

REMEMBER PLACEMENT:
PARTICIPATING IN THE
INDIAN STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM OF THE
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

by

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Submitted to the Anthropology/ Archaeology Program on May 8, 1992 in
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on a voluntary foster-care program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints ("the Mormons"), which places Native American children into white Mormon foster homes for the school year. The program began in 1954 and still continues in modified form, but reached a peak in attendance in the early 1970s. The thesis is divided into three parts. The first chapters of the thesis provide a historical and doctrinal background of the program and discuss previous studies of the Placement program. The program was motivated by a particular aspect of Mormon doctrine which deals with Native Americans; the first chapter discusses this doctrine in some detail.

The third chapter discusses my study of twenty-two interviews with Navajo adults who were participants on Placement as adolescents. I present their overall memories of the experience, and then discuss four common themes in memories of Placement: race, social class, culture, and personal identity. The interviewees were at various stages of struggling with who they were and where was their place within both Mormonism and their Navajo communities--I focus on this ambivalence and apply their struggle for self-definition to a processual conception of culture. Finally, I use the interviews in a discussion of the uses of narrative in relating Placement memories.

The final part of the thesis will deal directly with myself as author, my place in the research as both insider to Mormonism and outsider to Navajo culture. I will discuss methodological and epistemological issues relating to this inside-outside position and demonstrate the possibility of "inside" or "involved" anthropological research.

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Jean E. Jackson

Title: Professor of Anthropology

Contents

Abstract	1
Preface	3
One: Placement and its Mormon Doctrinal Roots	5
Two: Prior Investigations and Study Design	20
Three: Participant Voices and Themes	27
Four: The Inside-Out Anthropologist	56
Five: Conclusions	71
Bibliography	78

Preface

This project has been almost two years in the making. I always knew I wanted to study some aspect of Mormonism in depth; I have always been a Mormon but have prided myself, especially recently, on being able to understand ways of thinking outside the strictly Mormon frame of reference. I have great respect for members of the Church whose work is dedicated to a successful dialogue between Mormonism and "the world." Studying the Indian Student Placement Program (or "Placement") provides an unusual intersection between the Mormon doctrinal worldview and Indian-white relations in America. I think it appropriate that I say a few words about my interest in the program and how this thesis came about.

Growing up in Virginia, I had no contact with the Indian Student Placement Program nor anyone who had participated. I first heard of the program when my mother told me about her early married years in Pasadena, California. She was teaching the Mia Maid class on Sundays (the fourteen and fifteen year old young women), and in her class was a placement student, with a foster sister the same age. My mother remembered that the Indian girl never spoke, although she would occasionally whisper into her foster sister's ear. Even when my mother approached her outside of class, she could never get her to say a word. This disturbed my mother, who wished she could have done more to help this Indian girl.

I was intrigued and similarly disturbed by the idea of placement. I soon discovered that Placement ran from 1954 to 1984, taking Native American children eight years old and older, assigning them to Mormon homes for the school years and returning them home for the summers. Some people I talked to thought that the program was disbanded after 1984, but in fact it still continues, taking adolescents in tenth grade and older. There are many Church-produced articles and films about Placement but I found that there was very little research on what former Placement students actually thought about the experience. This project began as an effort to hear what participants in the program remembered about the experience.

I will let the thesis speak for itself without further introduction, but need to comment on references. For convenience, I have used traditional notation for scriptural references, rather than page numbers. Given that different editions of the Book of Mormon exist, I have given all scripture references in the familiar Mormon/ Christian manner. 2 Ne 26: 9, therefore, is the second book of Nephi, twenty-sixth chapter, verse nine. Abbreviations in the Book of Mormon are located at the front of every edition. Otherwise, all references to published works are given as citations. For quoting from interviews I also used a slightly different system. I have assigned all the informants a number, such that a quote from an interview is referenced as, for example, N18/ 12. This means the quote is taken from an interview with N18 (the eighteenth Navajo I interviewed), page 12 of the transcription. I have chosen not to assign pseudo-names to my informants. While this system does not indicate gender, it does allow the reader to get a feel for what certain persons said in response to different questions.

This thesis is mine in that I conceived the idea, received the funding, performed the research, transcribed the tapes, and wrote this text. But in a real way it belongs to many people, some of whom I would like to acknowledge here. My fieldwork--five weeks in Utah and Arizona during the summer of 1991--was funded by a generous research study grant from Leaders for Manufacturing. I am grateful to Professor Heather Lechtman for her assistance in obtaining that grant and to H. Kent Bowen for his support of the project. Additional funding for transcription of interview tapes was provided by the Kelly Fund, and I thank Arthur Kaledin for his interest and encouragement. I would also like to thank my hosts in the field: Ed and Judy Bosley, Leonard and Pauline Peshlakai, Alan and Eloise Goatson, and Bob and Norma Winsor. Special acknowledgement should also go to Thom and Bunn Ranger, whose enthusiasm and friendship was a great driving force in the early stages of my research. I would also like to thank Clarence Bishop for his time and the use of his vast collections of articles and information. And greatest thanks of all go to my husband, Don, whose love and assistance have made every page possible.

One: Placement and its Mormon Doctrinal Roots

INTRODUCTION

In 1947, a family of Navajo migrant workers were pulling beets for a Southern Utah farmer. At the end of the summer sixteen-year old Helen, a daughter of the family, asked if she could live with the farmer's family to attend the local school. She offered to sleep in their back yard. The family offered her instead a place in their home, and they enrolled her in seventh grade. She went home after that school year, returning in the fall with her sister and two cousins in tow, and so several other families in the community were enlisted to keep an Indian child for the school year. After six years the parents of fifty-five Navajo children were taking their children to meet Mormon families in Utah, southern California, Idaho and even Oregon (Bishop 1967: 39; Birch 1985).

From these informal arrangements between Navajos and Utah members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the "Mormons" or the "LDS Church") came the Indian Student Placement Program, a private foster-care program for Native American children administered by the LDS Church. The Indian Student Placement Program (or "Placement") recruited children to live with Mormon families to attend public school and experience life in Mormon communities, returning them to their reservations for the summers. Thousands of children from reservations throughout the entire western United States and Canada have participated in Placement between 1947 and the present. Since membership in the LDS Church is a requirement, the Placement program can be seen both as a volunteer arrangement within an organization--rather than a foster care program per se--and as an form of missionization.

What was the Indian Student Placement Program? Why was it organized? The program placed Mormon Native American children with non-Indian Mormon families for the school

year and returned them each summer to the reservation and their natural families. Mormons believed that Indian children needed both education and the teachings of the LDS Church, and that Placement would provide "educational, spiritual, social and cultural advantages", preparing Indian children to be leaders in their communities and successful in their contact with white society (Indian Student Guide 1973). In this it actually differed little from other American programs to assimilate the American Indian and, like the boarding schools of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, it sought to "civilize" the Indian while he or she was yet a child. Mormons believed that they were helping to lift up and redeem the Indian people, like their ancestors who first encountered the New World indigenous people. But what made Placement unique among other programs of its kind was the doctrinal twist Mormons gave to their motivations, that they put a particular spin on the white-Indian relationship. Understanding Placement is to peel away several layers of historical and theological onion skin. To do that will require providing some background about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints itself and their particular claims with respect to the Native American people.

THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF THE LAMANITES

Christian settlers in the Americas have been proselyting to Native Americans ever since they first arrived. And as white settlers pushed the Indians west and onto marginal lands, some of which became the tribal reservations, they also divided up the spiritual territory of Indian land among the various denominations (Prucha 1979). Mormons arrived late on the mission scene, preoccupied until the 1890s with problems of their own place in the United States. It was not until 1943 that the first official Mormon missionaries to the Indians arrived in the Southwest (Flake 1967). Before then, missionary contact between Mormons and Indians had been sporadic and short-lived (although such contact dated back to 1830, when two newly-converted Mormons went to preach to the tribes of the "West"-- in Ohio). In the Southwest

Indian mission Mormons first spent time on the reservations with the Navajos, Hopis and Zunis. The Indian Student Placement Program, which followed only eleven years after the Mormon mission opened, sprang from a renewed Mormon emphasis on converted Native Americans and particularly Navajos.¹ Although the program itself began among migrant workers in Utah, one of the major themes in early speeches and literature of the program was the appalling reservation conditions in the Southwest mission which Placement could help alleviate. For example, Spencer W. Kimball, Placement's most vocal advocate in the Church hierarchy, spoke often of the poverty, dependence, abuse and alcoholism on the reservation and the lack of opportunities for Indian youth. He hoped that through education and the example of good Mormon role models, Native Americans could change these conditions (Kimball and Kimball 1977).

Mormons reacted to their Indian missionary efforts in a way similar to that of other Christian missions, and so Placement is something like other Indian-white contacts of a religious nature. In a way not unlike the way other whites reacted to American Indians, Mormons viewed Indian culture as heathen, the people as materially needy, their conditions of life as backward or even desperate. In fact, Mormon accounts tended to reinforce general Anglo conceptions of the Indian way of life (Whittaker 1985).

One aspect of Mormon doctrine was particularly influential. A substantial part of the placement program's motivations and organization were dictated by the part of Mormon theology concerned with Native Americans. Mormons claim a special and unique relationship to Native Americans: a responsibility to the Indians that takes precedence over other needy peoples because of a book of scripture, the Book of Mormon. To understand the Mormons' claim and their special sense of responsibility to Indian peoples, we must examine this theological layer, beginning with a look at the Book of Mormon and its primary messages.

¹I use the word "conversion" loosely here, especially in light of Gladys Reichard's assertion that there is no such thing as Navajo who "truly understands Christianity." According to her, "Navajo religion draws back even the most sophisticated Navaho, otherwise 'fully acculturated,' to be 'sung over,' often secretly" (Reichard 1949: 66). Possible alternative conceptions of conversion will be discussed in chapter three.

To faithful Mormons, the Book of Mormon is scripture as authoritative as the Bible. They accept it as the word of God, along with the Bible and also two other smaller books, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. The Book of Mormon forms the basis of the individual Mormon's belief.² Mormons see it as a gift from God and as the ultimate test of the believer's faith because of the remarkable circumstances of its publication. They believe that Joseph Smith, the Church's founder and first prophet, translated the book into English from an ancient record he found near his family's home in New York.³ The Book of Mormon is an account of the workings of God through Christ on the *American* continents. Spanning approximately one thousand years, it contains a record of migration of a small group of Jewish refugees to the Americas (ca. 600 B.C.) and the rise and fall of the civilizations they founded. These people kept a record on thin plates of hammered gold and handed them down through a family of scribes. At the outset, this small group split into God-honoring and God-rejecting factions, and as a curse God gave the latter dark skin and cut them off from His word. The two groups became known as "Nephites" (after the righteous brother who wrote the first two sections) and "Lamanites" after the wicked brother.

The Nephites and Lamanites warred throughout the period, pushing each other north from South America into what is now the eastern United States. In the final pages the last Nephite scribe recorded a great battle in which the Nephites were exterminated and then he buried the plates. Thus Mormons believe that the Lamanites are the "principal ancestors of the American Indians" (Book of Mormon: i), since according to the Book of Mormon they outlived all the Nephites, and a remnant of the Lamanites would survive to read the book in the "latter days." The book's writers stated that it would come to the Lamanite remnant through the

² The Book of Mormon is also accepted by a splinter group, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who separated from the rest of the Church after the death of Joseph Smith in 1844.

³ Their use of the word "prophet" is not merely honorary: Mormons believe in continuing divine revelation and so they see their Church president as a prophet, a seer, a talker-to-God. After Smith's death the role (or "calling") of prophet has passed to the most senior member of the council of 12 apostles. For the period of this thesis, the presidents and prophets of the Church were George Albert Smith (1945-1951), David O. McKay (1951-1970), Joseph Fielding Smith (1970-1972), Harold B. Lee (1972-1973), Spencer W. Kimball (1973-1985) and Ezra Taft Benson (1985 to the present).

efforts of a Gentile nation who would find and translate the book. This Gentile nation would come from across "many waters." Nephi, the first Book of Mormon writer, prophesied that the interactions between the Gentiles and the Lamanite remnant would be antagonistic:

And it came to pass that I beheld the many multitudes of Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren [i.e. Laman and his followers, the Lamanites]; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten . . . [They] shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, [and the Gentiles] shall have camped against them round about, and shall have laid siege against them with a mount, and raised forts against them; and . . . they shall have been brought low in the dust, even that they are not (1 Ne 13: 14; 2 Ne 27: 15).

This Gentile nation would then discover the book which the Nephites had kept for the Lamanites, and would realize for whom it was intended:

After our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders . . . [For] there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed. And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers . . . And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes . . . (1 Ne 22: 8; 2 Ne 30: 3-6;).

The Book of Mormon is central to Mormon discourse on Native Americans because its own writers directed it toward a surviving remnant of the Lamanites. Thus for Mormons, it belongs in some sense to the children of the Lamanites; it is *their* book. This idea is so deeply

imbedded in Mormon doctrine that Mormons commonly refer to Native Americans using the word "Lamanites".

The Book of Mormon is central to discourse in another way too, in that the book is the foundation of belief in the Church--because if it is really the account of this continent's ancient inhabitants, then Joseph Smith was a prophet and all the rest falls into place. The document therefore intersects with a believer's life based on whether or not it is "true." Not only does the Book of Mormon mean many things to many people, but this meaning is often bound up with the believer's identity. This is doubly true for the Native Americans, who must decide if they really believe they are the Lamanite remnant. Accepting the Book of Mormon as truth is no simple matter for Native Americans; they must decide what it means for them individually and as a people; they must decide whether to buy the Mormon version of their own history and destiny. As we will see, for my informants these decisions have been a continual struggle between tradition and self.

Under the historical and theological layers lies a third element of complexity in the organization of the Placement program. The Mormon conception of Lamanites is not value-neutral. On the contrary, it carries, both now and when Placement began, a package of images and ideas that associate Lamanites with the worst elements of humankind. The meeting of the Gentiles and the Lamanites is not to be a meeting of equals. Recall that the Lamanites rejected God and their brothers at the outset of the Book of Mormon. Consequently God cursed them:

And he had caused a cursing to come upon them, yea, even a sore cursing, because of their iniquity. [W]herefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them . . . And because of their cursing which was upon them they did become an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey (2 Ne 5: 21, 24).

By the end of the Book of Mormon, the Lamanites and Nephites had intermarried over time, effectively destroying any direct line from the unfortunate Laman to the modern-day Indians. Nevertheless, Mormons have applied descriptions of the Lamanites freely to modern American Indians. One can see that the following depiction may have seemed apt to Mormons settling the Utah basin in the mid-19th century, who encountered the local Indians. And one can see also how easily Mormons would label the nearby Lamanites through the years even to the generation in which Placement began:

[T]hey were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and the cimeter, and the ax . . . and they were continually seeking to destroy us (Enos 1:23).

To be Lamanite carries a certain connotation which no Mormon misunderstands. One Ute, a Mormon, remembers his father saying, "Lamanite! I am not a Lamanite. They are a wicked people. I am not a wicked person" (Harris 1985: 143). He talks about the experience of growing up in the Church as a "Lamanite" and the ambiguity of the term: "The more I learned, the more I felt that the Church really had no place for us as 'Indians.' We only belonged if we were Lamanites" (Harris 1985: 147). But in fact, if one reads the Book of Mormon literally, the first Lamanites and their "surviving remnant" have no connection; "Lamanite" in effect became a general term for "not-Nephite". In fact according to Larsen, to be Lamanite is to be the inheritor of glorious promises, or even the promised builder of the kingdom of God (Larsen 1966). Yet the term still carries with it a negative image of an uncivilized and bestial people. In fact, these images differ only in the slightest from other racist descriptions of Indians. There is a similarity between the dominant view of Indians and the

Book of Mormon portrayal of the Lamanites; all the elements are present, from the loincloth to the teepee.⁴

We have found ourselves on the surface of a sphere; we begin and end a peeling away of layers with the dominant culture's view of Native Americans. That this view is expressed in Mormon terms represents not so much the operation of dominant American stereotypes but a coincidence of dominant and non-dominant conceptions. Many Mormons are members of American society; but Americans for whom religious discourse filters national norms. The Book of Mormon as a sacred record reaffirms the peculiar set of Mormon values--it helps to shape them in a direction different enough from their fellow Americans that Mormons consider their relations with Native Americans unique. However, the Mormon documents also legitimate the American status quo in such a way that for Indians to become Mormon requires them to set aside aspects of their Indian-ness. This idea will be explored further in the discussion of the interview sample. For now I want to emphasize the coincidence of Mormon and American views on Native Americans.

But note that when dominant American mores are expressed in Mormon terms, most members of the Church see only the Mormon-ness. That Mormonism and American society intersect on points of belief--as in this case--it is irrelevant (or, for some, testimony to the fact that American society occasionally reflects God's perfect society). This idea will be explored further in the discussion of the interview sample. As the next section presents a history of the program, keep in mind that the Mormon version of Indian history and destiny provided a primary motivation behind the organization of the Indian Student Placement Program.

⁴ Robert Berkhofer gives an excellent discussion of the elements of the dominant stereotype of Indians in his book, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. See especially the first chapter. "The Idea of the Indian: Invention and Perpetuation" (Berkhofer 1978: 3-32).

A HISTORY OF THE PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Almost every non-Indian Utah Mormon is familiar with Placement from having seen an Indian child come into his or her home, school or congregation. And many Native Americans know of the program from having participated, even for a short time, or having had a relative who went. The structure and history of the program could be drawn from participants' memories, but Clarence Bishop, the current program director, has written a comprehensive Church account of the program's early history by its current director, Clarence Bishop (Bishop 1967).

Bishop wrote his account using the program's records and minutes; his is the only published work on Placement which utilizes the program's records. According to his account, Placement began with a series of informally arranged school year exchanges between Navajos and members of the southern Utah communities of Richfield and Gunnison (Bishop 1967: 35). These placements and their apparent success prompted a local Mormon leader, Golden Buchanan, to request that the idea be considered for a Church program. In 1948, Buchanan was called to Salt Lake City as coordinator of Indian Affairs for the Church, under the direction of the three-man Indian Relations Committee. In this capacity he had the opportunity to be in contact with families who had taken in Indian children. As the number of children participating increased, the host families began to turn to the Indian Relations Committee for advice and answers. By 1952, fifty-five students were coming to Gunnison each year and being placed by a Church leader, Miles Jensen, into local homes. Jensen remembers that "most of the children who were coming were non-L.D.S. Immediately they began to study the gospel and become acquainted with the Church." (Bishop 1967: 39). By the early 1950s, interested families in southern California, Idaho and Oregon heard about what was then being called the "outing" program and arranged to have students come to their homes. These placements were settled through the families who often they heard about the idea from people serving as missionaries on the reservation.

The program had been unofficially monitored by the head of the Indian Relations Committee, apostle Spencer W. Kimball. Around 1953, Golden Buchanan wrote a Kimball a letter suggesting that the Church sponsor these school-year placements and coordinate the efforts of natural parents and those Mormons who wanted to take in a child. Kimball had travelled on the Navajo and Hopi reservations and had been touched by the poverty and lack of opportunity there. He liked Buchanan's idea and believed that attending Utah public schools and living in Mormon families would make a positive difference in the lives of young Native Americans. He also believed that the growing interest in these informal placements demonstrated the idea was inspired by God and worthy of the Church's support. In 1954, Kimball introduced the program (then called the "Home Care Program") to the membership of the Church and designated seven stakes in Utah to receive children.⁵ They organized a reception center in Richfield where registered nurses gave each child a medical exam and chest x-ray, provided baths, a hair treatment, and breakfast, and where foster families received an orientation (Bishop 1967: 50).

In that same year, however, the Utah State Department of Welfare questioned the legality of these placements. The Church placed the program under the administration of the Relief Society, which was state-licensed as a qualified agency for placement of children. They titled the program the "Boarding Care Program" and discontinued placements in states other than Utah until they could provide legal support (Bishop 1967: 52). It is important to note that the words "foster families" and "foster children" are somewhat misleading because although legally authorized to place Indian children into foster homes, the Indian Student Placement Service was not a foster care agency in the way we might usually think of one. The children were not placed because of troubled family circumstances nor did they become wards of the

⁵ A local Mormon congregation smaller than about 300 people is called a *branch* and when it exceeds that limit becomes a *ward* (a parish is a good equivalent term). Several wards make up a *stake* (roughly comparable to a diocese)

state or of the agency. They volunteered to participate and their parents signed a voluntary release form, as did the non-Indian Mormons with whom they lived (Bishop 1967: 45-47).

After the program became official, children were selected on the criteria of membership in the LDS Church, age of at least six,⁶ and legal parental consent. Caseworkers also made a judgement of the children's ability to benefit from the experience. In general the Church caseworkers favored Indian students with better grades, fluency in English, and some prior experience with the Church, in the hope that such students would keep up in school and resist being disoriented by local worship practices. As we will see later, these goals were not always fulfilled as intended, nor did selection on these grounds protect students from culture shock, homesickness and long-term identity crises.

The program grew rapidly (see Figure 1). Over the years the program worked out kinks about who should pay for illnesses, and whether students should be encouraged to inter-date.⁷ Students could not return to the reservation during the year and stay in the program (Bishop 1967: 56). The program's staff met several times with representatives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, beginning in 1957, to reassure them about the potential of the program and its positive benefits in the lives of participants (Bishop 1967: 60). The program's director recorded that in these meetings and in meetings with tribal representatives there was "little voiced opposition." (Bishop 1967: 63). In 1959, Navajo Chairman Jones visited the reception center and "suggested that there was not proper understanding among some of the non-Mormons who

⁶ The original documents specify six as the minimum age. However, they also state that a child had to be a member of the Church. Children are baptized at eight, and so even if a child was being raised in the Church, he or she would not technically be a member until baptism at age eight. It seems that children as young as six were being placed in the early years, to which the Navajo tribe objected on the grounds that such a child was not officially a Church member.

⁷ Bishop reported from the minutes of the Indian Placement Committee, January 8, 1957: "the problem of inter-dating between the Indian children and their non-Indian friends was brought to the attention of the Indian Committee. The concern was not so much that these children were dating each other but that if they dated, a certain percentage of them would probably end in marriages [sic]. It was suspected that neither natural parents nor foster parents would be happy with this situation. There was also the problem the couple would face because of added adjustments in relationship to their different cultural backgrounds." The Committee decided to sponsor dances and social events for Placement students to help alleviate the problem. (Bishop 1967: 70).

were against the Program and that visits such as these would go a great distance to help these misunderstandings disappear" (Bishop 1967: 66).

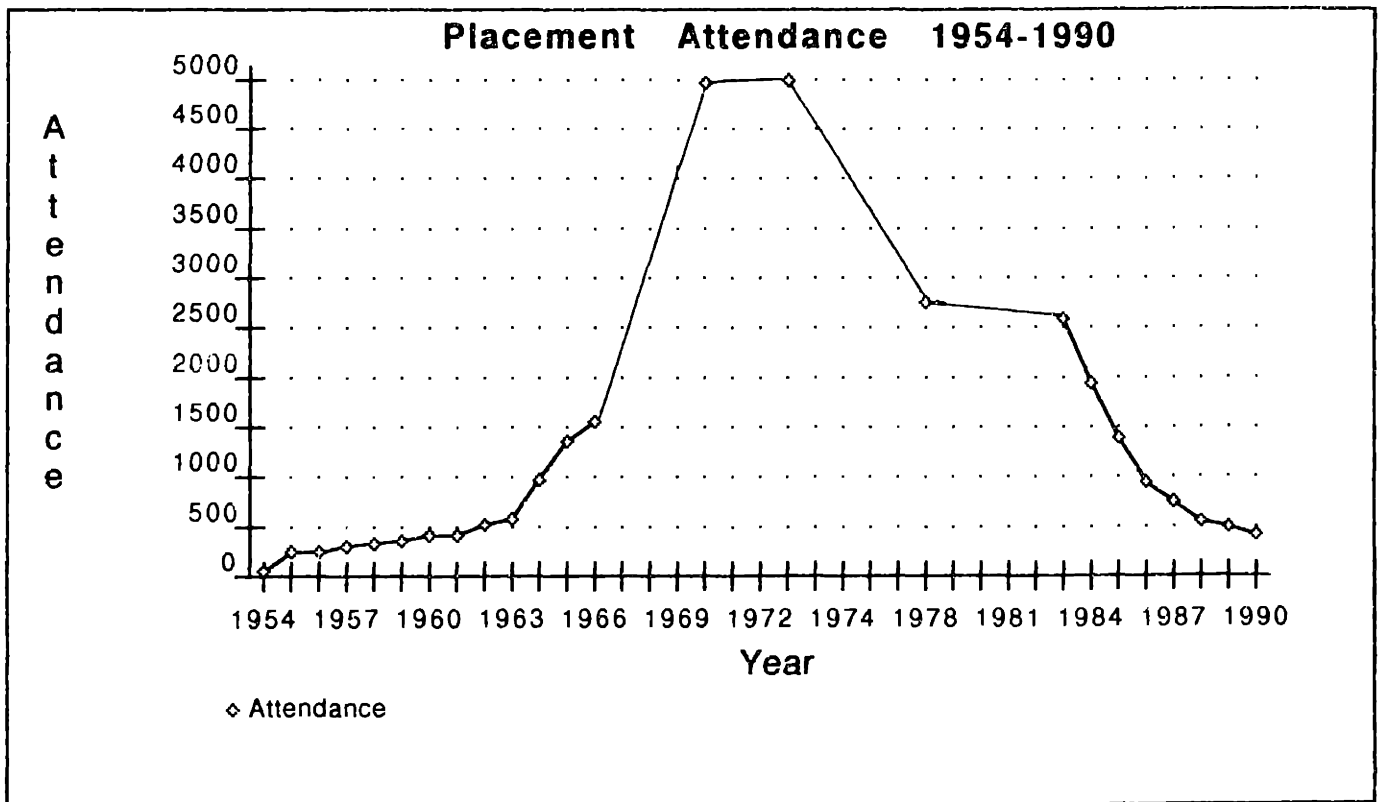


Figure 1.

At first, only students from the Southwest Mission went on Placement, but as the program slowly expanded into other states, more tribes joined. The Church organized agencies for placement in Arizona in 1962, in Canada (Alberta) in 1964, and in Idaho in 1965. Northwestern tribes were admitted in 1963, and Oklahoma tribes in 1966 (Bishop 1967: 77). The Church also organized agencies in Washington and Georgia after 1967 (Bishop 1967: 93, 94). By 1967, over 1569 students from sixty-four tribes were on Placement per year (thirty-seven of these tribes sent less than five students, forty-four less than ten, and only four sent more than 50) (Bishop 1967: 97). The program's attendance peaked in 1973-74 with five thousand youth.

Placements were arranged through a dozen or so Church-employed social workers. During the summers, these social workers visited students who were interested in going on Placement for the first time and explained the program to the student's family. If they were willing, the parents signed a consent form. At the end of the summer, a chartered bus picked up the students at local meeting houses on the reservation and drove them to a reception center, which in Utah consisted for many years of two buildings on the campus of Brigham Young University in Provo. Reception centers were part clearing house and part medical clinic. All the Placement students were given baths, medical and dental exams and any necessary injections and then were introduced to their assigned foster families, with whom they were to live for the nine months of the school year.⁸

Ideally, Placement students went back to the same family year after year. In order to continue in the program, Placement students had to keep their grades up in the local public school and adhere to the Church standards of morality. A student could be sent home for smoking, drinking, stealing, belligerence, or sexual immorality. Any one of those offenses could keep a Placement student from going back in the fall, as could lackadaisical Church attendance during the summer. The Church thus prided itself on having students who were "clean in body and mind" on the program. Placement students were continually assessed in a filtering-out process which dropped non-compliers from the program.

In the mid 1980s the program was cut back drastically. The administration raised the age of initial placement from eight to fourteen and reduced the program to the Southwestern Tribes. In 1990, only 453 students sixteen or older went on Placement. At the same time other coordinating Indian programs which flourished when the program was at its peak were also scaled back or cut, including the Indian Education department at BYU, Indian seminaries⁹ in Bureau of Indian Affairs and public schools, and Indian Youth conferences. At present it is

⁸Until the late 1970s, students did not go home for Christmas, although members of the natural family were encouraged to visit. For the many families who could not afford to travel to Utah, this meant that children on Placement only saw their families during the summers.

⁹I. e. a religious class for junior and high school students, often held on or close to school grounds.

contemplated that the program will continue "as long as natural parents want to send their kids on it" (Bishop, interview 7/91).

ISSUES RAISED BY PLACEMENT

At its inception, Spencer W. Kimball saw Placement as a grand apology for past wrongs or a kind of self-redemption for whites when he wrote:

If we as a nation and as a people can ever justify our invasions of these Americas, and our conquest of his promised land and the subjugation of the Indian, certainly it will not be by passing by on the other side, as did the superior priest, or the passing by on the other side, as did the self-righteous Levite, but by going to the limit as did the Good Samaritan, in binding up his wounds, pouring in "oil and wine," setting him on our own beasts, taking him to an inn, paying for his care and revisiting him (Conference Report, Apr 1949, p. 106).

Within the Mormon worldview, Placement was an obligation and a fulfillment of prophecy. Promotional church materials claim that the success of participants proves the program was divinely inspired. Indeed, some Placement graduates have become leaders in the Navajo tribal government, doctors, businessmen, lawyers on the reservations. They have also become active, participating Church members. Others have become misfits, even alcoholics. Those who were on Placement reveal a range of adaptations to the experience.

In its structure as a one-way foster care program, Placement tried to assimilate the Native American children who went. Yes, it was a volunteer program; we can infer from the rapid rise in attendance that Native Americans were interested in participating. Especially because of the educational opportunities which the reservation could not match, many Native Americans eagerly chose Placement. But on whose cultural terms and in whose language did that so-called Indian education take place? The obvious answer: not their own. Why else have

people chosen to participate? What were the responses and feelings of participants on Placement? What kind of consequences did Placement have for the participants, their natural families? Where do former participants place themselves in Mormonism, in American society, in their Indian communities (in this case, in their Navajo communities)? Neither the doctrinal basis nor the chronology of the program answers questions like these. In the next chapter, we will look at several studies of Placement that have been carried out to help answer these questions. The study reported here differs from these studies because it is concerned with telling the Placement story using the words and feelings of Navajos who were there. Their experiences, recorded in the third chapter, touch on many issues. Among the most important are issues of meaning, belonging, conversion and identity.

Two: Prior Investigations and Study Design

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF THE PROGRAM

The Indian Student Placement Program involved thousands of Native Americans in many different tribes; the previous chapter examined the program's reach and provided a general overview to the program's history and its source in Mormon doctrine. Because of Placement's size and its unusual structure, social scientists, both LDS and non-member, became interested in evaluating and understanding the program. This chapter will discuss the four major studies and set this project in the context of this previous scholarship.

The first study, written by the program's current director, Clarence Bishop, consisted of a detailed history of the program from its inception in 1947 to 1967 (Bishop 1967). It was largely Bishop's account on which the brief history of the program provided in the first chapter was based. His report also included a history of the program's personnel, changes over time in the operation of the program, and attendance records by year. Bishop's goal was to produce an accurate and complete account of the program's activities up to 1967, based on the program's files and minutes. Bishop concluded that the benefits of the program touched Native American families as well as the students themselves.

In the spring of the year the student returns to his parents on the reservation. He takes with him the culture he has experienced, his educational gains, social adjustments he has made, and many additional things he has learned that will be a benefit to the whole family. It is not the objective of the Program to alienate the child's affections from his natural parents but to strengthen them . . . Upon arriving home the child has been made aware there is a different way of life. In many cases the child has offered helpful suggestions to his parents and in some ways has actually lifted the standards of living in his natural home. (Bishop 1967: 110).

Bishop's *Indian Placement* was an account of the program from the viewpoint of its administration. This program-centered approach had limits, admitted Bishop: "Although much needed, there has been very little formal research concerning the effect the Program has on the children it serves." (Bishop 1967: 115). Others became interested in the program and worked to fill the gap in understanding what Placement's consequences have been for its participants.

The first systematic study of Placement was funded by the LDS Church in 1981. This follow-up study used a randomly selected sample of 238 current and former participants from the Four-Corners area where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah meet.¹⁰ Brigham Young University (BYU) sociologists Bruce A. Chadwick, Stan L. Albrecht and Howard M. Bahr interviewed 165 participants. They compared participants' educational achievements and employment with a control group of similarly aged non-participants and found that Placement participants were more likely to have completed high school and attended college or vocational school. Their grade point averages were likely to be significantly higher. Placement participants held more "high status" occupations (i. e. professional and managerial). Participants reported themselves to be "happier" than their peers, but the researchers found that the participants' marriages were no more stable or happy marriages than those of the control group (Chadwick et al 1986: 519). The researchers reported that "participation was associated with assimilation into white society" based on participants' responses to questions about the extent to which they felt more Indian or white, and how they perceived that they fit in with Indians and whites (Chadwick et al 1986: 521).

The BYU researchers concluded that the program provided educational advantage which may or may not have led to economic advantage. They also concluded that although

¹⁰ Participants in the study were Navajo, Southern Ute, Uintah-Ouray, Hopi, Zuni, Fort Apache, and San Carlos Apache (Chadwick et al 1986: 516).

participation "fostered assimilation . . . into white society", significant social and psychological maladjustments resulting from alleged psychological trauma of the experience were minor behaviors (or not reported) among participants (Chadwick et al 1986: 524).

A third, less optimistic study reported on a sample of twenty-five adolescent Navajo participants of the program. Clinical psychologist Martin D. Topper observed the youth during the summers from 1966 to 1973. Topper was specifically interested in participants' reintegration into reservation life during the summers after having been in their foster homes for the school year. He described this reintegration as marked by a psychological tension in the child, who had to perform both "developmental and reacculturative" tasks in coming back to his or her reservation community (Topper 1979: 150). Placement students faced not only the usual identity and independence conflicts common to all adolescents, but a contrast between their two lives and overwhelming questions about their future identity and prospects. They experienced "the temporary loss of their Mormon foster families, the resumption of a poverty-level standard of living, [and] the need to reintegrate socially and emotionally with their Navajo households and the local Navajo community" (Topper 1979: 153). According to Topper, the summer was "in effect, a dry run for the experience these young people will undergo when they are graduated from high school and return to the reservation to begin their adult lives" (Topper 1979: 150).

Topper identified specific examples of the twenty-five adolescents working through these conflicts by acting out, binge drinking or having hysteric fits which required the presence of a medicine man. Some young men and women chose to become parents (this being the least stigmatizing way of not going back after the summer). Topper concluded that rather than easing the development and acculturation of Navajo youth, Placement interfered with the Navajo adolescent's identity formation and "create[d] unreal expectations in the mind of a child by exposing it to a culture and a standard of living that do not reflect life on the reservation" (Topper 1979: 159). Further, Placement was unsuccessful as a missionary practice, since none of the students in the sample were regularly attending members of the

Mormon church in 1979. He pointed out that any sympathetic feelings the placement students may have held for the program were attributed to their holding good jobs as a result of the education they received. In short, Topper concluded that the program was ineffective as a missionary tool but did contribute to economic success and better jobs for its participants.

The fourth study, a 1968 Mormon follow-up of 165 early participants during the period between 1954 to 1967, told a similar story. Although ninety-eight percent of Robert D. Smith's respondents "maintained allegiance" to the Church,¹¹ he found that only twenty-seven percent of married respondents had been married in the temple. A temple wedding requires a high level of commitment to the Church for at least a period of a year but does not necessarily imply that the couple continue to be committed. Sixty percent of Smith's respondents had been to college and thirty percent completed technical or vocational school. Like Topper, Smith described a population of Native Americans with better than average education and jobs but without lasting ties to the Mormon religion. Smith found that "they are assuming roles which are not traditional and inimical to their respective cultures"; seventy-five percent "considered themselves as an average American in a contemporary culture" (Smith 1968: 2).

These four studies of Placement disagree about the ultimate consequences of the program. They trace distinct lines of dialogue, namely: the extent to which participants had been assimilated into white society, the extent of psychological scars from the experience, their economic and educative advantage over peers and parents, and the likelihood of continued participation in the Mormon religion. These researchers raised questions of identity, the meaning of conversion, the value of education in Indian life and, for those

¹¹ This number seems to indicate an extremely high retention rate, but represents a subtle skewing in sampling. The high reporting of church allegiance may reflect two factors: first, only those who returned the survey were included in the study. It is quite possible that those who had fallen away from the church simply had no interest in responding to a Placement survey. Second, it is extremely difficult to get off of Church membership lists. In the absence of Church disciplinary action or outright excommunication, a person can simply stop coming and basically never be cut off the rolls, thus still being able to claim church "allegiance."

within the Church, the responsibility of Mormons to Lamanites. But in all the conclusions on Placement, the voice of the participant was missing. The present study will begin to correct that deficit. It is based on the words of a group of Navajos who were on Placement.

THE PROJECT

This study of Placement relies on interviews with former Placement participants. To limit the sample size, I took a slice of the program during the years of peak attendance (1960 to 1975) and chose to interview participants who had started the program between those years. I limited my study to Navajo informants who had lived with Utah families, because the Navajo have been the program's longest and most numerous participants, and in order to minimize cultural differences among both the participant children and their Mormon hosts. Also, too frequently Mormons, like other Americans, use a blanket term for all Native Americans when they may be talking about members of one tribe or another. In the case of Placement, to use "Native American" or "Lamanite" would overlook or bypass cultural differences between tribes (Berkhofer 1978). It is possible, even likely, that non-Navajo children on Placement responded differently to Mormonism and to Anglo culture.¹²

The study is concerned with stories of Placement—accounts of experiences and memories from the people who had participated in the Placement program. It is based on a five-week fieldwork trip to Utah and the Navajo reservation to interview participants in the summer of 1991. I prepared by talking to several foster parents by phone about what it was like to have a Navajo foster child. I then traveled to the Navajo Nation to conduct interviews in person. On the Navajo reservation, people do not have as ready access to the telephone as

¹²Such limits on the study raise some issues of what is meant by "Navajo culture." Traditional Navajo culture as described in early ethnographies probably no longer fully applies to modern Navajos. The informants themselves had ideas about the definition of Navajo culture, as we will see in the third chapter. It is important to note that former Placement participants' apparent integration into Anglo society and their sense of being between cultures may have echoes in the feelings of many Navajos, simply because the Navajo way of life is changing rapidly.

in Utah, and I did not want to skew my pool of interviewees by only talking to former participants who have telephones. I spent twenty days in the Navajo Nation, splitting my time between three towns in Arizona. I attended Mormon services on three Sundays in "Lamanite" wards, and I temporarily lived with LDS Navajos while I was collecting interviews. During my fieldwork, I conducted twenty-six interviews with Navajo former participants. Three lived in the greater Salt Lake area and the remainder lived in Arizona, mostly within the Navajo Nation. Out of this collection of interviews with foster parents and former Placement students, I selected twenty-two interviews with Navajos as my pool of informants.¹³

THE SAMPLE

Of my twenty-two interviewees, seven were male fifteen female.¹⁴ Their average age was thirty-three. All but one had grown up on the reservation itself; all but the two still in high school had completed high school. Four had completed at least a bachelors' degree and six had completed some college but did not finish. They also had had a range of Placement experiences. Fourteen had been under ten when they first went on Placement, and eighteen were under thirteen, while three were in their last year or two of high school. Forty-three percent lived with a single foster family. Another forty-three percent lived with two,¹⁵ and fourteen percent lived with three or more families. The average length of time on the program was seven years. Average age at the time of first placement was ten years old.

Interviewees in this sample all declared themselves members of the LDS Church or claimed an affiliation with the local LDS branch. Some obviously participated more than others; the sample includes the wife of a regional leader, the leader of a branch, and an individual who had helped translate the LDS temple ceremonies into Navajo. Their feelings

¹³ My sample of foster parents was too small to be useful and several interviews with Navajos were inaudible on tape.

¹⁴ This ratio is roughly similar to that of male to female in the program as a whole at any given time.

¹⁵ In four cases, children moved to a second home because the foster parents divorced.

about the program and its influence in their lives were complex. Many expressed ambivalence; some felt angry, some confused, and some still identified strongly with their foster families. Almost all said they were glad to talk about the experience and several expressed pride that their story was being told.

In twenty-two interviews revealing very individual circumstances, there were some similar experiences and themes. All the informants remembered the culture shock of their first year and their adjustment to LDS life. Many spoke about Placement in LDS language--using LDS concepts and sometimes calling themselves Lamanites--perhaps recalling how they thought as children or adapting their thoughts to the Mormon interviewer. And in all the interviews, they talked through interlocking themes of race, class, culture, and personal identity. In the following chapter we will explore their words and themes, to understand Placement from the student's point of view.

Three: Participant Voices and Themes

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the interviewees' stories in their own words, engaging them in a kind of conversation about Placement that begins with some overall conceptions of the Placement program and thoughts on the program's purpose and objectives. Memories of the Placement experience follow: the initial days in students' foster homes and their adjustments to schools, the Mormon rhythm of life, and the foster family. We then turn to an unpacking of the themes meshed throughout the Navajos' interviews, an analysis of the layering of race, class, culture and personal identity. Finally, we foreground the textual nature of the interviews and briefly consider a crucial question of narrative theory, namely, how meaningful are the elements of narrative to the construction of an account from memory? The twenty-two Navajos' words represent a way of thinking about Placement in a particular situation--an interview--and with a particular result--a transcribed text. Elucidating interview themes is a form of text-reading and some questions of narrative theory are applicable. The dialogue with Navajo interviews ends with looking specifically at the textual and narrative element and its relation to their engagement with their own pasts.

The Indian Student Placement Program literature claimed that the program provided "educational, spiritual, social and cultural opportunities in non-Indian community life" (Indian Student Guide 1973: 1). But as children boarded the bus, walked into their new classrooms, and experienced Placement first-hand, they added their own ideas about Placement, its purpose and meaning. These ways of thinking represent individual responses to the experience and also the circumstances of their present lives. Varying response to Placement also reflects the fact that there are twenty-two separate interview events. But some

ways of thinking about the experience came up over and over, revealing similar thoughts. From the interviews one can make several generalizations about how the interviewees considered the program's overall effects.

First, interviewees frequently mentioned Placement's educational effects. One woman remembered, "the whole purpose of Placement was, number one, to provide us with a better education. Because at the time that I was in junior high and high school, the education system down on the rez was bad." But others were more cynical about what Placement was designed to accomplish, citing its overt religious emphasis. One woman speculated that Placement's purpose was acculturative first and educative second: "I believe we had to be indoctrinated into the LDS Church, for us to forget our traditions and whatnots. Because the Navajos' religion, traditions, and the way of life, the culture, they all tie in together, you can't separate it."

For this second woman, Placement was more than an educational exchange program; it struck a deliberate blow against her traditional Navajo lifeways. She might have chosen less inflammatory language and said the same thing using LDS concepts: Placement was designed to bring the gospel to Lamanite children to teach them about their true, forgotten history. In essence this woman raises the idea that there are elements of Native American life which are incompatible with Mormonism. Indeed, we can imagine that entry into any religion requires abandoning some elements of a previous life. 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. This woman holds traces of bitterness, as evidenced by her use of the word "indoctrinated" with its connotation of being compelled to accept a set of ideas. As in Martin Topper's study of Navajo Placement students during the summers, bitter participants may associate Placement

with a traumatic childhood separation from family and community and see that separation from "culture" as Placement's ultimate goal (Topper 1979).

Clearly, the interviewees hold a range of ideas about Placement's purpose and objectives, ideas filtered through their own lives. Placement viewed in memory takes on some of the color of the present and reflects current feelings about the LDS Church and about life choices. At one extreme, some Navajos see Placement as an opportunity to improve their lives. They may appreciate having lived in a foster family free of alcoholism and abuse, and cherish memories of foster parents who frequently expressed their love. These interviewees are grateful for the chance to finish high school and even attend college. And many of them are still tied into the LDS communities on the reservation and view Placement as the first contact with a church involvement they enjoy. For Navajos at the other extreme, whites used Placement to degrade an already struggling people, not by helping them accomplish their own goals but by devaluing those goals and substituting Anglo goals and measures of success. Thus for them, Placement disrupted Navajo families and communities, creating simply by its structure irreconcilable conflicts in the students. Many claim that Placement students were too young to understand what was happening or to make an informed choice about the consequences, and they had had to assimilate in the name of education to Anglo life.

Within this spectrum lie most of the people interviewed; most were ambivalent and seemed to be genuinely struggling with the experiences of Placement and what it had meant in their lives. To be true to that struggle requires presenting multiple responses and emphasizing that the interviewees did not agree about Placement nor describe entirely consistent feelings. They are on shifting ground when it comes to making conclusions about the experience; rather than impose an artificial order on their very real struggles this chapter's perspective also shifts. In this chapter the reader will be hearing many voices and returning to the same ideas again and again. It is not unlike riding a merry-go-round, where each revolution brings one back to the same scene. But is it the same? With every turn the scene

has changed--people have moved or laughed or left. Furthermore, the experience of making each turn has changed the rider so that he sees the scene differently every time. We will be circling around several issues and the Navajos' memories of several types of experiences-- and each time returning to the fundamental questions about Placement, seeing them in a changed way. By this method we will come to a informant-centered understanding about the meaning of Placement for those who were there.

WHY GO?

Going on Placement involved making stressful choices and adjustments. First, children going on Placement for the first time were generally younger than ten years old. Preadolescents change rapidly and are in the process of defining their personal identities, even those who never leave home for a significant period of time. Some adjustments of leaving home came with being separated from parents or other close relatives, leaving a familiar place and people--often leaving behind a first language. Most often these Navajo children came from large families and may have had siblings close to their age, often their primary playmates. Frequently siblings went on Placement at the same time but not to the same family or even to the same city. So for some, Placement involved not only leaving home and family but also knowing their siblings lived with new families too.

Starting Placement meant being presented a new set of parents and siblings, which the child was expected to consider his own family,¹⁶ and a new home in which he occupied an ambiguous position. For some, this new family and home became "theirs" and they took their place as son or daughter without conflict. More frequently, however, the child would experience constant reminders that he was not a "real" family member. He attended a new school where he was always in the minority as a Native American; he was expected to participate as a member of a church whose teachings were quite possibly new to him. More

¹⁶ Or at least act as if he did.

generally too, a child on Placement would be living in a home and community with new and unfamiliar cultural expectations and would need to learn new rules for everyday living. Given the multiple stresses of Placement life and the obvious pain of separation from the natural family and the reservation, we might ask why anyone would volunteer to participate in such a program. I put this question to the interviewees.

How did you come to be on Placement?

I just wanted to get away from the reservation. I saw my sister, she went on Placement.

(N10/ 3)

I was curious. I had seen other kids go but I didn't really know them very well and I wanted to try it, so that's basically how I ended up going at a young age. My parents didn't want me to go but I wanted to really bad. I bet it was hard for them because I was only eight at that time.

(N12/ 3)

My brother went first for two years and then my mother suggested I go. I was excited because I wanted to go and it really sounded like my brother was having such a good time.

(N13/ 1)

I was going to boarding school and my mom suggested that I go on Placement because her youngest sister, my aunt, was on Placement and she seemed to really like it. And she thought it would be nice if I went. So I went on Placement with my brother.

(N18/ 3-4)

The first time I heard about it was when Brother Jensen came with the elders. They explained it to my dad and for some reason I said, "Sure." That was it. I was the first one in my family. We were in the middle of nowhere. I don't remember that we were members of the Church before that.

(N21/ 4)

I had older brothers and sisters on it. My mom and dad were converted to the Church back in the fifties. We were all blessed into the Church and I guess we were expected when we turned eight years old to be put on the Placement program. And we all were.

(N22/ 3)

I guess it was through my parents. I wasn't asked--I don't remember. I think the people came through recruiting. I remember the missionaries used to come over and give us lessons but we never went to church. I heard about it and they put me in.

(N23/ 1)

I wasn't the first one in my family to go on Placement. There's quite a few of my sisters that went on Placement. And I think three or four of my brothers. So I guess naturally my mom wanted us to go on Placement so we could get a better home and better education. From what I understand, because then I was too young to understand things.

(N24/ 6)

The theme of family expectation and parental initiation runs through many of these accounts. Rarely did one child leave an intact family behind; almost universally his siblings left home also. Some participants remember that their parents wanted them to go--for a few, they experienced this as a painful childhood rejection. Why then would parents voluntarily send their children? One woman suggested that maybe so many others were doing it, her parents felt pressure to conform locally. Perhaps Navajos active in the local Mormon congregation viewed participation on Placement as a moral imperative, evidence of commitment or faith. But in several of the accounts given above, interviewees hint that their parents felt inadequate, that the home life was unbearable, the reservation life unsatisfying.

Many families benefitted materially from having kids on Placement. In his study, Topper noted the economic component to sending a child on Placement : "in many cases placement, even though it involves a painful separation, may be one of the few ways in which an economically underprivileged Navajo family can be supported" (Topper 1979: 143). Parents fed fewer mouths during the school year and each summer some returning

children brought new clothing and gifts. Parents might even have sent a rug or blanket for the child to sell to the foster parents. Further, while a Navajo family had children on Placement they would be linked to the local congregation's network of informal welfare and material support.

Children on Placement had to be baptized as Mormons. The same was not true for their parents, who could maintain ties with their community in traditional ways, through peyotism, or through membership in other organizations. Child baptism thus did not necessarily imply religious conversion in the usual sense; it may have involved complex parental motivations or simply reflected a desire to participate in Placement. Two interviewees remembered being baptized as children by overzealous missionaries without knowing at the time what was happening.

Deciding to go on Placement may not have been as difficult as we might imagine. Many reservation Navajos know too well the effects of alcoholism and abuse in the home. Jobs on the reservation are fairly hard to come by, money scarce. One man remembered the clerk at his local trading post stacking envelopes of welfare checks into towering piles once a month; government agencies support many Navajos. Although schooling has improved, in most communities in the 1960s and 1970s going to school meant living at a Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school. Some interviewees had been to boarding school before enrolling in the Placement program; they remember dormitory-style housing and authoritative teachers who punished them for talking in Navajo. Thus in some of these situations, enrollment in Placement released a part of the economic and social pressures of reservation life for children and their parents.

PLACEMENT'S ANNUAL CYCLE

What do you remember about starting Placement?

When the caseworker first asked me about it, I thought it was like a private school. I thought all the Indians that came up went to a certain school together. I found out

when I got [to Utah]. I didn't know until then, and we all got to the church that morning and all of a sudden I started seeing people leave with their families and thought, "Whca. Hold on here!"

(N4/ 5)

You know what I remember when I think about my first time on Placement? Is riding on the bus and coming driving on the freeway, and seeing Salt Lake City for the first time. I mean you talk about how New York has those skyscrapers, well that's what Salt Lake looked like to me then. It was a city to me, it was a huge city. And when my foster parents picked me up, I know I was a little scared. I was scared because you don't know these people and they're taking you in.

(N2/ 6)

Just the culture shock, you know, from one culture to all of a sudden just being thrown into the Anglo society. Just you know, sorta hard.

(N17/ 6)

I remember really clinging to my aunt, she was two years older than me, and we were all in this great big room, and they were calling the names and when they called your name you left the room and you never came back! And my aunt left and I . . . was nine years old, sitting there, I didn't know anybody but my aunt and now that she left, she didn't come back, and I was just really scared. Finally they called my name and I went out into the room where my foster parents were and I met them and they were really nice. That was in Provo [Utah], and we had to drive all the way back to near Ogden and on the way I remember crying. So, they pulled over to this ice cream store and they got me ice cream. And after that, you know, I wouldn't talk to them for about a week or two. I knew how to talk English, I guess I was just really shy. I remember when school started gettin' a whole bunch of new clothes. I had long black hair and she didn't know how to handle my long black hair. She didn't know what to do with my hair so she took me to a beauty salon and had my hair cut and permed. She took pictures of me and she sent them home to my mom and dad, and I remember telling my mom about it and she said, "Oh, no! Your long beautiful hair!" It was almost down to my waist, I think. Funny. Hmm. I really hadn't had it cut for a while.

(N18/ 4-5)

I was near L.A. It was probably about the furthest I'd been away from home, by then, by myself. It was too far for me. I ran away. I just made circles out there in the city for about an hour or so. They had taken us to a central location where the foster parents were supposed to come pick us up. My foster parents hadn't come yet. Before they showed up I decided I was going home--and there was about three hundred something miles. I didn't really know which way home was. [After they picked me up] I remember they tried to do everything they could to try and get me over the lonely feeling.

(N19/ 2-3)

Well, I was an eight year old. I didn't even know what's going on. Mom and Dad didn't *tell* me. They just put me on the bus and said goodbye. I didn't know where I was going. My brother at that time was in fourth grade and I was in third grade so we both went together on the same bus. I guess that was a little bit of comfort. I remember it was a scary experience. I remember it *well*. Being put on a bus and having to travel all night and being herded like sheep into the stake center and we had to be bathed and printed, so to speak. You know, to have our name tag and I felt it was like--it was like when I was a little kid we used to herd sheep to this one particular place and there was a whole bunch of people with their animals there. I felt like I was being tagged and printed and *branded* and it wasn't a good experience. They'd look through your hair and they wouldn't tell you why.

(N22/ 5-6)

It was a crazy way they did it. They put us all in this big building, and gave us our shots and got everything updated. We were all put in one place and we ate a meal. I think they took care of us until about three or four in the afternoon, and then the families started coming to pick up the kids. They had the names picked out ahead of time--they knew who they were looking for but I didn't know anything about them. I was very lonely the first few days--being taken from your family and into a different family, it was the loneliest [of] feelings.

(N23/ 2-3)

The interviewees remembered their first days on Placement as a time of bewildering change and isolation. They spoke of the reception center, of a dehumanizing sense of being processed, and of waiting with other children for people they had never met. Utah seemed

like an entirely different world to many. And in truth, in many ways the rules of life had changed. A Placement child had significant adjustments to make, now that he was part of a family where no one looked Navajo and no one spoke Navajo. The child ate new food, followed a new daily schedule, wore new clothes--and within a week or so went to a new school, where suddenly the child's conception that he or she was different was made very real.

It was a transition for me because I came from a really Indian, all-Indian school and then I went to an all-white school because it was a rich neighborhood, so it was all white. Just me and one other guy were the only Indians in the school. It was a different world. I just felt like I was in a foreign country or something. Everywhere I looked all I could see was white skin and blond hair.

(N3/ 5-6)

When I was up there I felt really intimidated because of all the--I don't know, it was a real different culture between the white people and Navajos. I felt like I was sometimes not white there. You know they kinda treated me different. I remember I wanted to play basketball in junior high and the coach didn't really like me very well and although I did real good she didn't put me on the team. I just felt like I didn't belong there.

(N12/ 7)

I remember that I was the only Indian student in the classroom. I just felt strange and different. You know? But all the kids were real nice and they were really friendly towards me and I made a lot of friends.

(N18/ 5)

I think the first few years [of school] were pretty rugged. Because I wasn't used to the way how things were done up in Utah. But the more I was on Placement I got used to the system.

(N22/ 8)

I guess I was just put in a situation where I would be--where I went to school it was much different, because there were only three or four Placement students in the whole school itself. I felt kinda weird.

(N24/ 4)

Part of Placement's design gave Native American children the opportunity to participate in LDS programs as they grew up within their foster families. This is no small thing; Mormons take pride in having activities and programs for almost every day of the week. Attending to all of them means a big time commitment for families and individuals, and for Placement students this process of "learning Mormonism" begins when they first arrive in their foster homes. "Learning Mormonism" involves participating in some or all of the following: LDS children below the age of twelve attend classes on Sundays as members of the "Primary" organization. They are expected to take part in (i. e., sit still during) the Mormon communion in the congregational meetings. LDS families generally set aside Monday evenings as "Family Home Evening," gathering for religious instruction, singing, and games. A Mormon adolescent between the ages of twelve and eighteen belongs to either the Young Mens' or to the Young Womens' organizations. These organizations have age-specific classes and activities such as dances, service projects and team sports. Most LDS young men are members of the American Boy Scouts, going on hikes and camping trips with their Scout leaders. In most stakes the Church sponsors an equivalent of Scouting camping trips for the young women.

In addition, Mormon youth attend a daily scripture-study class during their high school years, called Seminary. In predominantly LDS communities, students have "release time" Seminary--in which their class schedules allow for Seminary during the day and they walk across the street to a Seminary building.¹⁷ Elsewhere, Seminary classes are generally held in the local meeting house before school. Being a participant in all these activities

¹⁷Religious instruction and prayer is of course forbidden in public school, but nothing prohibits the LDS Church from building a small educational structure just off school grounds or the school from allowing any student who so chooses to have a release-time class.

involves a significant time commitment; most LDS youth are expected to excel in their studies and in extracurricular activities as well as maintain the full schedule of youth activities. The experiences of learning Mormonism were inseparable from the experience of learning to be a son or daughter, since the Mormons who would become foster parents were intensely involved in the local congregation on a daily basis. As one woman remembered:

I didn't like church really when I was at home, I guess I didn't like going to church. But you know, that was something I had to adjust to going on Placement, because when I went on Placement I had to go to church. You know, you went with your foster family, and that was part of the program.

(N2/ 4)

Placement students kept busy with their schoolwork and Church-related activities. Interviewees reported that over time the pain of separation from families and Navajo communities lessened, but not before children had cried many nights and spent many homesick and unhappy days. Most foster parents tried to arrange visits with members of the natural family, either with siblings also on Placement or by encouraging natural parents to visit their children. For a lucky minority whose parents could afford the trip, these visits were an unexpected delight. The rest sustained limited contact with their families. In all probability a child's natural parents did not have a telephone in their home and letters from parents, who for the most part had difficulty writing, came only sporadically. Then too, living in two worlds was a psychological challenge, and many students preferred to focus on the world at hand.

Most people in the interview sample still retained affection for their foster parents. They spoke of feeling loved and accepted by their foster families. A few said they had called their foster parents "Mom" and "Dad" from the first day. One woman said her husband found that practice hard to accept: "he just thought I was so strange. He would say they're not my mom and dad, they're my foster parents. Well as far as I'm concerned they're my mom and dad." Some welcomed the foster home as a contrast to the reservation household

because of the absence of family pathology. Others volunteered information about underlying tensions in the foster home, including foster sibling jealousy and discord between the foster parents (four students were transferred to other homes when the foster parents divorced). Some students were placed into as many as six homes because they found it difficult to get along with the foster family or vice versa.

Eventually each school year, with its characteristic adjustments, ended and the children boarded a bus for the reservation. In going home for the summers, Placement students experienced some of the same pain of separation, culture shock, and adjustments that they had felt in coming to their foster homes. After nine months of both formal and informal participation in LDS life, making friends, and living as a son or daughter in a Mormon family, many felt as though they were truly leaving home. Returning to the natural family meant resuming a pace and tenor of life at once familiar and unfamiliar. One woman described the experience as putting aside one mind and using another:

My parents aren't Mormons, and it's so different. When I'm in Salt Lake, it's a different life. It's just a matter of transition, or making the transition yourself. For a lot of people, they go on Placement and they get too used to it, to the culture and the language and how the people do things. And then when they go back [for the summer] they're like, "Oh, yeah! I forgot this!" That's how I was my first year. When I go back on the Placement program I have to think, Okay, I'm back in this world now, and now I have to do what I'm supposed to do here, and not have this other mind that's on the reservation.

(N3/ 8)

Several interviewees said they had forgotten how to speak Navajo during the school year in Utah. Others were newly sensitive to the economic conditions on the reservation and felt a confused resentment against their foster and natural families. Returning Placement students remembered feeling isolated from their peers by their new knowledge and experiences and struggled with how much involvement to have with the peer group. Mormons have a strict drinking taboo, and on the Navajo reservation as elsewhere, a group

of teens will commonly get together to talk and drink on a summer evening.¹⁸ The local congregation on the Navajo reservation had fewer resources to provide the LDS programs to which a student was accustomed. Access to the scattered meeting houses is more limited as well especially if an adolescent, as the household's only Mormon, could not impose or rely on his family for transportation to church. In contrast to the weekly round of activities in the foster home, the reservation has a slower rhythm of life. Many interviewees simply said, "There was nothing to do on the reservation." The summers were so painful for some that they stayed in Utah during summers to work or go to summer school, in some measure rejecting Navajo life.

The above descriptions provide a sense of the way individuals in the sample remember their childhoods and teenage years on Placement. Through their words the reader can understand some of the familial or economic pressures which a program like Placement could help alleviate. We can see the educational alternatives available to Navajos and gain a sense of the multiple reasons a child would become LDS and go on Placement. The interviews provide evidence that these former students are ambivalent about the experience. It was traumatic even for those who claimed Placement a positive influence in their lives; going on Placement for the first time, and to some extent at the end of every succeeding summer, involved a separation and culture shock. Even in the warmest of foster families these interviewees remember feeling isolated, different, homesick. Their words tell what it was like to be the only Native American in an all-white school and a remarkably homogeneous neighborhood.

¹⁸Alcohol is prohibited on the reservation but is not hard to obtain at border trading posts, bootleggers' homes and at Navajo ceremonies.

PHYSICAL DIFFERENCES AND RACISM

In this kind of encounter, being different involves both physical differences and cultural differences, and a sense of being behaviorally and psychologically ungrounded--but when interviewees reflected at greater length on the experiences of Placement, other dimensions of differentiation and tension emerged. We turn now to exploring out these axes. The participants spoke of their confrontations with Anglo Mormon life, in terms of race, class and culture. Interviewees raised these themes persistently, returning always to the underlying issue of personal identity: who am I? Where do I fit in? Where is the place for my people and for me within my people? These issues elicit high psychological energy and represent an intense struggle to reconcile self and community, self and past.

In this discussion we have already seen several cases where interviewees remembered their school and racial differences: "Everywhere I looked all I could see was white skin and blond hair", "I felt like I was sometimes not white there. You know they kinda treated me different" and "I was the only Indian student in the classroom. I just felt strange and different." Other examples of Navajos talking about race come through when they consider their foster families:

When I went somewhere with the family, I wanted to climb under a chair. They all had freckles and I didn't have freckles. My hair was pure black and it was down below my bottom. But it just made me feel more different. I mean, they all had light brown hair. I just never fit in.

(N23/ 2)

Now I refer to my foster parents as Mom and Dad. White Mom and Dad or something like that.

(N21/ 7)

One man recounted a specific instance of prejudice, an event which confirmed his mistrust of white students in the public high school. Such treatment was especially poignant when placed against his reception among his Navajo peers during the summer:

There's one instance that I guess really sticks out. These guys were like my best friends, all Anglo. These guys were good friends of mine, but they weren't best friends. We'd always talk and they were talking one time, and you know, about how they hated Indians and I was standing right there. I guess they didn't know I was there. I mean they just turned around and they just swallowed their own words. They were just sayin' how they hated Indians because those Paiutes there [in Utah] I guess they cause a lot of problems. But they turned around and saw me, and they said something like, "All except for you" or something like that. See, things like that I let it slide. And anyways there's really not much I can do about it. Because I'm the only one there. See, that's why I've never tried causing problems. And then when I'd come home, you know, I can remember feeling very different-- they'd say that I was white on the inside, and so I was faced with a lot of that. (N24/ 10-11).

This man returned to the reservation changed in the eyes of his peers. He acutely felt the distance between himself and his Anglo friends, but was no longer fully "Indian" in his community. The same feeling, described in racial terms, was echoed by a woman who decided to finish high school back on the reservation after seven years on Placement:

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 in the school than with my own people, the Navajos. And I know it was because of my upbringing in Utah. (N22/ 19)

Some people spoke with less of an ache but with equal sense of a racial gulf between themselves and their foster families, teachers and friends in Utah:

[On Placement] people will accept you--I remember like in the fifth grade I had a teacher who ended up a girl friend of mine and I ended up being one of her favorite ones, and so this helped me because I thought, they're not so bad, these white people. They're willing to treat me like I'm one of the favorites. (N21/ 10)

Through the years you are told, you know, that Anglos are a superior race. They don't really tell you that but--I don't know if it *is*, but you get that feeling somewhere along the way. Maybe even my mom and dad have said, you know, "The white people are able to *do* this, they have invented things, they are able to make the money to have all the stuff that they have" and so you end up thinking, you know, that white people are superior.

(N21/ 11-12)

The school system was overwhelming for a while. Because I saw all these white faces. Blonde hair, blue-eyed, you know! Where did all these people come from?

(N22/ 7)

Three individuals had felt strongly negative about their race at times in their lives and wished for a way to change what they looked like. One woman recalled her college days and her struggle with race and sense of self. Her resolution to the conflict, an integration solely on a personal level, will be discussed later:

I really had to struggle with it and I found out in order for me to be happy I had to accept both part of me [sic] and that I did. And that I found out that like I said, I'm a person. I'm not Utah Mormon and I'm not a brownskinned Utah Mormon and I'm not a Navajo Indian. You know, I'm just who I am.

(N22/ 30)

A young man took another direction in dealing with his race, equating it with financial failure and hoping for a solution by marrying out. He struck a defiant, resistant pose against his Indian-ness:

I told my mom, I says, "Yeah, I plan to be a lot different than my relatives." Told her I was going to marry a white lady. I told her that. I want to be able to go to college, marry a white girl, and live here [in Utah] and make something of myself, because my relatives barely, you know, they work two jobs and they're barely pulling it off.

(N4/ 9)

And last, one young woman found a uniquely Mormon way to reject her color and deal with concepts of race and Placement. She explained that since God made the Lamanites dark in the first place because of their collective rebellion, He could as easily make them white again. For her the mutability of race as revealed by color was a literal reality. She claimed that her non-Mormon friends were *darker* Navajos than she, and that the Book of Mormon had promised that the "curse of darkness" would be lifted. She was referring, I think, to the words of the Book of Mormon writer Nephi who in prophesying about the last days was moved to say that once the Lamanites had the book, "the scales of darkness would begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall become a pure and delightsome people." (2 Ne 30: 6).¹⁹ This scripture is the only one which even remotely suggests that the Lamanites' dark skin (darkness) could be changed contingent on their accepting the gospel--but for this young woman, being "pure and delightsome" equaled being white--or at least being made "lighter."

SOCIAL CLASS IN PLACEMENT MEMORIES

A second persistent theme running throughout the interviews is social class, tied intimately to the idea of race. Interviewees compared their families, their homes and communities to the ones they lived in on Placement, and "white" always came up as "wealthier." Consider these examples:

It was totally different from--you know, I don't come from a very rich family and our house is, I mean we--we had a house but it's not like super-nice, whereas these families, my foster families were not all rich but they were comfortable. So it was

¹⁹The word "pure" in the phrase "pure and delightsome" replaced the word "white" in the 1982 edition of the Book of Mormon. Thus from 1832 to 1982 the text originally read, "And not many generations shall pass save they shall become a *white and delightsome* people," a concept obviously possessing far less neutral significance for racial relations within the Church. I am indebted to Pandora Brewer for enlightening me on this point.

different to come into a home where there were nice things. I don't know. It was different in that respect. It was very scary, very intimidating.

(N2/ 6)

As it turned out the people that took me in were a very well-to-do people. I didn't know that, I thought all Anglo people were that way. The car they picked me up in, a white car I remember, turned out to be a Cadillac.

(N19/ 3)

I saw my sister, she went on Placement like I said. Lots of things from Placement program, lot of goodies and stuff like that, and presents and whatnot! I thought all people up there were rich and everything else. My sister had everything in the whole world, she had the whole castle, the foster parents that was a doctor [sic].

(N10/ 3, 5)

It was a complete change when I went on Placement. Well, for one thing we didn't have any electricity or running water. And we lived in a--I wouldn't know how to call it, kind of like a shack, and it had a dirt floor. And there weren't any beds, we had sheepskin to sleep on. Then here I went up to Orem and you know, completely different! Their house was really nice. It was just like any other suburb community that you would see nowadays, and they had everything most people would have nowadays.

(N18/ 6)

Most people around here are pretty poor and [there are] times when you just barely get by. When you're home you're faced with living in poverty. Or, either that or go on Placement, y'know, and live in a good home. See, down here, like everybody's so poor, it's almost like a ghetto. You know, sometimes I wonder if it's any different than a ghetto.

(N24/ 18-19)

These informants arranged Placement memories along the axes of race and class. The reality of socio-economic class has persisted in America despite our ideology of equality, and seemed to be deeply imbedded in informants' thinking about race. In their words, Anglos are rich, Navajos poor; to be white is to be privileged in Anglo-Mormon society. Indeed,

Placement was structured as a lopsided relationship which actually served to replicate dominant white American modes of interaction with Native Americans.

Placement was not designed to significantly alter the white Mormon status quo nor to fulfill Indian goals, except to the extent that Indians desired to live like whites. It is also not surprising that former Placement students intertwined race and class when remembering their experiences, because without exception the foster home appeared luxurious in comparison with their homes on the reservation. Significant, though, is that only two of the twenty-two interviewees identified the structure of American society as a factor in the correlation of white race, higher class/ Indian race, lower class, rather than searching for explanations in terms of the failure of Navajos themselves. This can be considered evidence of Navajos having bought a dominant ideology which devalues Indian ways of life, an ideology which general Mormon practice tends to legitimate. This would help explain why most interviewees identified race with class and wealth and tied both back to individual rather than historical circumstances. But it can also be seen as a belief in empowerment in that the interviewees then insist that they can personally make changes and that their present situation and lower class status is not solely a function of the unchangeable way things are in America. Recall the words recorded above of the young man who wanted to marry a white woman; he would then be able to go to college and have a "better" life than his economically marginal relatives. One could argue, however, that such individualized, success-oriented thinking *also* demonstrates an acceptance of Anglo goals and raises the question of what ways of improving reservation life might be considered "Navajo" ways.

CULTURE IN PLACEMENT MEMORIES

Finally, Navajos talking about Placement used "culture" to think through their experiences. This third theme in many ways cuts across the first two. Race, class and culture were

inextricably connected in Navajo memories of the Placement program. Delineating this theme brings us back to the question raised in the first chapter about what "Navajo culture" means. One strand of current anthropological theory holds that culture is a *process* by which individuals make decisions and choices and that these choices both reflect and create culture (Jackson 1989). Although collective and shared, culture hinges on the actions of individuals. This actor-oriented idea applies to Navajos who have been on Placement; their struggle to reconcile competing influences illustrates this creative cultural process.

However, in the interviews most individuals defined their culture in another manner: as categories of behaviors or outward manifestations. What it is to be Navajo consisted of ideas, values, beliefs, and behaviors that derived from Navajo culture seen as a thing one possessed. On the surface they described Navajo culture as something definable or tangible, capable of being lost or gained back. To them, culture consisted of practicing the traditional ceremonies and sings (i.e. having religious beliefs or traditional values) and following a specific moral/religious code which Mormonism could entirely displace (Rosaldo 1989). Culture also consisted of speaking Navajo and possessing "traditional" knowledge such as herbal medicine or Navajo mythology.

Culture is traditions and stuff, and the importance of being an Indian, being a Navajo.

(N3/ 10, 16)

Because of the traditional values you carry, like ceremonies--you don't know if you should go [on Placement] or not, because you believe in something else, so you're kind of back and forth about it.

(N12/ 10)

If I'd grown up in my own family I probably would have been more traditional than I would be right now. I would call in a medicine man if I was sick.

(N17/ 7)

My parents joined the Church, and they used to do this whole bit of going to squaw dances and doing ceremonies and, you know, all those other things and since they joined the Church they just left it all behind.

(N18/ 11)

My family is very traditional. My mom is still wearing the long skirts and my dad still does the traditional things. My mom doesn't speak English, my dad, some.

(N21/ 5)

It would seem that for these interviewees, Navajo culture is expressed through dress, language, behavior (calling on a medicine man when sick, participating in ceremonies), and having certain values. In most cases they concurred that Mormon "culture" was different in every respect from Navajo culture and that the two were mutually exclusive in many senses. On one level this is logical; you can speak either Navajo or English at a given time and you are either at a ceremony or not. And from this we can conclude that Placement interfered with cultural learning, since the participants' knowledge of Navajo and the traditional ceremonies and stories was, they admitted, less than that of their peers who stayed on the reservation.

These interviewees would seem to be taking an essentialist position by defining culture as inward values and outward signs--all of which can be acquired or lost. Yet on a deeper level, their struggles imply a process at work: that is, if some elements of Navajo and Anglo-Mormon culture are so divergent as to be exclusive opposites, then one must engage in a process of choosing one's own "culture" from both. These cases illustrate that culture is chosen and defined by the actor's own living out of his choices (whether conscious or not). And their individual struggles with what culture is, not in the abstract but in their actual lives, demonstrate the flexible, practice-oriented nature of culture. What is important to note about how they defined culture is that they seriously questioned successful biculturality--Mormonism and "traditional Navajo culture" were seen as irreconcilably different. You could be "functional" in Anglo-Mormon life, but not bicultural. In practice they still sought

reconciliation between their "two minds" but concluded that at some point they would have to choose one or the other. Having considered what Navajo culture is, and how being Navajo demands living out categories and ways of thinking, the interviewees in this way ultimately grappled with who they were.

PERSONAL IDENTITY

When people graduated and came back to the reservation, what was supposed to happen to the values they learned? What was supposed to happen to them? I know for me, I have more bad feeling than good. And nobody has the answers to those questions . . . no one knew how it would come out.

(N23/ 7)

All of the former Placement participants had to confront the experience of being Navajo and Mormon--both in their lives and in the interview situation. They were at various levels of engagement with questions of personal identity that Placement had raised. Some had constructed, by sifting their past, what they said was a satisfactory self--they had found a comfortable place. But for others their childhood on Placement had merely opened the door to a search for harmony, a search which they were not ready to declare complete nor abandon. The three themes of race, class and culture flow through the discourses which follow, as interviewees talked about issues of self and identity. We will be able to identify three loose categories of self-definition--people who isolated themselves from any "culture" and identified solely with self (or who tried to hold a position of balance between two cultural worlds), identified themselves as Mormons, or identified themselves as Navajo. Naturally these categories break down on close scrutiny, and several people's responses can fall into two categories--but these categories are helpful for lending some structure to this discussion of personal identity in former Placement students. We begin with the musings of a Navajo woman , a counselor in a Utah college:

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's 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. Course, everybody goes through an identity crisis once in their life. Once I got off Placement, to BYU, and mixed with Anglos and Indians, it was hard for me. Because I wanted to be an Indian, but live the white man's way. I wanted an education. I didn't ever want to 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? Or do I become white totally?" And it wasn't until later that I finally realized it doesn't matter. I'm a child of God, and that's the way that I should see myself, and just take it from there and live my life as such.

(N2/ 12)

Her response is similar to that of the woman who felt she had to accept "both parts" of herself and concluded, "I'm just who I am." For these women, to be simply themselves is apparently enough. They are suspended between two worlds but say they comfortable--at least for now--with that suspension. It is possible that they are actively resisting assimilation into one or the other of mutually antagonistic worldviews. One may wonder how long such a position is tenable or whether at some point a Navajo who claims he remains "just myself" will want to come down in one cultural space or the other. Or perhaps the metaphor is wrong, and these Navajos are delving *underneath* the two worlds to a personal place where neither race nor class nor culture nor even gender can penetrate, in search of something which no one can take away, something which is nothing more or less than a unique self. In that kind of search stopping at the level of culture or even community would be an incomplete journey.

Some interviewees seemed to reach a form of personal identity in the interview by identifying finally with Mormon or against Navajo culture, choosing to sublimate Navajo

influences and emphasize those of the Mormon way of life. From the standpoint of the program, these would be the most "successful" graduates and would be most likely to be held up as an example of the beneficial consequences of going on Placement. Those who were in this loose category tended to want to assume responsibility in their generation to provide opportunities for their children through the Church which they themselves had not had. These Navajos saw themselves as part of a special generation of Native American Mormons.

[People] like myself, we were the first generation to actually be members of the Church. Now it's changed [i. e., Church membership is more common] and now my kids, they don't need to go on Placement. Because I'm active in the Church and I'm able to make sure they go to school and take care of all those things.
(N13/ 3)

Somebody give it to you, now it's time for you to give it. [When I talk to people about it] I make them responsible, "It's up to you . . . YOU did it. It happened to YOU. The reason why you went was so that you could learn to take care of your own children, yourself and not somebody else to do it ."
(N19/ 14)

And finally, some former Placement students talked about being Navajo, being part of the community and tribe. For them, talking about race, class and culture brought them back to seeing themselves as an honorable people whose difference from Anglos should be maintained. Most of the interviewees who felt this way talked about Placement as a vehicle for improving their lives and the lives of other Navajos, but they always tempered praise by saying that not everything Placement offered them should have been taken. For example, one man who felt he had strong ties to Navajo life even though he lived off the reservation, talked about himself within his people this way:

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, an 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 to be able to take the best of both. Being 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.
(N1/ 2)

However the Placement students thought about themselves, they all felt an imperative to choose a path under pressure from several sides. For Navajos on Placement, conversion to Mormonism and going on Placement demanded that wildly divergent lifestyles be reconciled and a balanced life be created. Many former Placement students are probably still seeking this balance and those who claim to have found it may find in the future that they are struggling again with issues they thought they had resolved. These Navajos told their stories, creating a new history, a new version. Conversion in this sense could even be called conVersion, or the personal use of experience to make a version of self.

NARRATIVE ISSUES

The interviewees' versions of self are temporary in that they come from a particular reading of a text that is itself a representation of a moment in time. The textual nature of their conclusions is important--their own word choices, the capriciousness of the interview experience and the very fallible process of achieving a transcript all are elements of the text. The workings-out identified in this chapter occurred both in "real life" and in the interviewees' stories of their real lives, in personal narratives. Studying a narrative can help elucidate the uses of narrative, or story-telling, in creating this personal version of

self. Telling stories can facilitate a person's understanding of his or her own situation--in fact, can be a crucial factor in determining the situation itself. And telling stories about the Placement program is an important way that participants came to some conclusions, no matter how tentative, about what the program meant in their lives. Some remarked that they found it "helpful" to talk to the interviewer about their experiences. One said she never discussed it with her children and appreciated "talking it out" with someone.

Early narrative theorists suggested that the fundamental elements of any narrative are chronology--a sense of time order--and causality--a sense that events or feelings result from other events or feelings.²⁰ But later theorists like Frank Kermode, Louis Mink, and Seymour Chatman challenged this conception with the idea that chronology is a function of the structure of the narrative rather than of the experience itself. Thus a narrative with coherent causality and order does not imitate life but other narratives (Mattingly 1989: 90). These interviews have both chronology and causality; some of that structure was no doubt imposed by the interviewer asking things like, "Was that before or after you went on Placement?" or "Tell me about your second foster family." Other instances come from the participants themselves, who used time and causality to help order and relate the experience. Remarks like "I owe my education to Placement" especially demonstrate that the interviewees are telling stories in causal terms. In general, then, Placement stories can be considered narratives that help the teller work through their experience and represent it cohesively. The use of narrative as a kind of therapy or to create an epiphany (an "a-ha" experience) is well established; but one newer way of thinking about narratives is to see such stories as actually shaping actions (Mattingly 1989: 12). In this case, one might well wonder how the interplay between interviewees' stories about struggling for personal identity and the interviewees' actual struggles operates. Exactly how well do chronological conceptions match the process of defining self?

²⁰This brief discussion of narrative theory was influenced by Cheryl Mattingly's MIT thesis (1989), which contains a particularly good bibliography on the subject.

One important point is that even in those few cases where interviewees told extended stories without interruption from the interviewer, Placement narratives were fragmentary and tended to jump from the past to the present and back again. One might argue that they were simply "rough" narratives, needing only a little polish to be complete and cohesive. But I concur with David Carr, whose critique of imposed narrative elements seems especially apt. He asks, "[H]ow plausible is the idea of human events as a 'mere sequence'? Is this an accurate way to describe the temporal character of the experiences and actions that make up our lives?" (Carr 1986:20). Perhaps the most accurate--that is, *real*--account of a Placement, or any experience, is not cohesive and reflects a shifting perspective on events and feelings. I would guess this holds true especially when individuals talk about traumatic or "larger than life" times in their lives. Recognizing that these interviewees' related a disjointed story may be quite important to understanding the cognitive construction of an experience from memory and the ultimate creating or defining of the self.

CONCLUSION

We have undertaken a roundabout journey through the Placement experience in the words of some of its participants. These individuals spoke of the events and feelings connected to Placement, and interwoven in their stories we can themes of race, class and culture. Talking about Placement ultimately led the participants to consider themselves and how they have defined an identity out of a conflictual past. This creation of self, the ongoing conversion process, demonstrates the processual nature of culture and also the use of fragmentary memories of experiences develops into a story. Perhaps the best way to conclude this discussion of Placement is by providing a Navajo's own conclusions.

I know Indians have done wrong in the past and we've paid the price in turmoil in our government and land disputes. But we're not all superior, we're all the same, Indians and whites . . . the goal of being human is to get along with everyone,

whatever color they are. I've learned to grow within my own experience, I've learned to talk about my feelings, and I've learned more about my culture. I'm trying to learn what I can instill in my own kids, so they won't have to go through what I did and still get the feeling of responsibility. I heard somewhere that the Navajos are the most studied people. I tell my kids it's because we hold so much mystery. But it makes me feel good to let it out sometimes to someone. I've always thought someone should do something like this, maybe it can help the next generation.

(N23/ 10)

This Navajo woman, in reflecting on what she's learned from her experiences, concludes that she feels comfortable with herself and confident in her ability to raise her own children. She also tells the interviewer she appreciates talking about Placement. Her speaking directly to me leads smoothly to the next chapter. The interviewees' words in this chapter have provided a kind of dialogue with the reader; now the time has come to understand not only the participants' view of Placement, but my place in the story as well.

Four: The Inside-Out Anthropologist

13 July 1991. The Dial Inn, Elyria, Ohio.

[Today driving in the car] I listened to the "Masterfully Narrated by Charles Freed"

Book of Mormon tapes. I had some thoughts on the experience of listening to it . . .

So begins my initial field note, tapped out in a thirty-dollar motel room my first night out from Cambridge. In this chapter, the "I" of this account takes the spotlight and I begin, as did my fieldwork itself, with my own manifesto, or statement of intent. During my five weeks in Utah and Arizona, I experienced the doubts and elation common to all fieldwork. I often felt rudderless; those feelings alternated with ones of excitement and pride, as my fieldwork began to make sense and sometimes even seem perfectly congruous to what I had planned. Here I would like to focus, however, on the position I set out to maintain, that of outsider to Navajo life yet insider to Mormonism. In this chapter, I will use my own field notes as evidence to show how I thought at different times about my position as insider and outsider. I will discuss my three greatest methodological and personal challenges: to deal with my beliefs in taking on a study of my own religion, to cope with being different from (i. e. "outside to") my informants, and to understand the extent of my effect on the research as both insider and outsider.

STUDYING MORMONISM AS A MORMON

One question I considered in planning this project was where to put my own feelings about the Church while I was studying Placement. Was I supposed to pretend to not have them? How much of an informant should I be? This was the subject of the field note quoted above, 00021, in which I expressed at the start of my fieldwork some thoughts about what was to come.

13 July 1991. The Dial Inn, Elyria, Ohio.

[Today] I listened to the "Masterfully Narrated by Charles Freed" Book of Mormon tapes. I had some thoughts on the experience of listening to it . . . halfway through the first tape it occurred to me that I was listening with two sets of ears, that I was thinking about what I was hearing with two sets of voices. One set felt warm and fuzzy about "reading the scriptures," the very thing a good Mormon and one who deeply believes ought to be doing . . . That same side also kept me from changing the dial during the gospel hour on AM radio. That side of me, undeniably, is Christian. I haven't sorted out what that all means yet, but I believe in Christ, in His teachings, and have hope for my own salvation . . . Does all this make me a biased informant where Christianity and Mormonism are concerned? Undoubtedly. I never denied that I believe in the church's teachings, and there is a part of me which shies away from confronting my own beliefs and those of people who believe like me--a protective instinct, a herd instinct, and in-group ethic, if you will, a comfort in [the] meaning I have assigned to certain actions and words that I am a little hesitant to disturb . . . I have to admit, listening to those tapes today, a part of me was right there, believing, approving, wanting to believe and approve and try the experiment [of conversion] myself. And during gospel hour on the radio, when the radio pastor said, "Pray with me, and accept Jesus into your life," a part of me which is deeply Christian and non-denominational, which appreciates good wherever it is found, was right there praying with Pastor Bob.

But there was another side of me too, a side that listened with an unusually critical ear. A side that occasionally said, "That's ridiculous" or "That doesn't make sense." A side that said, "I don't believe, or if I do, that's a side of me that I leave behind when I do my study. And now I'm studying the Book of Mormon in order to use it as evidence, as a document that a group of people profess to believe in a certain way."

In other words, today I listened as an insider AND as an outsider, and trying to do both at once is disturbing to say the least. I'm wondering, should I set aside time to feed my soul in the way I believe is best? And then set aside time to examine critically, to look with outsiders' eyes and pretend I don't know anything or don't have feelings all tied up in what I'm doing? Or is that just another form of denial, of avoiding the problem of getting my hands dirty and messy and getting up to my elbows in dealing with my own beliefs and [those] of others? . . . Since in a sense my

work deals with me, and it is being done by me, and without me it would be a very nonexistent project--in other words, since everything about it is colored by me, is there any point in pretending like I'm not here and I don't have beliefs and deep feelings and all that? This is way too long for a field note that would make Bernard²¹ comfortable. But I am just about to arrive at my conclusion for the evening, and it's none too early for it either!! I'm exhausted!

I am not invisible. I do exist. I am studying something and I have feelings about what I'm studying. My feelings are going to be tangled up in what I do. They will shape my research and be changed by it. There is an alchemy going on inside me that will be a consequence, and a side effect, and for that matter a driving force of my research. I am not yet a professional anthropologist . . . I would like this in some sense to be an experiment in inside-outside fieldwork. I am going to begin by refusing to deny that I am biased, that my feelings will be separate from my work, and that my own beliefs will shape and in turn be affected by my work. I hope that makes me a revolutionary . . . What I would like to do is make my half of the story part of the results. Part of the research. Part of the conclusion.

Of course I know I have to separate out all the parts, be scientific about that much, take it all apart, me and the parts of me and my loyalties to different ways of thinking, because that's what I'm trying to understand about the Navajo:] their loyalty (that's probably not the best word) to different ways of thinking and perceiving. So I pick all that apart and I lay it all out and comb out the snarls (I'm thinking of sheep's wool), and then I roll it all back together--not just the "everything-but-me" but the "everything-AND-me"!! And I weave it into one whole!!

I was talking about a general problem in anthropology here as well as discussing my particular slant. In one sense, the anthropologist has always been an informant of the culture he or she seeks to understand. In representing the informants' ways of thinking and acting, the anthropologist stands in the place of the informants in the discipline at large. He or she also necessarily struggles with finding a balance between being "inside" and "outside" the culture in the fieldwork itself, not just in professional conferences and in written work. At the most basic level during fieldwork, an anthropologist juggles the methodological imperative of

²¹H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publishing Company 1988).

disengagement with the need to be actively engaged with the ideas. Recently, too, anthropologists are admitting there are personal reasons for active interest in certain aspects of informant life--the admission of bias is an important door to deeper understanding of the study of culture. Although in the imaginary ideal the researcher maintains a proper distance and objectivity, we are beginning to see that true disengagement may be neither possible nor ideal in reality. Anthropologists are always involved.²²

What if, however, the anthropologist *begins* as an insider to the culture? One of the discipline's hopes has been for the arrival of a time when indigenous accounts and study will be done, but the inside account is still viewed with mistrust. "Inside anthropology" wields a two-edged sword, in that (we assume) an insider knows more about the inside and yet in some sense we cannot rely on the insider to see the inside *from the outside* clearly. If anthropology's goal is to represent the inside view or the actors' ways of thinking and being, such an account by an insider should be the best one. But somehow it is often not, because we think that views from the inside are biased or "too close up" (i. e. lacking in the objective distance necessary for true understanding).

I set out with the hypothesis that being "experience-near" is actually a *better* methodological position for understanding certain things (See Jackson 1989). One might ask, for example, whether someone who has never given birth can truly give a full account of the experience. In the case of Mormonism and the Placement program I knew my membership in the Church and my belief in its teachings would make it easier to obtain certain kinds of information, but also I hoped that I could interpret that information with greater, not lesser, authority.

²²Probably the first systematic discussion of this idea comes from Peter C. W. Gutkind and Gillian Sankoff, in their annotated bibliography on anthropological field work methods (Jongmans and Gutkind 1967). More recently, the work of Clifford Geertz (1983), James Clifford (1988), Renato Rosaldo (1989), and Roger Sanjek (1990) have contributed to the development of the "involved anthropologist" notion. Michael Jackson's *Paths Toward a Clearing* (1989) probably most influenced my thinking on the issue, and it is to his work that I am indebted for the concept of "experience-near".

Asserting the fact of my own beliefs (my "testimony", in Mormon terms) was only the first step. I checked myself constantly in interviews--was I using too many Mormon terms without asking for explanations? Or was I glossing over obviously meaningful experiences because they were "spiritual?" I tried to explain my position honestly and participate in church activities as usual while in the field without using my membership in an unfair way. In my field notes, I can see now that I hesitated to appear completely "inside" even while I insisted I could do both. One day in particular comes to mind, when I began driving from Salt Lake City down to the Navajo reservation. I did not know anyone there nor what to expect from the next three weeks.

29 July 1991. Navajo Trail Motel, Monticello, Utah.

Said a long prayer in the car as I was driving away from Salt Lake. I can't even pretend that I didn't mean it, that I didn't believe it was heard. There are some things I can't set aside for the sake of scientific objectivity. I told Him I was diving into a great unknown, but that I trusted I would come out of it safely, and that I might have success [and] by that I meant I would be able to understand, to learn, and to do good in His name, because I have felt all along this is a project which has a beneficial purpose, a good reason, a sanction even. I asked for safety on me and on [my husband], and that I can remember who I am and what my priorities are. I said I have been slow to acknowledge His help so far in this trip, but I have been blessed and sustained every day, every hour. I have not felt alone or forsaken. [I] owe my success, my ability to get this far to the point of diving into the unknown, because of Him.

Obviously here I was struggling with an experience of being "engaged" in a belief, caught up in it, and at the same time watching myself critically. Again there was a sense of two voices or two selves, each striving for dominance at a given moment. I also paused at admitting that I believed my prayer was heard, feeling a measure of perhaps guilt that I hadn't stopped praying while in the field. Trying to be both religious and nonreligious, or trying to decide when to be what, stretched my emotional limits. The next morning I crossed

the line onto the Navajo Nation and for a time I silenced the debate within myself by not exerting myself to practice Mormon beliefs. I sought out Mormons on the reservation, including the local missionaries, and relied on the church network to find housing and informants. But in all my interactions, I preferred to use my "critical" rather than "accepting" self. I sustained this position, although I continued to pray at night (more out of habit than anything), until I went to a community just off the reservation and interviewed a local bishop.

7 Aug 1991. Tuba City, Arizona.

I want to record something that happened to me while I was talking with N19. A curious feeling I felt, a feeling which in the church we call "feeling the Spirit."

This is a kind of burning feeling in the chest, clarity of vision, and a feeling which is warm accompanied by the thought, "This that I am hearing is important. This has meaning."

I have not felt that way since I left Massachusetts [on 13 July]. I have been in a curious position of watching and participating both, and generally the watching has won out . . . I have felt this way before . . . But it is a feeling which does not just come, it is cultivated, in a sense. Cynicism suppresses it. So does the "stepping back" process which someone goes through who is studying his or her own culture. The opposite of "stepping back" could be called "stepping forward" but I was about to write, almost automatically, "letting go."

For these are the beliefs and feelings of my childhood, the way I was raised, and I have tried to analyze them while on this field trip, tried to look objectively at other people experiencing them. This is why I have remained dry-eyed when my informants were overcome, and why I have simply nodded when confronted with inexplicable and powerful experiences that have happened to people in their lives. But when I was talking to N19, that feeling broke through. I was grateful for it, it reassured me that I'm still capable of "spirituality" (as we say), and for a happy minute or two I was not thinking of who I was, I was not checking role for role, I was just being.

This experience's significance became more apparent after the fieldwork was finished, because it marked a turning point in how I thought about my role. In few interviews did I have such a strong sense of being integrated, but this experience encouraged me to think that such research was indeed possible. In this situation, my spiritual impression came at a time when N19 himself was talking about his perception of the Spirit, or the influence of God, in the order of events in his life. It could be that this "matching" facilitated further discussion between myself and the informant, but even if it is too much to presume that we were experiencing the same feeling, this experience can serve as a model for experience-near or "whole" inside research. At this time I felt that I could both experience affirmation of my faith and conduct successful research without compromising either.

STUDYING NAVAJOS AS AN ANGLO

Maintaining the tenuous methodological position as an insider studying the inside was difficult enough: as the research progressed I found that I was always having to decide how much of my own faith to reveal. Another concurrent challenge was dealing with how much of my testimony I could apply to understanding my informants. Up to this point I have emphasized my Mormon-ness and stressed that I was an insider in the research process. But in a very significant way, I was also an outsider because I was studying *Navajo* Mormons. I looked different, I felt different, I didn't understand the language. I was definitely an foreigner in the Navajo Nation. Even before I drove onto the reservation in my dusty car, I visited a Navajo ward in Provo, Utah and was the only white person there besides a Navajo's spouse. Even in that church meeting, although the familiar sequence spoke of commonalities, I felt very much outside what was happening.

21 July 1991, Provo, Utah.

This Sunday was the Sunday before July 24th, celebrated in Utah as Pioneer Day ("Days of '47"). The radio stations are advertising Pioneer Day sales and there is a big parade on Wednesday down the streets of Salt Lake. I thought that Pioneer Day wouldn't be too emphasized in the Indian Ward [in Provo], but I thought wrong, for [in] the program we sang "Come, Come Ye Saints," "They, the Builders of the Nation," and "Our Mountain Home so Dear."

"They, the Builders of the Nation" I was especially surprised was sung in Sacrament Meeting as a rest hymn in the middle. I was holding the [hymn] book with N1--his wife had gone out to nurse the baby--and when we got to the part which says, "Blessed, honored, Pioneer!" we looked at each other out of the corners of our eyes and got the giggles. The whole situation seemed wildly ludicrous all of a sudden, me sitting among all these American Indians, singing a song about pioneers, and they were all singing and I wondered if we were all thinking the same thing or not.²³

On the reservation I knew I looked and talked and acted differently from most people. Being Mormon and white, I certainly did not have an instant entree to every aspect of Navajo life, and in fact I probably had no advantage at all in understanding Navajos and gaining their acceptance as a researcher. With those that were Mormon I shared some common

²³Hymn #36:

They the builders of the nation/ Blazing trails along the way;
Stepping stones for generations/ Were their deeds of ev'ry day.
Building new and firm foundations/ Pushing on the wild frontier,
Forging onwards, ever onwards/ Blessed, honored Pioneer!

Service ever was their watchcry:/ Love became their guiding star,
Courage, their unfailing beacon/ Radiating near and far.
Ev'ry day some burden lifted/ Ev'ry day some heart to cheer,
Ev'ry day some hope the brighter/ Blessed, honored, Pioneer!

As an ensign to the nation/ They unfurled the flag of truth,
Pillar, guide and inspiration/ To the hosts of waiting youth.
Honor, praise and veneration/ To the founders we revere!
List our song of adoration/ Blessed, honored Pioneer!
Text: Ida R. Alldredge (1892-1943).

experiences and ways of talking, but even then there was an undeniable cultural and ethnic barrier. I found that I could not easily get past those boundaries and that other Anglos on the reservation were often easier to talk to.

30 July 1991, Ganado, Arizona.

I was standing at the public phone outside Bashas' and a white man walked up to use it. I had another call to make but could wait, so I let him go ahead.

"What are you doing way out here?" he said, looking at me curiously.

"I'm an anthropology student doing research for my thesis."

"Well I guess that's a good enough reason for a white girl to be here."

In this situation, I was noticed because I stood out, I was an outsider who didn't belong "way out here." On another occasion the circumstances were such that I was taken for someone who belonged, also because I was obviously an outsider. During a meeting of a Navajo ward on the reservation, a visiting (white) local church authority mistook me for the daughter of my white host and hostess.

11 August 1991. Tuba City, Arizona Ward Sacrament Meeting.

[The regional representative was visiting and I was sitting with my host and hostess].

Before the meeting, he came over to the W--s and shook their hands, and then said,

"And who's this good-looking redhead?" in the tone of voice that said he probably expected me to be their daughter. I was introduced and he said,

"Well! We're glad to have you!"

Another day, I interviewed several young Navajos who had just finished Placement. I acutely felt my differences from them and recorded some of my feelings:

19 July 91--Friday--Spent a day in Provo

I was quite impressed with [one of them] . . . We talked for almost an hour and a half and when I finally left and we parted ways on the sidewalk I found myself

wishing I were eighteen again--and Navajo. In fact, for ten miles of highway outside Provo back on the road to Salt Lake I fervently wished I were Indian.

Then it occurred to me that what I was going through is just a phase of my research and a very natural one--a phase of identification with and romanticization of the other. A period of time in my research whe[n] everything about the group I'm studying/coming in contact with looks appealing. . . I found myself no longer wanting to be an anthropologist but to be an Indian. It's funny, because anthropology--"being a student of culture"--gives me the legitimate excuse to be close to members of a group, but also gives me the theory or the intellectual reason to pull back short of becoming. In other words, if I just up and decided to talk to members of a certain group about their beliefs and experiences and common ground, I might be viewed with great suspicion--saying I'm writing a thesis, making it into an intellectual problem instead of a personal quest makes it legitimate. Personal quests are not looked on as ordinary or reasonable things to embark on. On the other end of the continuum is losing all objectivity, becoming a member of the group if possible. And between the two--the objective, intellectual exercise and the emotional immersion--lie I, somewhere.

Of course in this field note the issue of completely "becoming" was hypothetical, especially because I was talking about insurmountable physical differences. But these instances helped me realize that I could not instantly draw conclusions based on my own informant's knowledge of Mormon thinking. I had to temper my inside-ness with my outside-ness. In practice this meant recognizing that religion alone does not override ethnicity. As some of my informants themselves said, converting does not erase everyone's ties and obligations to their culture. More time would have helped, too, in that months and years of fieldwork are often barely enough time for an anthropologist to reach a point of understanding despite being an outsider. I was working within a period of three weeks on the reservation and much of my contact with the Navajos I interviewed lasted an hour or two at most. Brief experience taught me to be cautious about claiming to be a complete insider.

LEAVING MY MARK

No fieldwork takes place in a vacuum, especially that conducted with the conscious intent of working within the culture itself. Working inside Mormonism to study a Church program, I was bound to leave a religious ripple where I'd been. I found this a third challenge in my fieldwork, and particularly relevant to the issue of being an insider and outsider. Lacking informant knowledge, I relied often on local clues and relinquished a certain sense of control over the fieldwork process. On one occasion I reflected on the feeling that I was making a difference but without being in charge:

1 August 1991. Ganado, Arizona.

Being an anthropologist, interviewing people, studying their experiences and their commonality, their culture; it's not so much a question of CHOOSING, but of BEING CHOSEN. I don't just walk up to someone and get an interview, it's a two-way caution, a choosing on both sides. Even in what is said, I'm not digging so much as I am being revealed to. That's a choosing process on the informant's side, a gift if you want to call it that.

I had much the same feeling one evening while talking to my hostess in a small town where I had just spent nearly a week:

11 August 1991. Tuba City, Arizona.

Since [many] Navajos live so spread apart from each other, families and groups of families--family clusters, you might call them--tend to create their own little worlds, their day-to-day routines are very inward, very private. I am entering these self-constructed worlds as a stranger, a curious, nosy, prying stranger who comes for an hour or a series of hours, and then leaves a trail behind in the[ir] world. Tonight [my hostess] told me she went to a fireside [a Sunday evening meeting] in the Tuba City ward and N22 [a woman I had interviewed that week] spoke. She mentioned me, said that I'd asked about the placement program and said that I had made her think and she was still thinking about the questions I'd asked. She [N22] said that she thought it was good that someone was interested, that someone was thinking about the program and studying it.

"So you are making waves, you are leaving a mark," said NW, because I had made some comment [that morning in church] about how I wasn't going to sing a verse of a song [solo] because I was just there to listen and see what people do as if I wasn't there, although we all know that's actually impossible. But I wonder what happens after I leave these self-constructed worlds--I go back to mine, I guess.

Here I was struggling not only with leaving my mark as an outsider, but also as an insider, as a Church member. That morning's event to which my hostess referred was a meeting of the women's organization, the Relief Society, during the normal Sunday meetings. A branch member gave a lesson and discussion about music and suggested we sing a hymn. It turned out no one was familiar with the particular one chosen except me. I was the visitor in the meeting, from out of state no less, and I was asked to sing the verse. This made me quite uncomfortable, for I already suspected the meeting was being conducted using more English than usual because of me. I refused but offered to sing along with the others. I tried to explain later to my hostess (who was white) that I was there to observe, not to participate--and yet, that wasn't quite the truth. If I really took my manifesto seriously, I should be participating in whatever way I was asked, because I am a Church member and believed I could play all roles. I think that the moment at which I pulled back with the classic scientist's fear that I would have an effect on the experiment was another role-switching moment when the two converge and demand reconciliation. Only here I felt less personal integration and more ambivalence about which of the two should take precedence in a situation. That ambivalence turned to something akin to regret when I heard about the fireside. On the one hand I was delighted that I had helped an informant think in a new way about her placement experience but on the other I wished I hadn't left so obvious a mark (or maybe I wished I did not know what my consequences were).

When I arrived back in Cambridge and started to transcribe tapes and work on putting this thesis together, I saw how I had driven every interview. My influence touched everything about the interviews and I began to consider in a deeper way whether my position

as an insider and yet outsider improved or muddied the quality of my study. The lowest point struck while I was watching a PBS-produced documentary about BIA boarding schools for Indians. Gloomily I wrote:

18 February 1992. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

It is difficult for me as an insider to admit that Placement was so similar in many ways to the programs and motivations of the majority of white society. Doubly hard, too, since I am a member of the dominant culture and the Church which claims such a unique and positive relationship to American Indians. If I chose to work entirely within my own worldview as a Mormon I would dismiss the ceremonies of my Navajo interviewees as false worship (as did some my interviewees themselves), bound to fall to the power of Christian theology and the true identity of the Indian people in the Book of Mormon. I would celebrate all efforts to bring this knowledge to the Lamanites; and like other inside assessors of the program I would emphasize Placement's uniqueness, its separateness from other assimilationalist, paternalistic institutions of American society, and its glorious and Indian-centered goals.

But my training--and all my instincts--lie with trying to understand the program from an Indian point of view. That's why I sought interviews in the first place instead of merely performing a thorough literature search and leaving it at that. I wanted to know what the participants thought. I wanted to know if they had made peace with their enemies. I wanted to know who they believe themselves to be. I wanted to know if they believed that they were Lamanites, that their culture and language occupy an entirely temporal and disposable place in their lives, to be discarded like a worn-out sheepskin. I wanted to know what Placement had done or left undone. Not so much to assuage my own guilt at being a white, Anglo-Saxon protestant participant in the rituals and power structure of our dominant society--but to understand, to bridge a gulf which in this country we might have bridged long ago had we known, had we thought, had we wanted to. Of course I had romantic notions of "meeting the Indian" and I was unpleasantly surprised to find that I didn't need an interpreter on the reservation, that most people weren't wearing their traditional clothing, and that most people lived in HUD housing in drab, endlessly alike developments plunked down into the red Arizona soil. But even more deeply I believed that through memory my informants could make me feel their confusion, their experiences, their lives which have been so different from mine.

One of the films Placement produced to show its critics claimed that Placement was truly the golden rule in action. I wonder. I wonder how much we would really like to become someone else because we were in a dependent position. I wonder how much we would like our children taken away for months at a time. I wonder how much we think we could learn from the whites, were we Navajos or Sioux or Comanche or any other tribe of American Indians. . . The spiritual strength, the community, the deep belief, the culture that makes a Navajo who he is, an Inuit who he is, a Cheyenne who he is--how quick we have been to call them all Lamanites. It's just substituting one word for another . . . Mormons have coopted their history, written them another and called it true. God forgive us [because we do not] . . . know whether it is or not. As one of my interviewees said, when her father dies, the knowledge he has will die with him, because she didn't have the time or the ability or the understanding to learn it from him, and after him it will be gone. We have been calling the Indian a vanishing race for hundreds of years. I wonder how long until we are finally right. Yet I do have faith in the enduring and adaptive resistance of American Indian tribes. They have seen trouble before, have faced the extinction of their ways of life and culture and yet have endured, have even resisted.

I might call this entry my final testimony, because in it I demonstrate that I am still struggling with the same points and ideas. I would also add that in writing the text of all these chapters my position as inside and outside has never been far from my mind. Every decision about what words to use sets off a miniature debate about how to write with all sides of myself--or when a particular self should dominate. In a significant way, writing with a shifting perspective mirrors the informants' own shifting ideas about the meaning of Placement. Perhaps it also reflects how they juggled being two selves.

A final story may be instructive here. I stayed one weekend in the home of a couple, both of whom had gone on Placement. Attending church in their Navajo ward, I was the only white present aside from the missionaries. Sunday evening my hostess asked me how it had felt to go to church where no one else was Anglo. I recorded in my field note:

I said it felt a little strange, I wasn't used to it. I wasn't sure why she'd asked, but then she said, "When you write your paper, you should remember that feeling,

because it's the same feeling we had as placement kids, only we had to live with these people."

My methodological experiment has continued up to the writing of this thesis, because my position as outsider to Navajo life but insider to Mormonism did not end when I drove off the reservation and came home. Over the period of this study I worked on understanding my effects on my research and coming to terms with being a Mormon, a researcher and a non-Navajo studying Mormon Navajos and Placement. There were certain advantages to being experience-near in conducting fieldwork for this study but the greatest was that I constantly needed to examine my role. This self-checking encouraged the development of what I hope is a greater appreciation for the shifting ground my Navajo informants stood on and a greater capacity to represent their point of view.

Five: Conclusions

The previous chapter dealt in some detail with the author as the researcher, being inside and yet outside the domain that is the object of study. My place in the research project has shifted between informant for Mormonism and researcher among Navajos, requiring adjustment in point of view. Understanding my shifting positions helps clarify this study of Placement, because knowing how the author herself fits into the picture the reader can appreciate how different perspectives on Placement can influence interpretations of the program. In general, previous scholarship on the program has focused on the beneficial consequences for both individuals and communities. I, however, made myself part of the project to try to produce a more balanced account of the program, without seeking to make a categorical value judgement on any particular consequences of Placement. Instead, I have sought to represent the participants' own value judgements and their searches for self. Thus there have been two strands of self-definition running through this entire text: mine and the informants'. In these final remarks I will discuss two issues relating to Placement and the place of Native Americans within the church today, and also bring together these parallel strands to offer some thoughts on the meaning of inside anthropology.

THE FUTURE OF PLACEMENT

One important undercurrent in the history of Placement and in the words of the interviewees has been the future of the Placement program, and by extension the future relationship between Native Americans and the LDS Church. Although the program's administration insists that it will continue as long as Indians request it, in fact enrollment has been steadily decreasing (one indication of Placement's diminished existence is that several informants believed it had already been phased out altogether). Among the informants in the sample, the

general opinion prevailed that the end of the program in any form was swiftly approaching. Opinion was mixed on whether this represented a positive change (i.e. the beginning of Lamanite self-sufficiency) or a negative one (a more blatant disregard for Indian welfare), but most people agreed that Placement was fading from the Mormon scene.

We can interpret Placement's decline in one of several ways. A historical approach would highlight that the most important changes in the program and other Indian programs of the Church came after a change in Church leadership. President Spencer W. Kimball, outspoken all his life in behalf of Native Americans in this hemisphere, died in 1985. His successor, Ezra Taft Benson, in his leadership of the Church has tended to emphasize growth abroad. He continually stresses the universal audience of the Book of Mormon and its applicability to people in any land. Since Benson's succession to the offices of prophet and president, the Placement program and Indian education programs like the seminaries and the BYU Indian Education department gradually became a minor element in world-wide outreach programs. There have been similar shifts in Church emphasis after other prophets have come into leadership in the past. Hence, part of what is happening to Placement may be explained by seeing it in terms of a cycle in Mormon history in which a new prophet focuses on different aspects of the Church's organization. Many Indians remember the period of Kimball's presidency with a nostalgia bordering on reverence, seeing it as a sort of "good old days" time. This may be a romanticization of the past, based on the perception that since the prophet changed, everything else has changed also. But the decline of Placement has a real link with the changing of the guard in the mid-1980s and is part of a general trend towards world missionization.

A different interpretation could take a theological direction. One distinctive belief Mormons hold is that new revelation from God is always possible. Thus change is seen as a natural effect of having a prophet as leader--in fact, can be taken as proof that God still talks to His children through the prophet. Over the years Mormons have seen both major and minor changes in theology and the organization of the members. Most recently, in 1978, the

long-standing prohibition against giving black members the priesthood was lifted, under the auspices that God had declared the time right for such a change. Although in the case of all major changes one could trace the decision to some kind of necessity (that is, such decisions can follow from a historical event or series of events that make such a choice pragmatic or advantageous), theological or organizational changes are *seen as* coming from God. The decision to cut back the extent of the Placement program may be interpreted as a theological move away from a literal interpretation of the Book of Mormon and the doctrine of the Lamanites.

Literally, the Book of Mormon was intended for the descendants of its writers, who Mormons take to be the Native Americans. Thus in a significant sense, Mormonism was intended to be a Native American religion--and part of the whole reason for the Church's existence is to return the gospel to the Indians and help them resume the beliefs their ancestors presumably once held. This idea has sometimes been extended to a belief that it is the Lamanites who will play the greatest role in preparing for the imminent second coming of Christ, and the non-Lamanite members are merely assisting the Lamanites in their work. This idea was clearly expressed before 1900 by Wilford Woodruff, the fourth prophet of the Church:

The Lamanites will blossom as the rose on the mountains . . . It will be a day of God's power among them, and a nation will be filled with the power of God and receive the gospel, and *they* will go forth and build the New Jerusalem, *and we shall help them.*²⁴

During its peak, Placement served as an example to many that such prophecies about the Lamanites were coming to pass. And the decline of Placement in the 1980s was taken by some, especially Native Americans, to mean that the Church had undergone a fundamental shift in theological interpretation about the Lamanites. To them, the implications of cutting

²⁴ Journal of Discourses 15:272, in *LDS Reference Encyclopedia*, Melvin K. Brooks, ed. (Salt Lake: Bookcraft), 1960, 261-262, emphasis added.

Indian programs was obvious: the Church leadership (perhaps even God Himself) was disenchanted with the idea of Lamanite leadership in the last days. The most outspoken proponent of this idea was the only Navajo man in the Church hierarchy, George Patrick Lee. Lee was a member of the Quorum of Seventy (then the authoritative body just below the twelve apostles or advisors to the prophet), excommunicated for apostasy in 1989 after apparently making statements to the effect that the Church leadership was deliberately shirking its duty to the Native American peoples (Lee 1989). Since that time Lee has avoided becoming the head of any kind of splinter or protest group, although he would probably have little trouble finding Indian Mormons who agree with him. Thus the overall commitment of the Church to Lamanite issues is another factor in considering the future of Placement, and one interpretation of the decline of Indian program like Placement is that the Mormon leaders (and supportive mainstream members) have shifted position on the importance of the Lamanites in the destiny of the Church. Several informants suggested that such a theological coup had already happened, with Placement going down as its first casualty.

Placement's future is uncertain, and with it the place of Native Americans within the Church. This issue deserves a closer look, because for several informants in the sample, this question touched on how they saw themselves.

NATIVE AMERICANS WITHIN THE CHURCH

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is growing faster than any other American religion. In the last General Conference of the Church, membership was reported at just over eight million people worldwide, with a growth rate of fifteen hundred people every day.²⁵ Forty-four thousand full-time missionaries are preaching throughout the world. Yet it is no secret that Mormon congregations on the Navajo reservation and other American

²⁵ Conference Report October 1991. *Ensign* 21(11): 105. The same article reports that this represents an eight-fold increase just since 1951.

reservations are shrinking and being consolidated. Three different sources told me that Church activity on the Navajo reservation stands at about ten percent of total membership. In one small community where I stayed, I was told that two thousand people belonged to the Church--approximately the population of the town itself without the surrounding area--but not more than two hundred showed up for Church even at Christmas.

In part, this can be explained by younger generations of Indians who are placing greater value on living off the reservation, so that smaller Mormon congregations reveal an underlying change in the Navajo way of life. But some informants expressed concern over what they saw as a strained relationship between Native Americans and the main body of Mormons. Others worried that institutional support structures for Indian youth had been withdrawn too soon. Only a few had good things to say about the kind of tacit laissez-faire that seems to exist on the Navajo and other reservations, and those few expressed confidence in the ability of the local members to maintain involvement. Several informants had concerns about members who had fallen away (especially if they were on Placement), contributing to low involvement in reservation congregations:

There's a whole lot of people going on Placement yet they're not, they're not doing what they went on Placement for. I think they probably went for fun. You know, of course some of them have gained a testimony and lost it.
(N20/ 11)

I think the program is kind of phasing out. Because when I was on the program, there were lots of kids going. Now I don't really hear about people going. There's no very many people who are members of the Church any more. Because our little branch is small . . . in fact, we used to have a branch [in the next town] and now they did away with that there weren't any people up there, so we all had to come over to Ganado. Now this branch is really small, I figure that all the members are going away, going out. [*Off the reservation?*] No.
(N12/ 11-12)

[I see people] who just like got put through the motions. You know, not really studying and earning those credentials but just kinda getting taken through the motions. I think it has to do with the Church. I see the good intentions but the good intentions, that's hopeless, you know . . . Well, that's what happened with the Placement program. Maybe not so much the Placement program but with the Church's attitude at uplifting the Lamanites people. I think they pushed just a little bit too far.

(N19/ 15)

The LDS Church extends far beyond the borders of the United States, converting ever-increasing numbers in South America, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. The Church's membership thus is changing too, reflecting a diversity unprecedented even when Placement began. As the Church's focus moves towards meeting the needs of new members from vastly different backgrounds North American Native Americans, like other ethnic groups within the Church, may find a place not as the primary Other in the membership but as one group among many. Placement participants, in their individual struggles for reconciliation, will need to consider that the Church is no longer a white majority with a Lamanite minority, but encompasses many different peoples--yet finding a comfortable place within Mormonism may still prove a lifelong challenge.

"REMEMBER THAT FEELING"

Finally, let us return to the ideas raised by this particular project, namely the uses and possibilities of an insider examination of Mormonism. We have seen how Mormon Lamanite doctrine nourished the Placement program, and how the individual consequences of participation encouraged the Navajos in the sample to reevaluate their thinking about how that doctrine applies to them. In chapter three we traced out themes in the interviews which indicate these individuals' search for a satisfactory definition of self. A parallel struggle has been my simultaneous work to create a satisfactory balance between multiple points of view in myself. Ultimately, the participants hold the memories of Placement and an understanding

of its meaning in their lives. They live out that meaning in trying to find a balance between their own multiple voices, come to terms with their present and their past and remember the feelings and experiences of Placement.

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