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ACCULTURATION PROCESSES IN  
SOUTHERN UTE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Michael Richard Morton

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
MASTERS OF ARTS

In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the feelings and perceptions of Southern Ute students about their tribal heritage. These students attend a high school located on the Southern Ute reservation in Southwestern Colorado. The sample of Indian students was limited to senior high (grades 10 through 12). Total Southern Ute enrollment in the school was 31.6 percent of the overall enrollment. The students involved in this study represented 23.5 percent of the total Southern Ute enrollment in grades 9 through 12.

These Indian students experienced acculturation processes in differing ways. Some see themselves as no different from their non-Indian peers, while others see themselves distinctly and uniquely as Ute Indians.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Like all people, American Indians have social needs and want to feel comfortable within the atmosphere of group life.

However, it is a unique situation for the American Indian. As indigenous peoples, American Indians have faced and continue to face the question of their relationship to the dominant society. When one examines the historical background in relation to today's educational system, pressure towards submission by Indian students to the dominant culture becomes evident.

This submission appears to require some acculturation to the values and norms of the dominant culture, often to the exclusion of tribal community values. This research will identify and examine various processes that lend themselves to the acculturation, be it partial or total, of Southern Ute students attending Ignacio high school. The main processes dealt with in this study are:

- a) the influence of non-Indian friends
- b) the influence of non-Indian teachers and counselors
- c) the influence of the dominant culture in general
- d) multicultural education in a public school setting

According to Pewewardy (1989) the issue of what type of high school education should be provided for American Indian

students is both critical and controversial in the development of multicultural education. He states that

"at the heart of all the conflicting proposals for urban schools, integrated schools, or regional high schools, or reservation high schools, are many theories on what form of secondary school education yields the greatest benefits for Indian students."

This researcher employs Bagley's (1985) definition of multicultural education:

...a system of education, which, in an ethnically complex society attempts to meet the cultural, cognitive and self-concept needs of groups and individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In addition, such education aims to promote equality of educational achievement between groups and between individuals, mutuality of respect and tolerance between different ethnic groups, and ultimately equality of status, resources access and economic power between different ethnic groups of society. (p. 21)

The public high school of Ignacio, Colorado, the site of this research is one such school with a tri-ethnic student population that is engaged in the endeavor of multi-cultural education.

#### General Characteristics of the Southern Ute Population

According to the Southern Ute Tribe's Office of Vital Statistics (1991), Southern Utes are .35 percent of the La Plata county Colorado population today. Of this population more Utes live on the reservation (70.6 percent) than live off or away from the reservation (Vital stats. 1991).

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They also reported that the average income for Southern Ute families in La Plata county was lower (\$9,500) than the national average (\$19,917) and that many Southern Utes were below the poverty level. (May 1987, "Vital Statistics, 1990). The unemployment rate is 64 percent, much higher than national averages. The median age of the Southern Ute population is much younger (22 years) than the general United States population (30.0 years), due mainly to higher birth rates in past decades. Finally, the educational attainment of Southern Utes, as is true of Indians in general, is below national averages, especially when compared by college experience (Brod & McQuiston, 1983). While 16 percent of those 25 years and older in the United States population have completed four years of college, only 8 percent of American Indians have (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1984b), and only 5.4 percent of Southern Utes have done so (Vital Statistics, 1991).

According to May (1987), the average suicide rate for U.S. Indians and Alaska Natives for the period of 1980-82 was 19.4 per 100,000 which is 1.7 times the rate for the nation as a whole but lower than it was in the earlier 1970's. Looking at youths, the suicide rates for Indians and Alaska Natives aged 10-24 were considerably higher than the older groups having lower rates than the general population.

While most United States youths are faced with problems of adjustment, life meaning, and success in a fast-paced

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society with an uncertain economic future, Indian youths are faced with even greater challenges. Minority status, fewer economic and educational advantages, and cultural differences add to the difficulties of transition to adulthood (Berlin, 1986). Indian adolescents must choose from at least two often incongruent paths, that of Indian and non-Indian. Those Indians who are the least likely to wind up as statistics in any major category of deviance are well adjusted in both cultures (Ferguson, 1976; May, 1987). The question, then, becomes how to encourage and enhance such development in both the traditional Indian and the modern mainstream societies (Berlin, 1986; Pewewardy, 1989).

Echoing earlier policy concerning Indian education, Assistant Secretary of the Interior in charge of Indian Affairs, Ross Swimmer, proposed to transfer the BIA responsibility for the provision of Indian education services to the various states ("U.S. wants," 1987). This action could affect nearly 40,000 American Indian children. Together with their extended families, they account for 8 percent of the nation's Indian population, which totaled 1.4 million in the 1980 census ("Proposed transfer." 1987). As new policy is developed, a critical issue to consider is whether public high schools can provide quality education for American Indian students without substantially eroding native culture in the process.

This study explored various processes that lead to the acculturation of Southern Ute high school students in a public high school. It was based on these students' perceptions of Ute and Anglo values both within and outside of the public school environment.

### Purpose and Need for the Study

#### Purpose of the study

A major purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Southern Ute high school students. Using interview methods, the research was designed to examine the ideas and feelings about acculturation to Anglo-American values and norms held by a sample of Southern Ute students attending a public high school. The intent of this study was to produce a better understanding of acculturation processes based on the perspectives of these students in order to help provide a basis for designing appropriate programs dealing with cultural diversity.

#### Significance of the Study

In the past twenty years there has been a substantial growth in the number of studies conducted on racial attitudes. To better understand the behavior of Indian students and others in the context of the public high school as a social

organization, including the less tangible aspects of attitude, feeling, and perception, would appear to be of utmost importance to both students and administrators for the development and implementation of viable programs that deal with cultural diversity, multicultural education and ways to preserve and enhance indigenous cultural values.

#### Need for the study

Gade, Hulburt and Fuqua (1986), contend that there are few reported investigations about the perceptions of American Indian students within the context of the public school. There have been comparison studies of scholastic ability, but to date, no studies have been located that have investigated the perceptions of Southern Ute high school students about their acculturation experiences in public schools.

According to Schierbeck (1976), about 70 percent of American Indians enrolled in school (grades K through 12) in the United States attend public schools; the remainder attend private schools, parochial schools, and schools supported by the BIA. Since the majority of Indian students are attending public school at this time, it is important to examine the perceptions of Indian students in such a setting.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to data gathered from 20 Southern Ute high school students attending class in a tri-ethnic public school environment located in southwestern Colorado. The samples' ages ranged from 14 to 19 years representing the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

The study was further limited by the usual shortcomings of the interview and survey methods of research, some of which include (1) the problem of collecting an acceptable number of responses relative to the sample population, (2) the fact that the sample population included only Utes that were currently attending high school and did not take into account the high school dropout population, and (3) the problem of ambiguity of questions which may limit the understanding, interpretation and accuracy of responses on the part of the interviewees. The researcher, however, tried to minimize this latter problem by conducting a pilot testing project, the results of which assisted the process of making interview items clearer and more precise.

This study pertained specifically to a sample of Southern Ute students in southwestern Colorado. Researchers need to access local conditions carefully in applying them to other situations such as other schools, students, or tribal populations.

There is nothing within the published literature which is directly related to the subject area of this thesis, but there is considerable literature which has an indirect bearing on the problem of acculturation processes. The topics reviewed were: (1) American Indian Education; (2) Ethnic Studies and Indian Group Identification; (3) Southern Ute Indians; (4) Colorado History; and (5) School culture.

A systematic review of the literature was conducted which included a survey of the major sources of educational research material.

## Chapter 2

### PROCEDURES

Of utmost importance to the success of this study was the development of an instrument to gather evidence which would throw light on the areas under investigation. The review of the literature revealed many methods of measuring various group perceptions, but the one that appeared to be the most appropriate for use in this investigation was the interview. The interview allowed the researcher a vehicle for more depth in understanding the perceptions of the selected group.

#### The Interview Schedule

The nature of the interview schedule requires that detailed information be gathered on the perceptions of Southern Ute high school students about their personal experiences and how these perceptions might shed light on acculturation processes at work. The interview was chosen as the primary research technique in this study because it offers an opportunity to gather and analyze in-depth data about the student's views of life as they relate to Ute and Anglo culture. Gorden (1956), argued that the interview offers the opportunity to guide the respondent to the desired interpretation of questions, thus aiding in the collection of data by assuring that the respondent's frame of reference is

identical to that desired by the interviewer. Sidman and Bradburn (1974) supported Gorden's rationale, citing the advantages of face-to-face interviews (flexibility and interpretation) and suggesting that these outweigh the advantages of schedule and time.

#### Instrumentation

For this study, the primary instrument used in the collection of data was the interview. The interviews were conducted during the Fall 1990 semester. An interview schedule provided data on students concerning their background characteristics, their views on Ute and Anglo culture, and their educational aspirations.

A series of prompts were used to encourage students who had difficulty responding or who seemed to provide answers which were incomplete or ambiguous. A pilot study employing the interview schedule was conducted and questions were revised when deemed necessary. Study responses were recorded via a tape recorder by the researcher.

#### Pilot Study

The initial procedure was the development of an instrument to be used to gather data. To do this a draft interview schedule was developed consisting of 15 questions, a final interview schedule consisting of 19 questions was

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later devised. The interview schedule was then tested in a pilot study as described below.

A pilot study was conducted in order to establish procedures and techniques to be used in the final, overall study. For the pilot study, 4 students were interviewed. Care was taken throughout the interviews to note student understanding of each question. Careful notes were taken throughout the pilot study and carefully examined at the conclusion of the pilot study so as to develop the best possible procedures to follow in the main study.

#### Selection of School

Ignacio High School is the only high school on the Southern Ute reservation. The researcher contacted the Ignacio high school principal by means of a phone call and explained the intent of the study, and requested permission to begin research. Permission was granted to use the high school in the study.

According to the principal there were 85 Southern Ute students enrolled for the 1990 semester in grades 9 through 12. The total Southern Ute enrollment for this period was 31.6 percent of the overall senior high school enrollment of 269. The students involved in this study represent 23.5 percent of the total Southern Ute enrollment in grades 9 through 12.

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This research did not take into account the high school dropout rate, which according to Clare Martinez (1991), a counselor and teacher at Ignacio high school averages 12 percent of the total Southern Ute student enrollment. This figure was verified by the Southern Ute Tribe's Office of Vital Statistics (1991) as well. For the semester that was used for this research that would account for 10 students. It must be noted that of these ten students, eight or 80 percent were currently enrolled in a program run by Ignacio high school called "Second Chance." This is a program designed to allow the traditional high school dropout population to attain a GED certificate. Thus 80 percent of the dropout population is still in the school system.

#### Selection of Students

The students selected were volunteers who had identified themselves as Southern Utes in the school's records. The volunteers met the interviewer during a Native American Youth Organization (NAYO) meeting. This meeting was sponsored by the Native American student counselor and was held during regular hours.

The purpose of this initial meeting was to schedule individual interviews. At this session the principal introduced the researcher, who then helped explain the interview process.

This initial success was followed by four interviewees that had volunteered for what was to be the pilot study. After this however, there was a great deal of trouble "procuring" students to be used as interviewees for the study. There were several unprofitable trips made to the school with no volunteers showing up. This problem was however alleviated with "compensating" of the subjects for the interview. I then had all the willing subjects I needed.

#### The Interviews

The high school provided a school tutoring room in which the interview could be conducted in privacy. The room was adequate as far as privacy, comfort, and atmosphere was concerned. A few minutes was usually enough time to put the student at ease. If the student seemed at a loss for words, the researcher tried to draw the student out in various ways as described earlier. This method was also found to establish a good rapport.

The interview began with a brief explanation of the intent of the study and the general procedure to be followed. The student was observed closely for signs of nervousness. If nervousness was observed, the interviewer would shut off the recorder and steer the conversation away from the questions to put the student more at ease.

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Any question which the student did not understand was repeated or reworded until it was clear. Care was taken in the rewording to a question so as to avoid biases on the part of the researcher. The interviews averaged approximately 25 minutes, with perhaps five minutes being taken at the beginning for explanation and to establish rapport. At the close of the interview the student was thanked for his cooperation.

#### Research Setting

A brief outline of the study site follows. The location of study is part of a community in southwestern Colorado. The population in 1990 was 718 (U.S. Census). The population, though situated on the Southern Ute reservation, is diverse. It consists of Utes, Hispanics, and Anglos. The Hispanic population has resided in the area for more than 300 years, with the Anglos taking up residence in the mid-1800's. Of the reservation population, only 14.9 percent are Southern Utes, the remainder are comprised of whites and Hispanics. The diversity of the population added to the same kind of diversity present in the high school. An example of this is the ethnic breakdown of the faculty at the high school which consists of 23 Anglo teachers, two Hispanics, and only one American Indian teacher. This sole Indian faculty member was a member of the Southern Cheyenne tribe of Oklahoma. This example is in contrast to the ethnic composition of the School

Board which consists of two Hispanics, two whites, and one Southern Ute.

#### Procedures for Data Collection

The population of interest in this study was located in the only high school located on the Southern Ute reservation, Ignacio high school, Ignacio, Colorado. Data collection for this study began in the Fall semester 1990. Data on the students was made available to the researcher from the principal's office. Data pertaining to the following variables was gathered from the interview as follows:

1. Gender - the student's gender was designated by self-identification.
2. Age of the Student - the student's age was recorded.
3. Student Educational Expectations - the student's view of the importance of a high school education as well as post-secondary education.
4. Cultural Environment of Students - information regarding the student's cultural environment, particularly regarding the following was obtained during the interview:
  - a. student's residence, both now and where they grew up (e.g., urban, rural or reservation);
  - b. student's language ability (monolingual or bilingual);
  - c. student's interaction with other Utes (e.g., tribal elders, Ute peers, tribal ceremonies);
  - d. student's interaction with Anglos (e.g., Anglo peers, teachers, and school-related activities as well as movies and other outings).

### Outcomes

The study was designed to provide information on the following questions:

1. Who are the significant people in the lives of Southern Ute students? Do the students have role models who are Ute or Anglo?
2. Are the students comfortable with the Anglos with whom they interact in high school (e.g., counselors, teachers, peers, . . . )?
3. Do Southern Ute students view their education and school experiences as preparing them for what they would like to do after graduation?
4. What are the Southern Ute students perceptions about Utes?
5. To what extent and for what reasons do Southern Ute students involve themselves in Ute cultural activities?
6. What are the students perceptions about Anglos?
7. To what extent and for what reasons do Southern Ute students involve themselves in Anglo cultural activities?
8. Who are the significant group(s) of friends in the lives of Southern Ute students?

Such information has formed the basis for an analysis of the circumstances of Southern Ute students in a public school setting.

### Chapter 3

#### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze data collected on the perceptions and feelings Southern Ute students have about various processes that contribute to acculturation. The data are first reported for each question of the interview schedule. As described in Chapter 2, 19 open-ended questions were asked of 20 Southern Ute students at Ignacio High School. The categorization of the data was generated from the specific student responses. The responses were sometimes numerous. Some students gave multiple responses to some questions. In these cases the figures and percentages are noted and adjusted accordingly. However, unless otherwise indicated, percentages presented in this chapter are based on the 20 subjects.

In this chapter, the 19 questions which composed the interview schedule are presented. The questions and their responses are summarized in an accompanying table where appropriate. Next is an analysis of the data by question. Student quotations are in the words of the students. Colloquialisms used by the students are maintained to present a more accurate picture of student perceptions.

For each question, the data are first reported in tabular form with accompanying elaboration in the text. For the main

questions, there follows a discussion section that presents typical quotations from the interviewees and other pertinent information. Finally there is an interpretation section for each question. The questions are generally grouped together in pairs with respect to discussion and interpretation to better illustrate the course I wanted the questions to take.

After each question is considered, the chapter closes with a summary of main findings and an overall interpretation of those findings.

#### Interview Information

Table 3.1 describes the age, gender and grade level of the students. The age range in grades 9 through 12 is from age 14 (9th grade) to age 19 (12th grade). The male/female ratio of respondents interviewed was 90 percent female (eighteen) to 20 percent male (two) . Twelfth graders represented 5 percent of the total population surveyed; eleventh graders represented 55 percent; tenth graders 30 percent; and the ninth graders , 10 percent.

Table 3.1  
Student Classification by Age and Gender

AGE	GENDER OF RESPONDENT		TOTAL
	Male	Female	
<u>Age</u>			
13	0	1	1
14	0	1	1
15	0	6	6
16	2	3	5
17	1	4	5
18	0	2	2
Total	3	17	20

Table 3.2  
Student Residence Data

PLACE OF RESIDENCE WHILE GROWING UP	NUMBER	OF MENTIONS
Reservation	18	(90 percent)
Non-reservation rural area	1	(5 percent)
Small town	0	
Sometimes rural/reservation, sometimes urban	1	(5 percent)
Total	20	

CURRENT PLACE OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER OF MENTIONS
Reservation	19 (95 percent)
Rural non-reservation	0
Town	1 (5 percent)
Total	20

As can be seen from these statistics, the large majority of the student population both grew up on and currently reside within the boundaries of the Southern Ute reservation. This makes an even greater impact on the study as all of the individuals both surveyed and interviewed lived on the reservation. This includes the one respondent that answered "Town" is also included, as the town of Ignacio is situated within the confines of the reservation.

#### Report of Interview Data by Question

1. Do you consider yourself first a Ute or an Indian?

The majority of the students, 17, (85 percent) responded to this question that they considered themselves first a Ute,

and then an Indian. This question is one that, though subtle is very important because it draws out of the student how strong their Ute tribal identity is. For those respondents that answered "Indian" (15 percent), it is evident that there are elements of pan-Indianism present in their view of both themselves and other Indians. According to Waddell (1971), ". . . there seems to be a detribalization resulting in a general identity as Indian, rather than tribal member, but this detribalization is also influenced by and reflects the class structure. Retention of a strong component of Indianess may be the result of a real pride in heritage, but it may also be a kind of defensive behavior or refuge. [from further cultural erosion.] The range of variation is extensive." The move from tribalism to pan-Indianism still retains some of the cultural values of the more traditional society in some respects, but those values are now focused on a total Indian society rather than members of a particular tribe. This appears to be a social defense mechanism against being further acculturated to the dominant society.

Though some of the respondents answered that they were "Ute", and others answered that they were "Indian", all of the respondents reported having a conflict in their daily lives between what they were taught at home and what they were taught at school. This relatively common conflict, as perceived by some American Indians is crucial to an

understanding of the problems faced by Indian in the process of acculturation. Resistance to acculturation can be readily seen in two areas. The historical tradition of animosity by the White toward the Indian has not been erased in contemporary society. Nor has the conflict between Indian values and White values been tempered by time. According to Walker (1972):

The peculiarity of American Indians as an ethnic group stems from a number of facts which are crucial to their potential adjustment in white urban life. The most important of these is a basic antagonism to white society that has developed from a history of rejection and discrimination. American Indians perforce have had their traditional cultures decimated in one way or another, and have been drawn often unwillingly into the mainstream of American life. Highly important also is the fact that many fundamental Indian values are not only incompatible with those of American culture, but work directly in opposition to the principle on which the modern capitalistic order is based. Indians generally do not want to compete with others. They would rather share money or material goods than budget or save. They will not often speak out to complain or demand their rights. A basic tribal world view defining the interrelationships of man with his society and the world around him, and the paternalistic nature of Bureau administration of Indian community affairs have helped produce complex and deeply entrenched attitudes of dependency which greater hinder adjustment to the practical demands of urban life.

The responses of the students to this question, then, shows that the majority of them do not see themselves as an "ethnic group" of the type described by Walker, i.e. an "Indian", but rather as "Utes." If in fact the Southern Utes

involved in this research are "hindered" from totally joining the mainstream of the white middle class, It appears to be by conscious choice as to how much they wish to immerse themselves in the dominant society.

2. What is it that is special or unique about being a Ute Indian to you?

The most common response to this questions was the generic answer of "tradition". After asking the respondents to elaborate on what tradition meant to them, a wide array of things came out. A response like ". . . well, I like their dances and things like that. . .". as compared to answers like ". . . our language, ceremonies, etc. . . " was well noted by the researcher as an unconscious guide to the respondents self-identity as a Ute. The majority of the interviewees (80 percent) stated that the Ute language, ceremonies, particularly those of the Bear Dance and the Sun Dance, and the "Ute" view of keeping in harmony with all those around you were the specific things involved in the uniqueness of being Ute. The minority of the interviewees (20 percent) responded that beadwork, dressmaking, and powwow dancing were what was special about being a Ute. Waddell and Watson (1971) point out that "When Indians are together on a reservation or in a small town close to many friends and kinfolk, they may have a number of conflicts, but they rarely have problems of

personal identity; their images of self are usually accurate and in the sense that they have only to look at the friends and kinfolk and see models for behavior." An important point relevant to this study is brought out here. First that on a reservation or in a small town young Indians do look toward their friends and kinfolk to see models of behavior. The personal identity crisis that Waddell and Watson fail to see is that a large portion of these friends that young Indians take social cues from are in fact whites. The fact that their social behavior is also influenced by their kinfolk is true, however it is important to remember that the Ute students interviewed had been socialized for a large percentage of their lives by whites - teachers, counselors, and peers.

#### Discussion

Questions 1 and 2 were asked so as to get an inside view of how the students looked at themselves. As the interviews went on there were only two categories of respondents, Utes, and "Indians". Those students who identified themselves as Utes appeared to me on the whole as being very much aware of the difference between being a Ute as opposed to being some Ute variant of an Indian. They stated such things as language, physical appearance, ceremonies, history, and traditional dress as being very much different from those of other tribes

and in some cases even other bands of Utes. Those students who identified themselves as Indians spoke of how ". . . we're all just Indians now.", and how such things as powwows and Indian softball leagues have brought "us all together." It was brought out by these respondents that since many young Indians don't really know much if anything about their own personal tribal heritage, that being an Indian is preferable to having no self-identity at all. This was a very important observation by some of the students themselves of acculturations processes present.

#### Interpretation

Questions 1 and 2 were asked as a way to gain understanding of the students by looking into the way they view themselves. During adolescence when identity is so important to values clarification it is important to realize that outside of the immediate kin group of these students that there were very few Utes from whom to take social cues from.

The role models that most of the students learn from within an intimate environ (the classroom) are white teachers. Given this fact it is a wonder there were any of the respondents answering "Ute" to question 1 and explaining what that meant to them personally. For those that did, it was brought out in the interviews that they had a very strong connection with their nuclear family and their immediate kin group as well. This was even more evident from the students

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that came from a broken home through either divorce or the death of a parent and had been raised by grandparents.

Those students who identified themselves as "Indians" appeared to me to be asserting themselves as an ethnic identity in an attempt to create a "slot" for themselves in opposition to total social absorption into white society. It is interesting to note that white society resists their membership too, often forcing such a compromise.

In his study of the subject, Robert K. Thomas advances the hypotheses that pan-Indianism is a defense mechanism on the part of the tribal Indian and that other such movements have their genesis in the same reasoning.

Modern industrial civilization, through the vehicle of the bureaucratic nation-state and its institutions, demands not only the incorporation of tribal peoples but immediate incorporation and individual assimilation. Industrial civilization individuates and attacks the solidarity of the social group. A tribal group cannot tolerate such an attack. It is furthermore doubtful if the individual tribal person could survive as a personality under these conditions. The first reaction of tribes under this kind of stress is the banding together of tribal groups and a widening and bolstering of this new identity, in self-defense. Even when tribal peoples desire to be incorporated into an industrial civilization, they are unwilling to break up as social groups, and therefore try to come to some kind of compromise, such as partial incorporation while retaining the solidarity of the social group. (Report in Walker 1972 : 745-46).

3. What are some of the positive things you see as being part of Ute culture? Do these things apply to you?

Interviewees gave similar answers to the first part of this question, and these answers dealt exclusively with only the visual trappings of Ute culture. These included in reality, things that were both Ute and "Indian" in origin. I refer here to powwows and powwow dancing, which is also a pan-Indian expression. 40 percent of the students answered "dancing" as part of their response to question 3. When queried as to what kind of dancing, powwow dancing was inevitably either part or all of their answer. Other responses included mention of both the Bear Dance, an annual social dance, and the Sun Dance, an annual ceremonial dance.

Other things mentioned by the students in answer to this question were beadwork, "their traditions" and other more non-descript answers such as "Oh, the way they are." For the most part, the students answered that, yes, the things they mentioned as positive about Ute culture did apply to them personally. Some responses were more specific. One such case of this was that the Southern Utes had some degree of sovereignty, via their own "little government" [tribal council]. Though this was a refreshing answer from "their traditions", it still was not a reflection of Ute culture,

though it does indicate a concept of sovereignty important to any cultural view.

4. What are some of the negative things you see as part of Ute culture?

There were two answers that came out again and again to this question, these were drinking among Utes and racial discrimination on the part of whites. Once again, neither of these are a historical part of Ute culture. They are however, aspects of the social fabric of most reservations throughout the country. When queried as to why they thought people drank to excess, every one of the students responded with the same answer - "I don't know." The issue of racial discrimination is one they may or may not exist. The students making this observation also stated that this discrimination came from their Anglo classmates. Such comments as "they're mean" or "they always look down on Indians" was common. This may not however be what it appears. This condescension on the part of the white students may in fact be something more along the lines of economic social strata as well as racial discrimination. This is particularly true in light of the fact that all of the respondents indicated having white friends in their immediate peer group. None of the students admitted to

having a problem with excessive alcohol use. All of them without exception noted that they had at sometime in their tenure in high school been the victim of racial discrimination.

### Discussion

It is evident from the student responses that to the majority of the interviewees that the social atmosphere of both the reservation in general and the high school in particular are to them "Ute culture". The focus of these two questions was to determine if in fact a distinct Ute culture did in fact exist for these students that was different from their school or reservation culture.

### Interpretation

Even this early in the interview, it was becoming clear that varying degrees of acculturation were present in the student population of the Southern Ute tribe. There did appear however to be a dichotomy developing instead of the occurrence of varying degrees of acculturation, as the researcher had expected there might be. Though all of the students were greatly influenced by their school culture, those who identified specific facets of Ute culture also were the ones who has a strong connection to their family and kin group structure.

This influence of the school culture is not a new one. Pewewardy (1989) notes that the origin of the general notion of school cultures can be traced to Willard Waller's classic 1932 study on the sociology of the school. He writes:

"Waller conceived of the school as being not only a formal organization but a miniature society as well, with teachers and students comprising two subcultures which vie for power within the school society. He argued that the teachers' subculture derived from common professional backgrounds and perspectives. The student subcultures grew out of the fact that socially homogeneous cohorts of children were drawn together through compulsory mass education. Suggesting that students participate in school as a way of life, with virtually total involvement, Waller believed it inevitable that they would form a subculture centered around values and interests that would be at cross-purposes with those of teachers. The incipient conflict between students and teachers would grow out of their subcultural commitments -- teachers attempting to maintain order and scholastic motivation, students uniting to avoid or deflect teacher demands -- strengthening and reinforcing their respective commitments."

McSwine (1979) analyzes these developments, suggesting that we are witnessing a revolution of consciousness: a rebellion against having one's identity redefined in the image of another, even if that other image is that of a tribal Indian.

5. What are some of the positive things about Anglo culture?

From the answers received from this question, it is clear that if Southern Ute high school students are confused about

Ute culture, they are somewhat in the dark about white culture as well. For this question 100 percent of the students, all of them, gave the same responses -- technology, cars, radios, television, and movies. It appears even after in-depth questioning that the major appeals of white society for these interviewees was in essence various forms of entertainment and modern conveniences that made life easier. Question 6 of the interview schedule helps us get a better handle on how these students really felt about whites.

6. What are some of the negative things about Anglo culture?

If all Southern Utes like about white culture is their technology and their various forms of entertainment, they are equally clear about their dislike of white culture. Once again 100 percent of the respondents mentioned these things -- racial prejudice, greed, and the white political structure. The first two were not really surprising, growing up in a reservation environment where these social ills flourish. However, the third response mentioned, that of the white political structure was one not expected by the researcher. When asked to elaborate on this response typical answers were " we don't get to really take part in anything affecting us", and "they put us on this little reservation and decide things for us all the time and there's nothing we can do about it."

This dislike and distrust of the white political system, according to the respondents, covered the whole spectrum of the political scene, from the county commissioners to the White House. Many of the interviewees were surprisingly well-acquainted with the U.S. government structure and its various branches.

#### Discussion

The focus of Questions 5 and 6 were to see how much Ute students were actually acquainted with white culture and how much they liked it. If any of their responses can be taken at face value, this group of Ute students didn't think much of whites or their culture. Typical responses about whites included:

- \* "They fight against each other and create a lot of problems"
- \* "The way they treat each other, I don't think they treat each other well"
- \* "Their government and how they set us on reservation"
- \* "They're mean to Indians"
- \* "They talk bad about us"

At first glance it might appear that there are isolated incidents of racial prejudice on the Southern Ute reservation, however every student interviewed denied this and painted a picture of a constant environment of racial prejudice present,

no matter how benign it might appear to an outsider. Each student when queried further was able to give a number of specific incidents of racial prejudice or "meanness" from whites that had occurred personally to them. This appears important as an element that would reinforce their own tribal identity as a method of surviving this constant attack, no matter how much of the technological trappings of white society these students have taken on.

#### Interpretation

Questions 5 and 6 give us a glimpse into the students feelings about not only whites and what they view as white culture, but also their feelings about interpersonal relationships. This is added here because many of the students views about whites are those garnered from their interpersonal relationships with their Anglo contemporaries within the high school environment. It was evident from the interviews that each of the students had a very elemental conflict going on within them about the clash of Ute values and Anglo values that they had to contend with every day. This conflict has, it appears, a great deal to do with the responses gathered from the first six questions. This conflict between these two differing sets of values is at the heart of the acculturation process. Many of the students really feel this intercultural

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"bite", others simply switch back and forth between these two cultural environments with little effort. As 95 percent of the interviewees responded that they had adjustments to make between Ute culture and white; home and school, it is apparent that acculturation pressures are present. Walker (1972) surmises that the adjustments most Indians make in learning the cues for living successfully in the white world seem to be superficial to their established basic qualities of Indianess. It appears that these Ute students have followed that adjustment process.

7. Do you speak your tribal language?

Table 3.3 shows that 13 students (65 percent) spoke the Ute language in words and phrases. 7 students (35 percent) spoke no Ute at all, while none of the respondents spoke Ute fluently. When asked who had taught them to speak Ute 16 (80 percent) responded that they had learned the language from their grandparents. Three students (15 percent) answered that they had learned Ute from their parents, while one student said that she had learned the rudiments of the language in school from a Ute teacher.

For the most part the knowledge of and speaking of the Ute language was a cornerstone of what it meant to be Ute -- at least for the 65 percent that spoke. Ironically the two students who did not speak any Ute were the only full-blood

Utes in the interview survey. All of those who reported speaking at least some Ute stated that they made a concentrated effort to talk Ute with their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles.

Table 3.3  
Student Identification of Ute Language Ability

CATEGORY	RESPONSE BY GENDER		NUMBER OF MENTIONS
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	
Fluently	0	0	0
Words and Phrases	3	10	13
Not at all	0	7	7
Total	3	17	20

Table 3.4

Student Identification of Who Taught Them  
to Speak the Ute Language

CATEGORY	RESPONSE BY GENDER		NUMBER OF MENTIONS
	Male	Female	
Parents	1	4	5
Grandparents	2	5	7
Teacher	0	1	1
Total	3	10	13

8. What do you think of the tribal elders?

Each one of the respondents answered that they really liked the old people and had a great deal of respect for them. This connection with the past is particularly important in making any type of determination of acculturation processes present and how ingrained they might be. It is also important to see if these young people view the elders as viable models for behavior. Table 3.5 shows specific student responses to this question, they were able to list more than one response. When asked how much they were around elder Utes, 16 of the students (80 percent) stated that the elders they were in contact were exclusively in their own immediate kin group (blood relation). The other four students (20 percent) said that they had regular contact with elder Utes other than in their immediate kin group. These people were sometimes

relatives by marriage and at other times not related at all. Clan relationships along these lines were not investigated as they were beyond the scope of this study.

Table 3.5  
Student Identification as to  
What They Think of Tribal Elders\*

RESPONSES	NUMBER OF MENTIONS	PERCENTAGE
Persons to be revered	7	35%
Old fogies	0	0%
Persons to be pitied	0	0%
Living in the past	3	15%
Living history	12	60%
Ignored by the tribal government	0	0%
Ignored by the younger Utes	7	35%
Teachers	15	75%
Politically powerful	3	15%
Persons of authority	13	65%

\*Students were encouraged to respond to as many categories as they found appropriate.

### Discussion

Questions 7 and 8 focus on intimate facets of Ute culture, language being the most basic of these. Language is directly related to the keepers of Ute culture, the elders themselves. According to Pewewardy (1989) elderly Indian people in Southwestern and Plains Indian culture are "awarded a far greater measure of respect and prestige than is seen in

Anglo society." The interviewees in this study seem to bear this out. The most common theme coming from the respondents was that they thought the old people were "funny" [humorous] and that they liked how they told stories that had an application in today's world. Some of these stories were myths while others were factual occurrences in the lives of the storyteller. Typical observations were:

- \* "I like old people, they understand what it's like to be young and can relate to you well"
- \* "They're neat, I like to listen to them"
- \* "I was brought up to respect them at all times"
- \* "I like to learn stuff from them"

The circumstances where the young find themselves in contact with the elderly occur mainly in two social settings; while visiting kinfolk, and at ceremonies (both secular and sacred). It is also during these encounters that the respondents stated that these are usually the circumstances under which they speak Ute. None of the interviewees spoke Ute among themselves, whether in school or out.

#### Interpretation

The importance of these two questions cannot be underestimated. Nationally, the language loss among Indian youth today is appalling. According to Robert K. Thomas (1989), there are many tribes across the nation that are

experiencing an 85 percent language loss in children under the age of ten. With the loss of language often comes the loss of ceremonies as well. When there is a disconnection to the tribal elders, and the wealth of cultural knowledge they hold, there is also a break in the chain of cultural continuity. This did not seem to be the case with the target population for this study. Obviously, with an erosion of these essential elements of culture it is difficult to turn back and recover them. The Utes, both elders and the young people that were interviewed seem to be aware of this fact and are concerned about it. Language ability appeared to be a very important element in Ute culture to the largest portion (90 percent) of the students interviewed.

9. Do you attend any Ute ceremonies?

Of the students interviewed, all twenty (100 percent), attended at least one Ute ceremony or specifically tribal event. A complete breakdown is shown in Table 3.6 The one Ute ceremony attended by all of the respondents was the Ute Bear Dance. The Bear Dance is an annual event held in May to celebrate Spring and the rebirth of life. Spring is of course when the bear awakes from hibernation. The Bear Dance is a social dance and has little religious connotation. It is however specifically a Ute cultural event with no connection whatsoever to pan-Indianism. Because it is a social event,

everyone is invited to attend. For this reason there are generally a fair number of Indians from other tribes present who have forged friendships with the Utes through the years, as well as a few non-Indians as well. It is an immensely popular event attended by young and old alike.

The next most attended ceremony recorded by the researcher was that of the Sun Dance. Fifteen students (75 percent) attended the Sun Dance. It is important to point out that only one of the male respondents had actually taken part in the Sun Dance itself. However, all of the male respondents stated that they did in fact plan to take part in the Sun Dance in the near future. Their statements along these lines cannot be taken lightly as the Sun Dance is a grueling four-day ceremony that takes an immense amount of mental and spiritual preparation to undertake. It is not something one jumps into, and the proper "sponsorship" by a family must occur before one has "permission" to dance. Though females do not dance, they take part via camp preparations, and at times sing with the men within the Sun Dance arbor itself. The singing is done only by older women who have achieved a great deal of social status. The young girls such as those in this study are limited to camp preparation, spectating, and moral support.

The Sun Dance is a relatively recent ceremony among the Utes, just over some 100 years old. It is generally accepted

that the Utes received the Sun Dance from their northern neighbors the Lakota, though there is no way to document this theory. In the Ute language the ceremony is not even called the "Sun Dance", but rather "The Long Thirst." It is a sacred ceremony and is also immensely popular with the Utes. It is an "open" ceremony as well and is attended by Utes, other tribes, and non-Indians as well. The dancers are however restricted to Indians only, but non-Utes may be granted permission to dance if they go through the proper channels of "sponsorship" as would any potential Ute dancer. The peyote ceremony, or Native American Church was identified by the respondents as the third most attended ceremony with 12 students participating (60 percent) on a regular basis. The peyote ceremony is the most recent ceremony adopted by the Utes who were introduced to the ritual in the 1950's by the Navajos. (Stewart 1982). The peyote meeting is an all-night ceremony that is sacred in nature. It takes place in a tipi and the participants ingest the peyote cactus and sing songs. The songs are prayers of worship and vary from tribe to tribe.

The fourth most attended ceremony the interviewees indicated was that of the sweat lodge. Eight students (40 percent) indicated that they sweat on a more or less weekly basis. Both male and female students indicated that they sweat, so there was no basis for exclusion from the ceremony based on gender.

The sweat lodge is historically a sacred ceremony of purification used by the Utes for centuries. Among the Southern Utes however, its use had diminished in the 1940's almost to a point of discontinuance. As the sweat lodge is an indispensable part of the purifying process prior to performing the Sun Dance, its use did not stop completely, but as previously mentioned, had declined substantially. Its usage was essentially revitalized by one man, Eddie Box, Sr. Mr. Box tells of learning the rudiments from an Arapaho man. Ute songs are sung in the lodge of Mr. Box as well the other sweat lodges operating presently on the Southern Ute reservation.

The curing ceremony is one seldom seen on the Ute reservation, but it does exist. The researcher could find no pertinent information on specific curing ceremonies of the Southern Utes. However, four students, (20 percent) responded that they had attended a curing ceremony at some point in their lives.

The least practiced ceremony indicated by student responses was that of the vision quest, with only one respondent having participated, (5 percent). This low response is not out of the ordinary when one takes into consideration that only males may take part in the vision quest. Viewed in this light, this one person represents 50 percent of the male students interviewed. The vision quest is a ceremony where a young man goes alone into the mountain to fast and pray

without food or water for four days and four nights. A vision is sought by placating spirits in this manner. There were no other kinds of ceremonies mentioned by the respondents during the research. No puberty ceremonies, or ceremonies to ward off witchcraft or "bad medicine" were cited, nor was it found by the researcher that these kinds of ceremonies were even present on the Southern Ute reservation.

Table 3.6  
Student attendance at Ute ceremonies\*

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF MENTIONS	PERCENT
Bear Dance	20	100%
Sun Dance	15	75%
Peyote meeting	12	60%
Sweat lodge	8	40%
Curing ceremony	4	20%
vision quest	1	5 %

\*Many of the students attended more than one ceremony.

10. Do you attend a Christian church?

Eight students, (40 percent) attended a Christian church. Of these, five attended a Catholic church while three attended a Protestant church. Those respondents who stated that they did attend a Christian church, said they did so only

on an irregular basis, and weren't "really into it". Table 3.7 shows specific attendance figures.

Table 3.7  
Regular student attendance of Christian churches

CHURCH DENOMINATION	NUMBER OF MENTIONS	P E R C E N T		
Catholic	5	25%		
Protestant	3	15%		
NON-ATTENDING STUDENTS	12	6	0	%
TOTAL	20	100%		

### Discussion

From the responses garnered during the research, it seemed that the students involved in the study went to Ute ceremonies not so much to consciously bolster their identity as a Ute, but because it was either expected within their family or kin group, or simply because it was fun. None of the students confused the events I have generically termed "Ute ceremonies" with powwows, Indian hand games, or any other social event. All of the students stated that they attended these events with family members and at times with [Ute] friends as well.

The fact that the minority of the respondents attend a Christian church is interesting in view of the fact that there are some "regular" Ute churchgoers living on the reservation. The majority of the students who did attend church did so with their parents as a sort of "neighborly" thing to do, "so the priest won't think we're mean", as one student responded.

#### Interpretation

Responses to questions 9 and 10 to be very interesting. They seem to point to the fact that Ute ceremonies are surprisingly alive and well on the Southern Ute reservation. That these high-school age adolescents are attending at least some of the ceremonies on the reservation appears to show that though acculturation processes are at work all around these students on a daily basis, they may not have made as serious an impact on at least this particular group of people as an outsider may think. External trappings such as T.V.'s, cars, stereos, and even the English language does not necessarily point to an acculturated Indian. The fact that these things are used by Utes of all ages means merely that they have taken on some technological devices, and another mode of verbal communication. It appears that if these material things were taken away overnight, it would not have a very serious effect on the Utes residing in Ignacio, CO, and this would include the students interviewed in this research.

11. What is your concept of time?

100 percent of the students gave evidence of a great conflict between how they were expected to conform to time when they were either in school or had for example, a part-time job, and when they were around their family in the summer when school was out of session. All of the students stated that the pressure of working "under the clock" was intensely unpleasurable to them, and caused a great deal of stress and anxiety. When asked how they measured time, the same two answers came from each student. These answers were first, when they were in school, and second, when they were around either their family or friends. They were: one hour, and one day.

12. Where did you get this concept?

Once again all of the responses to this question were the same. The students answered that they got the concept of time in the sense of an hour, and smaller increments from their teachers at school. They got their concept of larger increments of time, the day for example, from their parents. They all stated that these two differing viewpoints of time gave them anywhere from "hardly any" to "moderate" conflicts to resolve in their everyday affairs with relation to time.

### Discussion

The conflicts Ute students experience because of differing concepts of time are pretty standard for Indians of a generation or two ago, but the presence of them in the views of Southern Ute high school students was surprising indeed. Some research has been done on the subject and is identified by Neifel (1972) as he isolates three concepts of Indian culture that are in direct conflict with the dominant white society. The concepts of time, saving, and work as evidenced in white society have, according to Neifel, little meaning in Indian society.

Time, in the sense of measuring duration by clocks and days of the calendar as we do, is not important in the Indian way of life. In our economic and other social relationships it becomes essential to schedule most of our activities in accordance with a commonly accepted system of timing. . . . In the economically simple life of the old Indian system there was never any need to coordinate efforts of the group except in some general way around the natural objects, such as the sun, moon, and seasons. (Rpt. in Bowles: 1972)

The cultural conflict over the sense of punctuality remains important today when Indians deal with the society outside their own. However, Neifel fails to point out that Indians today do not live in a time vacuum, and that we must all be somewhat of a slave to the clock at one time or another simply out of necessity. But the other concept of time duration and punctuality held by Indians, that of the day and

beyond, still appears to exist in the lives of the Southern Ute high school students researched in this study.

### Interpretation

Questions 11 and 12 once again point to the cultural schism felt by the Southern Ute students interviewed in this research. Though many of them are able to immediately adapt to their surroundings, be it the environment of the classroom or the home, there are definitely two different concepts of time employed by these students.

In the beginning of this study, the researcher was convinced that the students that were about to be interviewed were already totally acculturated to "white man's" time. How could it be otherwise? They had been subjected to the mores, values, and schedules of white teachers since the age of six. It appears however, from the data thus far gathered that this was a premature assumption, and that the influence of the family in the early formative years as well as in the present has been strong indeed. This would apply not only to the differing concepts of time, but in other factors relating to the acculturation process as well.

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13. Do you think Ute culture is being lost?

Fourteen students (70 percent), stated that they thought that Ute culture was being lost. When asked how they thought this cultural erosion was occurring typical answers included "because of all the other things to do" and "Indian things just aren't that fun for a lot of people." The major item identified by all twenty respondents as being lost the fastest was the Ute language. Other things mentioned were dancing styles, beadwork styles, and dressmaking styles that are all uniquely Ute. Seventeen students (85 percent) stated that these things were being replaced by a more generic "Indian" style. This included powwow dancing, i.e. fancy dancing, and clothing styles based more on the motifs and designs of the more northern Plains cultures and less on the indigenous Ute designs.

Though the majority of the students interviewed stated that they thought many of their Ute peers were rapidly losing their cultural heritage, I did not find this to be that much in evidence from the data collected.

14. Do you have many non-Ute friends?

Though on the surface this appears as a very benign question, it was imperative to see what the student interviewees peer group consisted of if there was to be any kind of correlation made between acculturative processes and

non-Ute peers. As it turns out nineteen students (95 percent) stated that they did have non-Ute friends. Only one student reported having an immediate peer group that consisted only of Utes. These figures are not surprising when one considers that Ignacio high school is in a tri-ethnic community, and that the influence of non-Ute peers within the environment of the classroom is constant. Of the 95 percent that did have many non-Ute friends, all of the students stated that their immediate peer group consisted of Utes, Indians of other tribes, Hispanics, and whites. They also stated that they all got along well, and that ethnic background was not a hindrance to their friendships.

#### Discussion

The group most often identified by students as their peer group was one of mixed ethnic members. A few common responses include:

- \* "I have a variety of friends"
- \* "Yeah, I have a lot of non-Ute friends."
- \* "My friends are a mixed group"

It is noteworthy that of the nineteen students responding that their immediate peer group consisted of a mixed ethnicity. All of these nineteen also responded that their peer group consisted of more members of their own sex than that of the opposite sex.

### Interpretation

These two questions were grouped together to focus on whether or not there was a correlation between the students perceptions of whether Ute culture was being lost and the fact that the vast majority of them have a mostly non-Ute peer group. Though on the surface these two questions appear to be unrelated, the premise was to see if the influence of a peer group of mixed ethnic composition might have some effect on the acculturation of the Ute students. After interviewing the students the conclusion was reached that the influence from non-Utes in the immediate peer group was nominal. Peer groups are of importance to students during their adolescent years. Oftentimes an adolescent is defined by the group they "hang out" with. Other factors in evidence were that in all of the students interviewed their peer group consisted of both friends that they had grown up with as well as new friends whom they had met while in high school. The students seemed to take part in a variety of interpersonal activities, without regard to the ethnicity of their friends.

15. What kinds of things do you participate in that you consider "Indian"

For this question a differentiation between "Ute" and "Indian" was not made in order not to hinder the students in their responses. To many of the respondents "Ute", "Ute Indian" and "Indian" within the context of this question, were

all the same thing. All of the students answered that they participated in powwows. As was mentioned in Question 9, all of the students also took part in the Bear Dance. Table 3.6 gives a complete breakdown of answers. It is apparent that to these Indian students, "Indian" activities exist in essentially two forms. Those are, 1) powwows and things related to them such as featherwork, beadwork, etc., and 2) Ute ceremonies. Though these were the activities related by the interviewees, upon personal observation many young Ute people, including several in this research group, are found to be present at other tribal functions not mentioned during the course of the interviews. These would include but are not limited to the annual Southern Ute Christmas party, Indian rodeos, tribally sponsored cultural activities such as storytellers, and most recently a greatly attended prayer vigil held for Southern Ute soldiers in Saudi Arabia.

16. What kinds of things outside of Ute culture do you participate in?

Table 3.8 shows responses to this question in order of frequency. The answers to this question correlate precisely with those of Question 5, positive things about Anglo culture. The answers to this question can also be easily divided into two categories, 1) those things associated with entertainment such as movies, music, cars, TV, etc., and, 2) those things

directly associated with school such as sports, cheerleading, and student organizations.

The activities associated with school cannot be overemphasized as the majority of the students (95 percent) identified their circle of friends in school and out of school to be the same. It is within this same circle of friends that essentially all of the activities outside of Ute culture occur, and a great deal of these are school-related.

Table 3.8  
Student activities outside of Ute culture

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF MENTIONS	PERCENT
Cars	20	100%
Movies	18	90%
TV	20	100%
Music	20	100%
Parties	6	30%
School activities	18	90%
Sports	16	80%

### Discussion

How Southern Ute students spend their time and what they do within and outside of their culture I think gives us an insight into what kinds of acculturation processes are occurring and at what levels. It appears that their participation in Anglo activities is more or less restricted to school related activities and things that are essentially of an entertainment type nature, i.e. movies, cars, music, etc. It also appears that many of these students are much more "Ute" than they seem to realize. They routinely go to Ute ceremonies and social events and have for the most part

internalized many Ute cultural values. The fact that they are not cognizant of this is an even greater indication of this phenomenon.

#### Interpretation

The group of Southern Ute students involved in this research are definitely being influenced by certain factors that can lead to acculturation. How rapidly they are being acculturated to white American values is another question entirely. The fact that they are riding a fence between two radically different cultures is apparent. Some deal with this process rather effortlessly, while some of their peers have a much more difficult time of it.

From the information garnered from the interviews relating to the two aforementioned questions it appears that for the most part the students involved in my study have been acculturated to white values mainly superficially. Their Ute values appear strong, though there appear to exist heavy overtones of pan-Indianism at work as well. This is apparent from the students' responses to Question 15, What kinds of things do you participate in that you consider Indian? It is obvious that powwows are a major focal point for many of the students who identify as an Indian. When more intensive investigation is undertaken, it is clear that a Ute identity is clearly present in the majority of the students.

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17. Who do you think has influenced the way you view life the most?

The majority of the interviewees (80 percent) responded that it was their family that has influenced the way they view life the most. Two of the students (10 percent) said that it was their teachers in school that had influenced them the most. This was followed by one student (5 percent) who said it was both his family and his teachers that had shaped his view of life, while one other respondent (5 percent) stated that it was his friends that had influenced his viewpoint of life. For those students that responded that it was their family who had had the greatest influence on them, the parents were the major influential party, followed by the grandparents. Table 3.9 gives a detailed breakdown of this.

Table 3.9  
Student Identification of Most Influential  
People in Their Life

CATEGORY RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF MENTIONS	PERCENT
<u>Family and Friends</u>		
Father	0	0
Mother	0	0
Grandfather	0	0
Grandmother	0	0
Parents	16	80
Grandparents	1	5
Parents and Grandparents	1	5
Teachers	0	0
Friends	1	5
Family and Teachers	1	5
Total	20	100%

#### Discussion

The responses to this question, though still in line with the data gathered up to this point in the research, were a bit surprising. One might expect that the most influential people in their lives would have been identified as their teachers and friends -- this was not the case. Though all of the respondents stated that they liked their teachers and were in fact influenced by them, they we still "not family."

According to Banks (1981), our society requires identity from other human beings who are important to us and incorporate that within ourselves. In other words, we validate our identity through the evaluations of those who are

influential in our lives. For the large majority of the Southern Ute students interviewed in this research, that was their family.

### Interpretation

This particular question is very important, and as it is "hits the nail on the head." Whomever is the most influential person in one's life, whomever influences how one views life, will be one of the single most important factors as to whether one will be acculturated to Anglo values and mores. If this person is an Anglo teacher, one will be much more susceptible to acculturative processes that will sooner or later erode one's indigenous cultural heritage.

It appears from this research however that extremely strong Ute values have been instilled in the majority of the students involved in this research since they were very small. It further appears that the strength of these Ute values has served as a buttress against major acculturation via the school environment, non-Indian peers, and the dominant Anglo culture in general. Conversely, the research also bears out that those Ute students involved in the research that were not instilled with strong Ute cultural values view themselves as Indian Americans that are no different from their non-Ute contemporaries. It is not surprising that these same people

also identified "teachers" and "friends" as the people most influential in the viewpoint of life.

18. How important do you think a high school education is?, Why?

All of the interviewees stated that they thought a high school education was very important. When queried why sixteen of the students (80 percent) said it was to "get a job." The remaining four students (20 percent) pointed to the fact that they wished to continue their education and go on to college, and that this was of course not possible without a high school diploma. Two of the students (10 percent) stated that they didn't like high school at all but "would finish anyway."

When asked why they thought that completing their high school education was so important half of the students said that it was because their parents had told them so. The other half stated that it was both their parents and teachers who had stressed the importance of finishing school. Table 4.10 gives a complete breakdown of specific reasons stated by the students as to why they thought completing high school was important.

Table 3.10

REASONS STATED FOR COMPLETING A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION		
CATEGORIES:	Number of mentions	Percent
<u>Financial Security:</u>		
very important	16	80%
somewhat important	2	10%
not too important	1	5%
not important at all	1	5 %
Total	20	100%
 <u>Gain Respect from Indian People</u>		
very important	10	50%
somewhat important	8	40%
not too important	1	5%
not important at all	1	5 %
Total	20	100%
 <u>Gain Respect from non-Indians</u>		
very important	5	25%
somewhat important	10	50%
not too important	5	25%
not important at all	0	0 %
Total	20	100%

Family Tradition

very important	15	75%
somewhat important	4	20%
not too important	0	0%
not important at all	1	5 %
<hr/>		
Total	20	100%

19. How important do you think a college education is?,  
Why?

Only eight students (40 percent) responded that a college education was important, and even then they specified that that was only for them personally and not for people in general. All of these eight people that responded positively said that college was important to them only because they could command a higher salary at some point in the future.

The remaining sixty percent of the students interviewed said that they planned on future economic security from either self-employment or through skills learned in a vocational-technical school. Of the twelve students who had no plans to go on to college, eight of them aired their view that college was very overrated. When queried as to why they thought this, the most common response was that they had college-educated friends and relatives that still "pushed a

broom somewhere." It is apparent that in the majority of the students there is definitely not a connection between a college education and a good-paying job.

### Discussion

Since the premise of this research is that the school environment and the Anglo-American educational process is the single most influential factor lending itself to the acculturation of Southern Ute high school students Anglo values, norms and mores, the responses to Questions 18 and 19 as very significant. Though all of the respondents stated that they thought the completion of a high school education was imperative to attain some degree of financial stability, it is also apparent that not all of the students in this research have bought the "betterment through education" sales pitch.

For example, the education of American Indians and the curriculum into which they have been molded are designed by the dominant white society. Waddell and Watson (1971) report that:

To a significant degree, educational goals have been fashioned to conform to the competitive achievement orientation of the American middle class and to the attainment of material wealth. As we have seen, American Indians are for the most part not oriented to the attainment of long range goals.

It was obvious that for the students answering these two questions they linked, at least in part, education to money

earning ability. The researcher wanted to see if this group of people had been completely drawn into the doctrine of bettering oneself intellectually, emotionally, socially, as well as increasing one's ability to earn money. For the most part, this doesn't appear to be the case.

#### Interpretation

Much of the students' emphasis on the importance of a high school education was directly related to the economic plans for the future. Even the ones that planned to go on to college, gave future economic security as the main reason for their decision.

Clearly, employment opportunities in modern America depend to a large extent on the educational background and qualifications of the individual. The cultural values of many Indian peoples work against the attainment of a successful middle class American education and therefore carry over into the Indian's search for employment. The poorly educated person must compete with others who have higher qualifications. Thus, the search for employment is often reduced to seeking out the opportunities for unskilled or semi-skilled employees who receive less pay and are more subject to the vagaries of the economy.

It appears that the current view of the students in this research were pragmatic with respect to education. Though the premise of this research is that the American school system

is a major factor in the acculturation of Indian youth, its effects on the Southern Utes of Ignacio seem to be only partial.

#### Summary of Main Findings

The people most significant in the lives of the students interviewed were Utes. The individuals identified were mainly immediate family members. Non-related Ute elders were also prominent in the student responses; few of the role models identified by the students were Anglo.

The majority of the students were comfortable with the adults in their educational environment. With respect to this, teachers and counselors were mentioned the most often. Of all of the adult educators employed at this particular high school only one, a counselor, was identified as an Indian. None of the students mentioned the ethnicity of the adult educator as a factor important to them.

All of the students identified the importance of their education as preparing for future employability. Students who planned to continue their post-secondary education realized the importance of a high school education.

The large majority of the students interviewed identified themselves as Utes. Their perceptions about Utes were for the most part accurate, with some overtones of pan-Indianism filtering through. There was a very high regard for family and

tribal elders among the students, even those who thought of themselves "just as Indians."

There was a very high frequency of student participation in Ute cultural activities. None of the students responding noted any type of coercion to attend these functions, and did in fact on the whole enjoy them greatly and looked forward to their occurrence. All of the students expressed a great deal of pleasure in attending powwows. However, powwows were not included in the category of Ute cultural activities.

The students perceptions about Anglos were generally positive. There was however an interesting "split view" of Anglos revealed. With regard to those Anglos with whom the students had contact with within the confines of the school environment, i.e., peers, teachers, counselors, etc., there were mostly positive remarks. As far as Anglos on the "outside" were concerned however, there was a uniform perception of racial prejudice.

The students involvement in Anglo cultural activities revolved around essentially two things -- entertainment and activities directly related with school. This school climate was a major contributing factor to the culture of the school and the cliques and social circle that are a part of that "school culture". Students took advantage of social involvement through actively participating in extra-curricular activities associated with school.

The most significant group of friends in the lives of the students were those in their immediate peer group. Most of the students reported that their closest friends were those they had grown up with and were also former classmates before high school. The ethnicity of their friends was not a factor since they all had friends of differing ethnic backgrounds.

#### Overall Interpretation of the Findings

The analyses and profiles reported in this chapter highlight the various acculturative processes at work within both a small reservation community and the public high school therein located.

These students experienced Ute culture, the culture of the dominant society, and high school culture in a variety of different ways. Their perceptions of these experiences are many and varied.

Despite the wide range of responses from the students, a major finding of this study was that the Southern Ute students responded as "Utes" rather than "Indians." This conclusion is supported by the responses of the students to the questions concerning who was important in their lives, what cultural activities they participated in, who their friends were, and who was involved in their social circles.

For example, a majority of the students' responses to questions indicated that:

- \* The most influential people in their lives in both the past and present are Utes.
- \* They were very involved in Ute cultural activities.
- \* The immediate peer group was composed of friends from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
- \* Their major involvement in Anglo activities was directly to school and the school culture.

At the same time it should be recognized that a minority of the students interviewed did not fit this profile. These people were more "Indian" oriented and appeared to be more involved in both the Anglo culture in general and the school culture in particular.

To the uninformed outsider coming into the school system or this particular reservation, that these Southern Ute students on the surface do not appear any different from their Anglo and Hispanic contemporaries. A second major finding of this research however, reveals that this is not the case. There are in fact strong acculturative processes at work on the group of students involved in this research, but it appears that they have at this point in time not had an extremely detrimental effect on the Ute identity of these students.

If we define acculturation as the replacing of the indigenous cultural with that of another, say like the Mexican

acculturation of the New Mexico Pueblos for example, then yes, the students interviewed are definitely acculturated to some of the Anglo values, mores and activities of both their teachers and their peers. In the case of these Southern Ute high school students what is happening appears to be more of a case of "social sophistication."

Robert K. Thomas (1989) defines social sophistication as taking on partially or totally aspects of another culture while keeping one's indigenous culture intact. He states further that while a person may be completely capable of functioning in another culture, even comfortable in it, they have not necessarily internalized that particular culture's value system. An example of this he gives is a Frenchman doing business in Germany. While completely comfortable with his business associates, and completely at ease within the German language and culture, he has not internalized that culture, and is still undeniably French. This appears to be for the most part what is happening with the students involved in this research. This is also consistent with the students identifying cultural friction between what they learn at home from their family and at school what they learn from their teachers. The majority of these students are definitely living in two cultures. They essentially "put on a different hat" when the cultural circumstances dictate such. In keeping with Thomas' definition of assimilation as being

"total social absorption", none appears to be present in any of the students interviewed.

While these findings may have limited application for change or recommendations, it should be noted that with the majority of Indian students now attending public high schools, many young Indians throughout the United States are in situations very similar to that of the Southern Utes. It must further be stated that any assumptions about the demise of tribal culture in such settings are clearly challenged. This perhaps indicates that further support of tribal cultures within schools is at least practical.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### Summary

##### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Southern Ute high school students regarding Ute and Anglo cultural values. Using the interview as the method for data collection, the research was designed to examine the feelings and ideas about what it meant to be a Ute as perceived by a selected group of Southern Ute high school students attending a public high school in southwestern Colorado. The intent of the study was to produce a clearer understanding of acculturative processes present in both the public high school and the town itself and how these processes affected the students involved in this research.

##### Importance of the Study

With the increased attention focused on minority affairs, education, and cultural diversity, it is important to know how people view themselves and the various factors involved that lend themselves to changing or modifying this view. A study of Southern Ute students and their social experiences seemed to be a useful contribution to the field of ethnic

studies. It is hoped that this study might also provide useful information to tribal officials and others interested in preserving cultural diversity.

#### Review of procedures

A review of the literature revealed that studies of student perceptions of culture in the field of ethnic studies are rare, and that Southern Ute students' perceptions of their own cultural experience has been relatively unexplored.

The first step in this study was to develop an interview schedule designed to garner student perceptions of themselves as Ute Indians. This interview schedule was then tested in a pilot study for the purposes of: (1) to test for clearness of questions, and (2) to practice interview techniques and procedures. On the basis of the results of the pilot study, the interview schedule was revised. The final interview schedule consisted of 19 questions. These questions dealt with: (1) student perceptions of the people most significant in their lives; (2) their view of the importance of education; (3) their involvement in both Ute and Anglo cultural activities; and (4) the significant group of friends in their lives.

### Sample and analysis

The researcher interviewed 20 Southern Ute high school students, selected at random on a volunteer basis in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 representing a public high school in southwestern Colorado. Each interview was conducted using the revised interview schedule. Student responses were tape recorded. Each interview averaged approximately 25 minutes.

Data from the interviews was later transcribed and transferred to a group of tables designed to facilitate ease of analysis. The data was then analyzed, interpreted and placed in categories.

### Implications of the Study

The question of whether or not a public school education is a major factor in cultural erosion is a serious issue. If the results of this study apply to other settings, say for example the Hispanic or Asian student, multicultural educational programs may be seriously deficient. There is cause for concern at the Ignacio public high school due to the absence of effective cultural diversity programs. On the other hand, even with the absence of these programs the Ute students involved in this research appear for the most part to have a very solid Ute cultural background. Further implications of this study are not only the questions it

answers in the context of the interview schedule, but also the numerous questions that the research has given rise to. For example, do the high school-age Utes that have dropped out of school have a more or less intact tribal culture than that of the students interviewed in this research? Would a more ethnically diverse high school faculty have an impact on these students' perceptions of their tribal identity? These are important and valid questions which would not only provide needed answers, but would also open the door to further valuable research, not only among the Southern Utes, but other tribes as well.

The implications of the language loss among the student population is a very important factor in cultural preservation. Robert K. Thomas points out the fact that there is a major difference between speaking a language in words and phrases and speaking fluently and expressing one's self totally via the language. With this in mind, it appears that some accommodation is being made along these lines with respect to ceremonies, as many of the ceremonies are now held in both Ute and English. This appears to be a very significant alternative to total ceremonial erosion due to loss of the native tongue.

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ACCULTURATION PROCESSES IN  
SOUTHERN UTE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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The University of Arizona, 1991

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This study examined the feelings and perceptions of Southern Ute students about their tribal heritage. These students attend a high school located on the Southern Ute reservation in Southwestern Colorado. The sample of Indian students was limited to senior high (grades 10 through 12). Total Southern Ute enrollment in the school was 31.6 percent of the overall enrollment. The students involved in this study represented 23.5 percent of the total Southern Ute enrollment in grades 9 through 12.

These Indian students experienced acculturation processes in differing ways. Some see themselves as no different from their non-Indian peers, while others see themselves distinctly and uniquely as Ute Indians.