daughters quit eating and speaking. It is interesting to note that Arianne Cope (2006), the author of *The Coming of Elijah*, chose to create a Native American protagonist who is emotionally damaged and vocally mute, as well. In an email exchange with me, she wrote of this decision.

I did decide to make Mary mute as a symbol of the communication barrier between Utah Mormons and other cultures during the twentieth century. A lot of people I interviewed said their IPP [Indian Placement Program] students were very quiet. Mary's silence, to me, is a cry—the cry of all the placement students who were never heard or understood. (email interview, July 17, 2007)

Jim Curley also chose silence:

My caseworkers, church leaders, and foster parents' solution to many of my questions and some of my problems was to simply pray and the answers will come, if I am diligent, faithful, and humble. This is not what was needed. I needed a mentor. I needed someone to show me the way. After a while, I...kept things to myself knowing others didn't have the answers or solutions to help me. (email correspondence, April 20, 2005)

Cox (1980) wrote of the trauma of being passed from one LDS family to another—of not being wanted back. One of her placement students had lived in five different LDS homes in four years. According to Cox, “She lost one home because she put a package of frozen fish in the cupboard instead of the freezer. She lost another because she used her foster mother's toothbrush” (p. 62). One of Cox's placement students who could not stay in her home because of his behavior returned to the reservation and committed suicide within a year's time.

The responses of the Native American participants I spoke with varied widely on this topic of emotional impact. It was of no surprise that the respondents who were still

active in the LDS church and who were patterning their lives after typically white models, reported that, besides initial homesickness, they were generally contented with their placement situations and adapted somewhat easily. Cynthia Frazier, for example went to live with her foster family when she was four years old. She wrote,

I was so young when I went to the Williamson home that I built a strong bond with my foster parents and my foster brother. I did not return to the reservation during the summers but stayed in American Fork with my foster family. I always thought I was part of their family; they truly accepted me as their own daughter. (email interview, January 31, 2006)

Others had experiences much like Ella Bedonie. They tolerated the white lifestyles and church experiences, but they returned to their native/other cultural practices and beliefs after their foster placements ended. Leslie Ellis had that experience. She said, “The family itself was nice. The mother a little stricter than the father. A little too Hoity Toity for me. I maintained who I was, because I had a strong sense of who I was.... In the end I can say that Placement only reinforced that I love who I am” (email interview, July 20, 2006). A couple of respondents continued to feel anger and hurt because of placement experiences, and they wanted to talk to me about that anger. Bahe Reck said,

We cannot be white even though the Mormons have tried to make us believe that we can turn white if we believe what they believe. [It’s] a subtle punch at non-white people when you’re a kid, but it sure smacks a wallop when you realize as an adult what the Mormons were trying to do to you as a kid...brainwash and turn you against your own. (email interview, July 27, 2006)

Jim Raven spoke of his mother’s foster experiences: “As my mother said to me: ‘I learned in spite of these scum not because of them; but if I knew I could only acquire my education and what I have via or as a result of what they did to me, I would choose to

be illiterate and to have nothing.” His mother was sexually abused by her foster parents. She later committed suicide. He continued, “She left a note indicating that the demons that had haunted her for so many years as a result of all kinds of abuse she suffered at the hands of Mormons were a factor in her suicide” (email interview, July 17, 2006).

Difficulties were recorded from both sides of the foster experience. Cox (1980) said that the first year was the most difficult. She and her husband were determined not to quit, however, and ultimately, after many years and many different placement students, she felt the experience was positive. She did request, however, that one daughter be removed because “the tension caused by our lack of relationship was ruining our home life” (p. 82).

The majority of the LDS foster parents I interviewed reported that they had lost contact with their past foster children. For example, Jenny Maughan did not know how to reach her past-foster student, a young man who had lived with them from the time he was nine until after he graduated from high school (telephone interview, October 30, 2006). After taking in six foster students, Helen Smith had no current connection to any of them (telephone interview, October 15, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, most White foster siblings reported they felt little attachment to the Native students both during and after the experience. Arianne Cope reported that this curious lack of connection was the main reason she was prompted to do family research and write her resulting book: “How could my family be so directly involved in something they whole heartedly believed in, and then never talk about it again after the results weren’t what they hoped?” She continued,

Talking to my grandpa is like reading George P. Lee's book. He is all cheerful about it all, but there is a lot between the lines. These children didn't end up being the kind of people they could boil down to an inspirational story to share, and so they don't talk about it at all. I was halfway through my book before I knew anything about their experiences. I think they would at least say it was more complex and challenging than they planned. What else did they plan on? I'd say sweet little kids who would come up and be totally grateful for the greater truth and culture they were being exposed to. But the children ended up being confused and complex. And no one seemed to realize what wasn't working. (email conversation, July 22, 2006)

I, too, have been struck by the general lack of discussion and emotional connection between foster children and their LDS families. As I spoke to one LDS foster sibling, Adam Barker, about his experience, he was amazed by his own epiphany. He said, "During all of these years, I have never even thought about this experience and what it really meant. I just accepted [the foster placement students] as a presence, as wallpaper in my memory. But what did it mean?" He was amazed by the fact that "it didn't seem to mean anything" (personal interview, October 26, 2006).

One foster sibling I spoke to, Sandra Mickle, had very strong feelings associated with the experience, however, and openly wept during our conversation. Her family had been asked by George P. Lee to take two of his nephews. He told the family that the boys had some problems and needed to be placed in an exceptionally good LDS home. The speaker's father was the Bishop of their ward. She asserted that both boys, who were a little older than she was at the time, sexually abused her. When her parents contacted Lee to have the boys removed from their home, Lee seemed unconcerned and tried to insist that the boys remain. I asked her if she knew what became of these boys. She said the oldest had been murdered on the reservation and, last she heard, the other one was homeless (personal interview, October 20, 2006).



Miekle's memory of sexual abuse was echoed by another foster sibling I interviewed. Joy Winn related a similar story. Both she and her older sister were sexually abused by the much older boy placed in their family (personal interview, November 11, 2007).

Certainly the above interviews, whether conducted by others or myself, illuminate the human drama of this intercultural endeavor and give individual voice to experiences of joy and sorrow. The continuum of experience is wide: Cynthia Frasier, a past placement student, said she felt "so blessed to have the best of both worlds" (email interview, January 31, 2006). Nancy Clark, another past student, said she gained a testimony

of the Savior and Heavenly Father's teachings by "my loving foster family.... My whole earth life and eternity have been affected. Now I have nine grandchildren with parents [who] are members of the church.... Looking back, I gained so much more than I gave up. (email interview, July 5, 2006)

Jim Raven blames his mother's unhappiness and suicide—plus his own sorrow—on the impact of placement experiences. He is furious:

My mother used to lie in wait for the Mormon missionaries to show up where she would put them through pure hell in terms of exposing the ugly racism, misogyny, elitism and just plain perversion in their history, practices and "holy books".... There are some very dangerous and sick twisted individuals running this "Church" and some really brainwashed and even pathetic individuals following it. (email interview, July 17, 2006)

Behe Reck said,

The thing I remember the most about mormenz is that they told me that my people were "cursed." That god had cursed ndnz and that's why they were blk. Or rather, their favorite phrase was "dark and loathsome" while the white people were "light and delightsome." And that mormenz were put here to save the "dark and lothesome" ndnz from their heathen ways. I was in the "placement program" from 1962–1965, between the ages of 8 and 12. They tried to brainwash me of

my ndnness and ndn ways, and they succeeded for awhile...but I eventually regained my humanity slowly but surely. It was a long process. (email interview, July 26, 2006)

Perhaps this is the significance of this chapter: For Native Americans in particular, participation in the LDS Indian Student Placement program was not a benign event. It was dynamic and continues to affect continuing generations of Native Americans in several ways: religion, education, socioeconomics, and culture.

None of the four Native Americans quoted above live on the reservation. All four have college and graduate degrees. The two women teach at a southern Utah college. Jim Raven is also a college professor. Behe Reck does technology/computer work. All four live in a white world, but their levels of acculturation and assimilation are very different—or perhaps their inner peace/turmoil with acculturation and assimilation is very different.

For many LDS families, it was a perplexing, challenging moment in time as parents and their children struggled to be obedient to the responsibilities of the LDS church. When I asked Helen Smith, the foster mother of six children (at the request of President Kimball himself) if she would do it all over again, she replied, “No...yes...I guess. My husband and I talked a lot about this. I’m not sure what we did for their futures—church-wise or otherwise.... Maybe, if nothing else, we helped their self-esteem.” Her first placement student graduated from a local high school and went straight to Viet Nam. He and his wife were later killed in a drunk driving accident. The second child, his sister, was sad and cried nightly. At the end of 4 years, she died of a heart ailment. The third child, a brother, came and went. He was a “trouble-maker.” The

fourth child was of another Navajo family. She came for only one year and “we hardly got to know her.” The fifth child stayed until she graduated.

She was beautiful, but so unhappy. I don't think she ever got over being homesick. She cried night after night. I would try to comfort her, and I would ask what was wrong, but she didn't say much.... She was hard to have in our home.... In all the time she stayed with us, she never showed us any affection.

The sixth child, who came as a 12 year old, was already an alcoholic. All returned to the reservation. As mentioned above, there is no lasting contact (telephone interview, October 15, 2006).

Even though history generally illuminates patterns and prompts conclusions, pulling together these diverse, complex experiences in order to make meaning from them is no easy task. The above interviews, whether conducted by others or myself, illuminate the human drama of this effort to assimilate Native Americans to the LDS religion and culture. In the final chapter of this study, Chapter VI, I will again consider the task of drawing conclusions as I focus on issues of acculturation and assimilation.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

I stated in Chapter I: “My foremost purpose was to describe this historic phenomenon deeply and to create a more unified, more correct understanding of the program.” En route, I promised to answer the following questions.

1. What was the Indian placement program?
2. What was the historical context that led up to its creation, its operation, and its demise?
3. What were the controversies during its operation?
4. What did the program do for/to the child? The child’s family? The foster family?
5. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program?
6. What does the Indian placement program experience tell us about educating Native American children?

These aims and questions have been answered, although the last item will be considered more in this chapter. As to coming to conclusions concerning the program, there is more than one way to approach this task. The first begins with goals and objectives: Did the program accomplish what it set out to do? Second, the weight of outcomes can be considered: What outcomes continue to surface and repeat? Which outcomes are most significant? What outcomes were surprising? Third, perhaps this event serves a significant purpose: Can we learn something important from this past event?

## Goals and Objectives: Did the Program Accomplish

### What It Set Out to Do?

*Foster Parent Guide*, a 1970 orientation manual for new LDS foster families, states the program's objectives:

The objective of the Placement Service is to provide educational, spiritual, social, and cultural opportunities in non-Indian community life for Latter-day Saint Indian children. It is felt that through the exemplary living of selected Latter-day Saint families, these Indian youth will be motivated to use their experiences now and later for the benefit of themselves and their people. These experiences may provide a springboard to positions of great leadership for some students, for others they will be a means of becoming stronger, more adequate parents to their own children. In any case, the experiences of the Indian child in the foster home can provide a bulwark of intellectual and moral values which will assist him to meet challenges of his life. (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970, pp. 1-2)

“Opportunity” is difficult to define, and that definition is affected by perspective.

For example, many involved in the placement program did not consider acculturation or assimilation into Anglo society an opportunity. If opportunity can be defined as broadened choices or options, then that definition could work: The Indian Student Placement Program did, indeed, provide more educational, spiritual, social, and cultural choices than would be typically available on the reservation. The choices of the less privileged are often encumbered by their difficult circumstances, however. It could be said that participation in the program limited the Native American's choices in some ways—they lost their opportunity to live culturally cohesive lives.

Clarence Bishop was emphatic that the program was successful because it offered opportunities, but it was up to the participant to decide what to do with these choices.

His comment below was made in response to my question: How have you responded to

other people, particularly Native Americans, who asserted that the program took away the placement students' native culture? He responded,

What culture? The culture of alcoholism and drugs? The culture of poverty, joblessness, and despair? They need to have those traditions changed. Besides, according to the *Book of Mormon*, Lamanites changed long ago from one culture to another—it was just a change in ways of living—changing from one way to a better way. If it were wrong to do this, then we shouldn't be baptizing Catholics and Hindus, either. But it was really about change through education. The placement program was an educational program. And this was a success. We offered opportunity. Just the offering was successful. It was up to them to then succeed or fail. We gave them the opportunity to succeed in today's world. If you went to Arizona, to the Tribal Council in Window Rock, to the reservation schools, you would see their competence in action. And not just on the reservations...our largest congregation is in urban Los Angeles.... The program was a success. (telephone interview, October 4, 2004)

Certainly these comments illustrate an outmoded, minimalizing and deficit-based view of the significance of Native American culture and of cultural change. According to Bishop, assimilation was just a change in ways of living, just choosing to change from bad to good, and that choice to assimilate into white society was an “opportunity.”

According to the *Foster Parent Guide* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970), Native American participants could use what they learned on placement to become more effective leaders and better parents—according to Anglo, LDS standards. Did placement students go back to reservations to become religious, social, or political leaders in their culture? Did these people become good parents within their own society? Did these placement students become leaders and better parents within Anglo society?

There is not sufficient pooled data in this report or others to conclusively answer those questions. George P. Lee became a high-profile leader, eventually running for tribal President. He was not successful in his political bid; he lost his leadership role in the

LDS church; and he lost a leadership role within the school system where he was serving as a principal when he was convicted of sexual abuse of a child. Of those interviewed for Brigham Young University's LDS Native American Oral History Project, however, several respondents mentioned positive leadership and familial outcomes, as defined by white LDS mores. For example, Elena Hogue said she learned to be a wife, mother, and sister from the examples set by her foster family. Stephanie Chiquito also commented that she learned to show familial affection by watching her foster family. Edouardo Zondajas had a degree from BYU and was becoming a lawyer. Julius Chavez discussed his various leadership positions in white schools and church organizations. Jim Benally graduated from BYU and became the coordinator of student programs there. Joseph Harlan was headed to law school. Both Lewis Singer and Jim Benally became educators and worked on reservation schools. Lewis Singer is currently a principal for a southern Utah school district.

I first met Jim Curley when he came to a local high school to talk about Indian culture with students there. The president of a local multicultural club, Curley was there as a culture emissary—a culture broker. Szasz (1988) defined leadership success as having the ability to serve as a culture broker between the Native American and Anglo worlds. Not only did Curley visit other sites with his message, he had the opportunity at Utah State University to assist people as they worked to function in and find peace in the white dominant society. It is difficult to make a clear connection between his leadership position and his participation on the placement program, but he gained much of his knowledge of the white world while on placement that has enabled him to do this job

(email interview, April 20, 2006).

School settings are natural “homes” for culture brokers, and I have made personal contact with many Native American past-participants who now work in school systems as paraprofessionals, teachers, principals, and professors. Shumway and Shumway (2002) reported the prevalence of Native American past-participant educators in their book, as well.

### The Weight of Outcomes

I asked, “Did the positives outweigh the bad or vice versa?” to most of the people I interviewed. Both Native American and Anglo participants had trouble succinctly classifying their participation for all could remember both good and bad. I did note, however, the affirmation their responses gave to the Chadwick and colleagues’ study (1986), namely:

“Good”:

- The program slightly enhanced the educational achievement of participants.
- Participants viewed themselves as being reasonably competent in both Indian and White worlds.
- In the study, 82% of the Native American families felt there was some positive effects, the largest being: family religiosity (15%), a better education (14%), a better life (12%), an improvement in character (12%).
- Most of the Native American parents believed their children had been adequately cared and provided for.
- Foster parents reported they had learned patience and a greater capacity to love others.



“Bad”:

- Only about one third of the Native American students returned to their foster families each year until they graduated from high school.
- Participants did not feel they belonged totally to either the Indian or White worlds. They expressed the fate of a marginal person straddling two cultures.
- Native American families reported the loss of the child’s contribution to the family’s well-being as a negative effect (hauling water, chopping wood, herding sheep, etc.).
- Natural parents missed their children (and the placement children missed their families).
- Foster parents reported that family relationships were strained due to disagreements about how to handle the placement children. Mothers and children in the foster families reported the most stress.
- Foster parents reported that the behavior of placement children had adversely affected the behavior of their natural children.

“Good/bad”:

- Participants were more likely than controls to consider themselves “partly white.” The placement experience propagated the assimilation process.

“Neutral”:

- The type of employment, occupational prestige, and income generally favored placement students, but the differences were not statistically significant.
- Concerning long-range economic success, none of the economic indicators showed that the participants were better or worse off than the control group.
- The marriages of past Native American participants were neither more or less stable or happy than the controls.
- There were no social adjustment benefits from the placement experience.
- Psychological adjustments were “reasonable,” not extreme. (Topper, 1979, reported the opposite.)

Because the study was conducted by BYU professors, it is interesting that this

study did not ask specific questions concerning religiosity. Topper (1979), as mentioned earlier, did focus on religious attitudes and practices and found that the program was not a successful missionary tool: The subjects he followed did not continue to be actively practicing Mormons. The data I collected and reported in the previous chapters support that finding, as well.

Although there are more “bad” and “neutral” listings, it seems logical that items should be weighted by significance. For example, how does one compare the pervasive loss of Native American culture, assimilation into the white world, with slightly enhanced educational achievement in white school settings? Yet, the ability to function in a white world, a knowledge gained while on placement and a result of acculturation, has not been disparaged by any informant that I have interacted with or read about. Obviously, this type of cumulative assessment is subjective because it is based on a single value system laden with biases—mine.

Because I have had personal experience as a foster child, I soon realized as I conducted this study that there was another variable complicating the categorization of outcomes—a variable that had not been specifically mentioned in any of the existing placement program studies: the impact of foster care per se. Foster care can be difficult and produce mixed outcomes. There is homesickness and isolation; there is a unique family-culture shock; there are problems with existing siblings; there is emotional detachment; there are identity issues. Foster situations exist because it is deemed by those in authority that children will be better off when removed from their natural families. Even when the foster situation involves people of the same racial background,

family-level assimilation is a goal. The child must adapt to new rules and expectations, new inter-personal dynamics, a new educational placement, and perhaps a new religion. Obviously, cross-cultural foster care can be even more difficult, where new and foreign value systems must be internalized. Conversely, the foster families' standard of living might be better; the foster parents may have better parenting and life skills; education support might be greater; the foster placement might be a safer environment; there might be a greater emphasis on religious and social values.

Fostering Indian children was not a new idea. Robert Bergman, former chief of Mental Health Programs of the U.S. Mental Health Service, wrote,

Separating Indian children from their parents and tribes has been one of the major aims of governmental Indian services for generations. The assumption is that children and particularly those in any kind of difficulty would be better off being raised by someone other than their own parents. The purpose of the first boarding school on the Navajo Reservation as stated in its charter in the 1890s was "to remove the Navajo child from the influence of his savage parents...." Few agencies who are supposed to provide care for Indian children are able to help Indian communities and families solve child welfare problems except by one or another means of placement. This procedure usually solves problems only in the sense of removing them from the immediate scene while in the long run destroying families and communities.... The human experiment of tampering with Indian children's welfare and education for over 100 years has been for the most part a failure. (1977, p. 34)

Theoretically, the placement program was voluntary—within the range of encumbered choices—for all involved parties and the foster families were not remunerated. There is little evidence that suggests that the intent of the program and the foster caregivers' participation was not well intended. LDS President Spencer W. Kimball saw what he considered to be dire need in the Native American community: financial poverty, lack of schooling, alcoholism and drug abuse, the breakdown of family

units, and a need for spiritual salvation. The foster parents I interviewed all believed they were performing appropriate acts of kindness and charity by bringing Native American children into their homes to be raised by intact, caring, religious families.

Though the placement program was part of my own LDS milieu, I was surprised or impressed by several findings, some of which have already been mentioned: the lack of emotional bonding, the reasons people became involved with the program, the lack of true conversion, the spontaneous leap into the program on the church's part and the lack of church response to race-related criticism. I was also impressed by the general lack of school success, particularly considering that "student" is a key word in the program's title.

I, like Arianne Cope, was astounded by how few people reported that the foster child folded into the family and maintained family ties, even after sharing the same home for years. There may be various reasons for this, but the one that is most glaring relates to issues of assimilation. The more assimilated a child became to white middle-class values and the LDS church, the more likely they were to connect emotionally. Gerald Singer paid tribute to his foster mother and said, "I didn't consider myself to be deeply entrenched in the Navajo ways, so it didn't seem to be a big problem for me" (email interview, February 22, 2006). He married an LDS Anglo woman and they live a white middle-class lifestyle. Singer is a school principal and educator. He and his wife participated in a state foster care program and took several Native American boys into their home. He added, "We did not promote the Navajo culture ways, but we were aware of the natural parents' wishes." He and his wife remain in close contact with his foster

family. But many other Native American students did not connect emotionally and never found a home in the “landscapes and ecologies” of the white world. To quote Evelyn Blanchard again: “When [the foster children] grew old enough to wander, they left these homes in search of themselves and their people” (Blanchard, 1977, p. 59).

When I was asked to accept a foster student, I assumed that those who did volunteered. I was surprised to find during this study that, in almost all cases, acceptance came after a direct personal request from a church authority. Obedience was more the prompt than charity. I also believed that almost all placement students were participating out of a desire for a better education. Certainly, this was a consideration, but I was surprised by how many Native American families were coping with poverty and large families by juggling children between boarding schools, the placement program, and home. The one gap in this study is a lack of interviews with Native American parents of placement students because of language issues and inaccessible locations. At this point in time, many are aged or deceased. I would like to know, however, in what ways these parents worried about the affects of assimilation. How did that weigh with opportunities for “a better life”? “A better life” seems to refer to some degree of acculturation and assimilation.

I also thought that emersion into the LDS culture and being taught the LDS gospel would have produced more long-term Native American practicing members even if they were initially baptized for program eligibility purposes. Again, I think assimilation difficulties accounted for this. There is a unique LDS, white, middle-class, Utah culture, complete with its own “language” and lifeways that operates in tandem with the LDS

gospel. It would be very difficult to accept one, the LDS teachings, without the other, the LDS culture. Jimmy Benally (interviewed by Odessa Neaman, July 18, 1990) highlighted this difficulty: “I got a testimony of how the church works. The church is true, and it is just the human beings who have frailties.... Once we separate that, we won’t have any problems.” For Native Americans, becoming a Mormon was a multi-layered assimilation process, including white life-ways, LDS life-ways, and LDS doctrinal expectations.

The placement program began with Helen John almost spontaneously and in a flash. Surely Golden Buchanan or Spencer W. Kimball had little idea that her “guest” education situation would snowball into the program it was in such a relatively short amount of time. There was little time to plan or research—then. I am surprised that when there was so much information out there to warn program administrators concerning pitfalls, they seemingly tended to ignore it as they ventured forth. Examples of such are the unhappy lives of the “slave” children purchased during Brigham Young’s time, the minimal assimilation successes of the mission and parochial schools and Pratt’s “outing” program, and the gathering civil right storm, emerging activist voices, and an eye toward self-determination among minority groups. How were those issues considered? Clarence Bishop said little directly concerning that; however, he stated he believed in what the church was doing—assimilating Native Americans for their own good.

I have also been surprised by the LDS church’s silence concerning this event in history. As mentioned earlier, there has been little discussion and no acknowledgement of past cultural naivete or underestimation. There is a remarkable absence of discussion

concerning this long enterprise in Spencer W. Kimball's latest biography/gospel teaching manual published by the church in 2006. Is this chapter in LDS church history intended to be forgotten?

#### Significance: Can We Learn From This Past Event?

What, then, is the lasting lesson or significance of this historic endeavor? Is there evidence that, through participation in the Indian Student Placement Program, many Native Americans were truly converted to the LDS faith? There is not, though some past-participants remain faithful, and their families have been raised in the LDS faith. Is there evidence that the program significantly raised the education levels and socioeconomics of the participants and/or their extended communities? There is not, though some fostered children graduated from high school successfully and attended college, usually BYU.

Is there evidence that the program assimilated the participants into the Anglo culture? Yes, in varying degrees. The term "assimilation" is problematic and, much as I assigned a "good/bad" value in the above categories, it is hard to pin down because of the varying levels of acculturation involved—and the varying levels of satisfaction involved. There did seem to be a pervasive sense of loss, however. As Evelyn Blanchard of the Laguna-Yaqui tribe stated, "When [the foster children] grew old enough to wander, they left these homes in search of themselves and their people" (Blanchard, 1977, p. 59). My reading and interviews substantiated this phenomenon, though most past-participants appreciated being "competent" in both worlds. The angst communicated in interviews with people such as Bahe Reck, Jim Curley, Jim Raven, and Leslie Ellis, all highly

“competent” people, indicated to me that competence is not enough. According to Jim Curley, there must also be peace:

Reflecting on the good and the difficult times as a participant in the program does not necessarily mean one has to assimilate to be successful. What it comes down to is finding your inner peace, whether it be on the reservation or off, living traditionally or as a true Mormon, living with or without modern amenities, etc. Finding that inner peace is a process, it takes time to understand through personal nurturing, self-discovery, identity and actualization to have balance and harmony in life. And as opposed to mainstream society, personal success and attainment in my culture is not based on how smart you are or how much material wealth you have acquired but based on a person’s character. (email interview, April 20, 2005)

Jon Reyner (2007) substantiated Curley’s sentiments when he commented,

Success in school and in life is related to people’s identity, how as a group and individually people are viewed by others and how they see themselves.... Identity is not just a positive self-concept. It is learning your place in the world with both humility and strength.... It is children as they grow up finding a home in the landscapes and ecologies they inhabit. (p. 6)

Bahe Reck, Jim Curley, Jim Raven, and Leslie Ellis are still seeking peace in the landscapes and ecologies they inhabit. For Jim Curley, his target is clear.

At the beginning of this dissertation and at the beginning of this chapter, I ask if this study informs our understandings about schooling Native Americans and other minority students. Some of the above outcomes prompt this question: If most children were screened into the program because they demonstrated academic promise, then why were there few Native American scholars? Through my work as a high school secretary, teacher, and administrator, familiarity with placement students and student records had also prompted the above question. Certainly, cultural assimilation was an issue.

My study for this dissertation made me realize that we were imposing another persona on the placement students: a white *student* persona with white culture



competencies and white background knowledge. Thinking back to my own students, I realized they wrote and spoke of superficial things in their daily lives at school or with their foster families. Rarely did I get a glimpse of the Native American world inside of them. I saw, instead, adaptation, accommodation—and *resistance*. I did not recognize it as such then. It was so passive, so pleasant—but so very real.

Why? Reyner (1992) stated:

A considerable amount of data shows that power and status relations between minority and majority groups exert a major influence on school performance. Minority groups that tend to experience academic difficulties...appear to have developed an insecurity and ambivalence about the value of their own cultural identity as a result of their interactions with the dominant group.... In short, minority students are empowered or disabled as a direct result of their interactions with educators. These interactions are mediated by the implicit role definitions that educators assume in relation to four institutional characteristics of schools. These characteristics reflect the extent to which:

1. Minority students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program;
2. Minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education;
3. Instruction (pedagogy) is used to motivate students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and
4. Professionals involved in student testing (assessment) become advocates for minority students by focusing primarily on the ways in which students' academic difficulties are a function of interactions with and within the school context instead of locating the problem within the student.

Each dimension can be analyzed along a continuum, with one end reflecting an antiracist orientation and the other reflecting the more traditional assimilationist (Anglo-conformity) orientation. The overall hypothesis is that the assimilationist orientation often results in school failure while an intercultural, antiracist orientation allows students to develop the ability, confidence, and motivation that lead to academic success. (p.16)

Now, we are experiencing another forced assimilationist moment in history.

According to the dictates of the current NCLB legislation all cultural/racial subgroups will perform at predetermined benchmarks and will be assessed using identical methods. The knowledge tested is state CORE curriculum, a curriculum built from Anglo cultural experience. Yes, there are subgroup achievement gaps, and ironically, No NCLB is meant to force the gaps to close. As a school administrator, it is my job to see that children memorize content that appears on the test, even when it is not culturally relevant or makes any kind of cultural sense. In a move towards assimilation, I must school children, not necessarily educate them.

I feel compromised and can only imagine how some of my students must feel. Diversity must be allowed, celebrated—and valued in school settings. This acceptance must find form in culturally sensitive and responsive materials, instruction, and assessment. The landscapes and ecologies of education and places of education should foster peace and validation.

Adaptation, accommodation, and resistance to acculturation and assimilation. . . . These terms clearly describe many accounts of Native American placement experiences and, I believe, the experiences of many minority school children today. It is time for change.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Lynette A. Riggs  
(January 2008)

## CAREER OBJECTIVE:

- It is my career objective to continue to work to educate children. I can accomplish this through several roles: as a public school administrator, as a teacher of administrators, as a teacher of teachers, or, best of all, as a teacher of children.

## EDUCATION:

- Ph.D.–Utah State University. College of Education: Curriculum and Instruction
- D.A. coursework completed–Idaho State University:  
English and Philosophy
- Administrator Certification
- M.S - Utah State University: English
- B.S.–Utah State University:  
Major–English Education  
Minor–Music Education
- ESL–Utah State Office of Education/Utah State University

## EXPERIENCE:

- School Accreditation Instructor/Chair–Utah State Office of Education
- Principal–Cache County School District: Lincoln Elementary School Hyrum, Utah
- Vice Principal–Cache County School District: Sky View High School Smithfield, Utah
- Vice Principal–Logan City School District: Mount Logan Middle School Logan, Utah
- Adjunct Professor–Utah State University
- Teacher of English– Logan City School District: Logan High School Logan, Utah
- Classified Employee–Cache County School District