# Module Two: Exploring Social Science Issues, continued

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# 2-1 The Scientific Method

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# Introduction to the Scientific Method

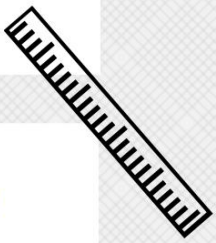
## Introduction to the Scientific Method

The scientific method is, simply put, a way to approach scientific research. It is a set of processes and procedures that are used to answer specific questions in a measurable, meaningful, repeatable way. This is done by gathering data, analyzing that data, and then drawing appropriate conclusions about the findings. In the social sciences, investigators are particularly interested in determining why and how people act and think the way that they do. The full process is as follows:

Identify a problem and ask a question

Review the literature

Form a hypothesis



Collect and analyze data

Draw conclusions

Identify research limitations and ask another question

Click on each of the following tabs to learn more about the individual steps of the scientific method.

Identify a Problem and Ask a Question

At the outset, it's important to identify a problem or issue and then ask a question on that topic. Social science issues are typically focused on the factors shaping, influencing, and motivating human behavior and attitudes. For example, a social science issue could be: "the effect of social media on human interaction." Questions surrounding this issue could ask how or why behaviors change when using social media versus interacting face-to-face.

Review the Literature

Next, an investigator must perform a background search on his or her question. This is also known as "reviewing the literature." In this stage, it is important to find papers and books written by members of a discipline. For one thing, maybe your question has already been answered! Background research can also help the investigator refine the question or hone in on an even more pressing one.

Looking at the work that's already been done can help guide the next steps; it may become clear what the means of gathering data is, or it may give insight as to what other resources are out there. Finally, it can help a researcher gather support that there is a need to answer these questions.

Form a Hypothesis

A hypothesis is often called "an educated guess," because a person makes a hypothesis after reviewing the literature. A hypothesis is a statement about what the researcher expects to find.

After the hypothesis is formed, the researcher needs to test it. A hypothesis gains support when you can demonstrate the opposite of the hypothesis, or the null hypothesis, is false. While it is not possible to prove definitively and absolutely that any particular hypothesis is correct, a hypothesis becomes stronger with additional evidence and as alternative hypotheses are proven false.

Collect and Analyze Data

Once the hypothesis is formed, it needs to be tested. This can be done in a number of ways. Researchers can send out surveys or questionnaires, observe participants, conduct interviews, perform case studies, or design and run controlled experiments with selected participants. Additionally, researchers can do a more targeted and extensive review of existing literature.

Once enough data has been collected, it needs to be analyzed. In the case of most experimental studies, this includes some form of statistical analysis to show that the results are meaningful and can be applied to a larger population.

Draw Conclusions

This can also just mean, "to make sense of the data." This can be done by continuously comparing the results to the hypothesis and asking whether or not it fails to disprove the hypothesis.

Sometimes a hypothesis will be half-supported, or a researcher will find evidence that the hypothesis is supported in some instances but not in others. They may determine that there is a correlation between two variables (they are connected), but there's not enough evidence to prove that one absolutely causes the other. Perhaps other factors may influence truth or falseness of the hypothesis, and those need to be examined in more depth. In each of these cases and more, it is important for the researcher to pinpoint limitations to their research.

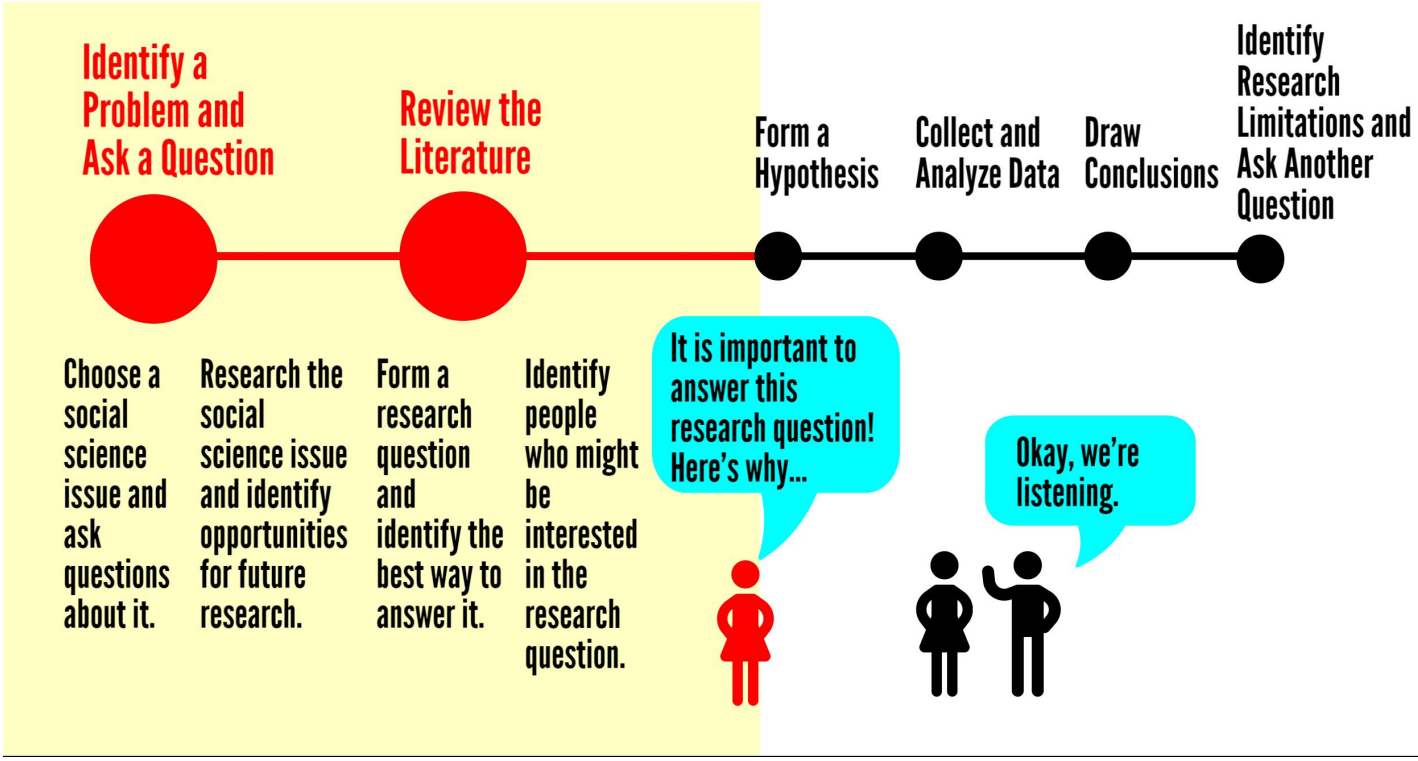
Identify Research Limitations and Ask Another Question

When reporting results, researchers are essentially doing three things: first, they are making the process available to peers and other researchers with the hope that others will validate the findings. For this reason, it is important to give details about the specific process used, variables measured, the exact way in which those variables were measured, etc. The reporting needs to give others everything they would need to recreate the study.

Second, they are identifying the limitations of their work. This could be related to the sample size of the population studied, or the fact that only a single variable was tested. Perhaps the researchers acknowledge that they could have influenced the results by expecting one outcome more than another. By stating these limitations, other researchers can construct studies that account for them.

Third, the report should ask more questions. Whether or not social scientists disprove the null hypothesis, many will see this as only the beginning of a larger body of research. When reporting results, it is a good idea to point out blind spots in the field that still need exploration.

This image shows how the steps of your research investigation match up to the scientific method. The yellow portion represents the work that you'll do during your research investigation. Then, you will need to communicate your work to an audience in order to convince them that continuing the next steps of the scientific method are worthwhile. Essentially, you will need to convince this audience that there is value in answering your research question.




## 2-2 Social Science Issues

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## Social Science Issues

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## Beliefs and Values

### Beliefs and Values

Beliefs and values are the cultural ideals that a society strives to maintain.

These can be moral...

*Murder is wrong.*

cultural...

*The group is more important than the individual.*
*Real men don't cry.*

or lifestyle based.

*You need to cut your grass and maintain a full, green lawn.*

Beliefs and values are woven into the fabric of a society, sometimes very deeply so. For example, many societies value human life; therefore, the cultural beliefs and values teach that to murder another individual is wrong. In many societies with a legal

system, this value is often written into the laws very early on; therefore, it is reinforced by the social institutions of the society. While some people still commit murder in these societies, there is a cultural understanding that this should not happen, and if it does, there will be punishment.

However, beliefs and values can change over time and in response to new cultural or ideological influences. For example, Ireland has seen a cultural shift in the beliefs and values that influence attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other) communities. In the 1800's, laws prohibited homosexual activity and marriage. Throughout the 20th and 21st century, many amendments to the laws were made to decriminalize these activities. Finally in 2015, the population voted to legalize gay marriage in an open referendum. People from all corners of the world publicized their journey #HomeToVote on social media (James, 2015).

Ireland is a prime example of how a country's laws are not always the underlying reason that a culture holds certain beliefs and values. This is to say, people don't believe it's wrong to murder because the laws forbid it. People believe it is wrong to murder, and the laws express it. In this way, when the laws no longer express the beliefs and values of the culture, they can be changed, as they were for LGBTQ+ rights in Ireland.

Some cultural beliefs and values are less obvious than the people's opinions on marriage or murder; instead, they are very subtle. The people in the culture might not even know it is a value that is specific to their culture. For example, in some cultures, there is a pervasive attitude of "more is better."

This same idea can be reflected in the fast food campaigns of the 1990's in the United States, in which employees asked customers whether they'd like to select a larger sized meal for only a few cents extra. The idea was that, even if the food was more than the person could eat, it is a bargain to get so much extra food for only a few extra cents. However, other cultures hold the culture value that "enough" is plenty. When people from these two different cultures experience the other's point of view, this may be seen as:

| More Is Better | Enough Is Plenty |
|---|---|
| "Can you believe the size of the ice cream cones in France? They're so tiny! This is just a cone with a bite of ice cream on top!" | "Can you believe the size of fast food meals in the United States? Who would want to make this meal larger? Who would buy more food than they could eat?" |

Cultural beliefs and values are the underpinnings of many aspects of a culture's daily life. They influence interactions among the people, they demonstrate ideals that we should all strive for, and they shape the cultural perspective on right and wrong.

### Beliefs and Values in Areas of Increased Longevity

#### Beliefs and Values in Loma Linda, California

Life in Loma Linda is significantly shaped by the conservative Seventh Day Adventist

Church. Adventists are committed to the belief that the soul and body are one, so in order to care for the soul, one must take care of his or her body. The social norms of the community, which involve healthy practices like leisure, exercise, and healthy eating habits, are a reflection of those beliefs and values.

Many of the community's institutions, including Loma Linda University, are founded on the Seventh Day Adventist doctrine. While alcohol and tobacco use are restricted in many communities, the commitments of the Church make the use of these substances even less common. The local government in Loma Linda strictly controls access to and the sale of alcohol, and smoking is banned in most places in the city, including all public spaces with the exception of dedicated smoking posts at shopping centers.

## Beliefs and Values in the Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica

The beliefs and values of the people in the Nicoya Peninsula influence aspects of their daily lives. Nicoyans value hard work, and this can be seen in the strenuous lifestyle that most Nicoyans undertake to sustain themselves. They spend their days walking long distances and working long hours of physical labor. While some might see the work they do as strenuous and back-breaking, many Nicoyans wake up with the sense that there is purpose to their day and that they are contributing to the community through the work they do. This belief, which is deeply embedded in the culture, is known as a "plan de vida" — a purpose for waking up and living life. (Blue Zone Photos, n.d.)

Nicoyans also value family, and they demonstrate this priority by spending a large amount of time laughing, socializing, and playing with friends and neighbors.

## Beliefs and Values in Sardinia, Italy

In Sardinia, Italy, family is incredibly important. Families spend time together after work and during leisure time. Elderly relatives in particular are well-respected. They often live at home with their children in old age rather than retiring to elderly homes; to send an elderly person to a retirement home would be dishonorable. These beliefs and values result in a sense of community and support throughout life.

## Beliefs and Values in Ikaria, Greece

At the core of the beliefs and values in Ikaria, there is a sense of reliance on one another and prioritization of community. Historical and political forces influenced these beliefs and values. Ikarians experienced high casualties during World War II, as both the Italians and the Germans occupied the island. Some people estimate that as much as 20 percent of the population was lost during that time. Those that survived united around a strong sense of shared history and tradition. The war also meant that many people with communist or leftist ideologies were displaced, and many of those people came to live on the island of Ikaria (Anthony, 2013). As a result, the people of Ikaria rely on one another, care for one another, visit one another, and discipline one another's children.

## Beliefs and Values in Okinawa, Japan

Much of the population of the islands that make up Okinawa practice an ancient religion called Ryukyuan. Ryukyuan is characterized by a strong respect for relationships between the living and their deceased ancestors. Ancestor worship in the Ryukyuan practice is reflected in the strong sense of family responsibility.

In addition, Okinawans value *Ikigai*, or "reason for being." This belief means that Okinawans rise each morning much like the Nicoyans do — with a sense of purpose for their day. This value is reflected in the structure of society. Even in old age, Okinawans have a role to fill in society and a purpose for waking up.

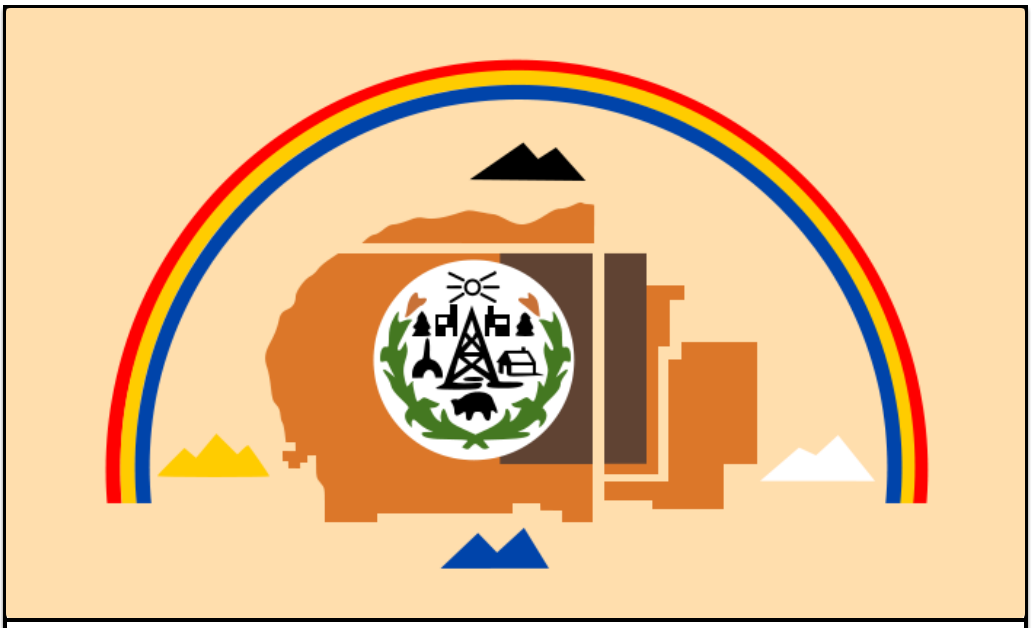
Anthony, A. (2013). The island of long life. *The Guardian.* http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/31/ikaria-greece-longevity-secrets-age

James, R. (2015, May 22). Irish people from all over the world are travelling #HomeToVote in the same-sex marriage referendum. *BuzzFeedNews.* https://www.buzzfeed.com/richardhjames/irish-referendum-home-to-vote?utm_term=.nrjR9O7QN#.obXjadkym

*Blue zone photos: Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica.* (n.d.). National Geographic. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/happiest-places/blue-zones-costa-rica-photos/

# Beliefs and Values in a Native American Reservation

## Beliefs and Values on the Navajo Nation Reservation



The Navajo Flag ®

Native Americans are considered to be the people whose ancestors lived on the land of North America prior to the arrival of European settlers. There were (and are) many different groups of Native Americans, each with distinct cultures, beliefs, and values.

Beginning in the 16th century, Native Americans in what is now the United States were subordinated militarily, culturally, and economically by the descendants of the European settlers. Prevailing attitudes toward Natives among early white settlers were a mixture of contempt and fear; one of America's seminal documents, the Declaration of Independence, refers to "merciless Indian savages" bent on "the undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions." Consistent with the view that Natives were savages, many American Indians were not recognized as U.S. citizens until the 20th century.

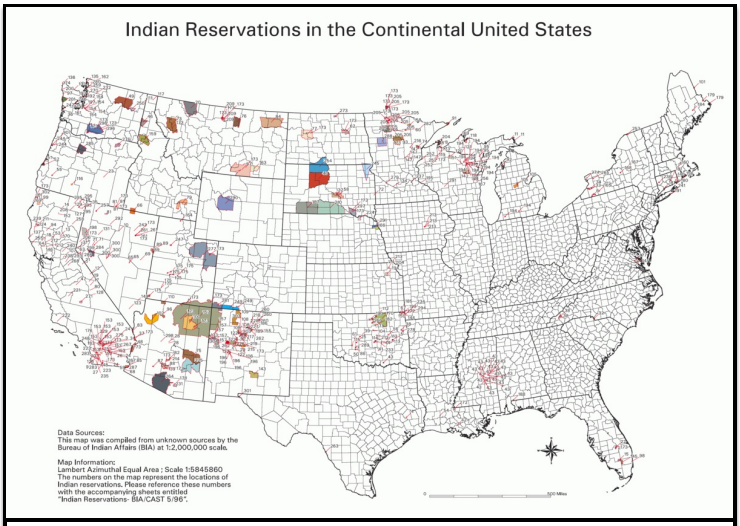
Over the course of several centuries, many Native American tribes were removed from their ancestral lands, either through coercion or the direct use of military force. In the 1830's, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which granted the President the power to negotiate the removal of five Native American tribes—the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Creek—from their land in the southeastern U.S. to territory west of the Mississippi River. This forced relocation led to the deaths of thousands of Cherokee as they walked the "Trail of Tears," (Prucha, 1984; Anderson, 1991) and it set the stage for similar "removals" in the decades to come.

One of the most notorious of these was the "Long Walk" of the Navajo, a tribe whose ancestral homeland was in northeastern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico. Conflict between the Navajo and the U.S. government began soon after the U.S.

acquired these territories at the end of the Mexican-American War, in 1848. (Anderson, 2014) Near the end of the Civil War, the American government forced about 8,500 Navajo to relocate by foot to eastern New Mexico, a journey of more than 300 miles. About 200 Navajo died during this forced march; after four years of living in overcrowded and substandard conditions, the Navajo were finally allowed to return to a small piece of their original homeland in 1868. ("Peoples of the Mesa," 2014)

Ultimately, the Navajo and many other Native Americans were relegated to land known as "reservations," a term coined during negotiations of peace treaties between Native American tribes and the early United States government. In these treaties, Native Americans surrendered their land, often under threat of attack; however, they did so on the condition that certain areas be reserved for them.

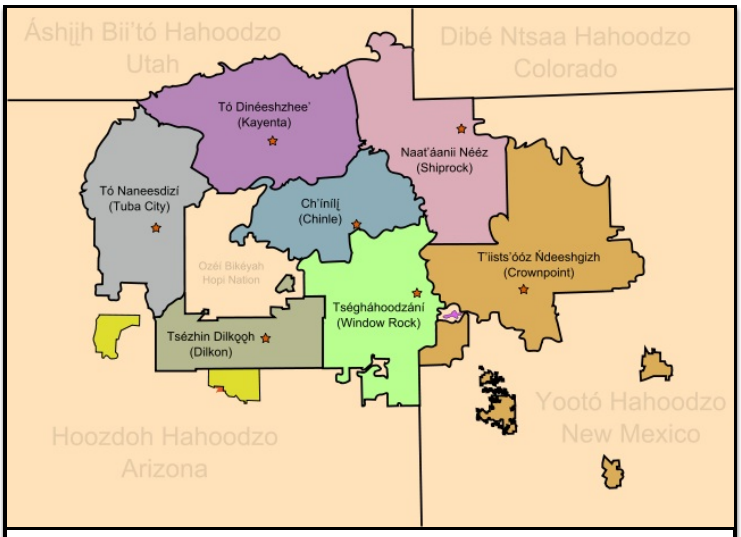
The federal government and some states established more than 300 reservations in the United States today. Not every Native American lives on a reservation or belongs to a federally-recognized tribe. Further, not every Native American tribe or nation has a reservation. Some have more than one; other tribes share control of reservations. As of a 2010 census, 22 percent of the Native American population in the United States lived on reservations.



A map of Native American Reservations in the United States

Today, reservations are managed by one or more Native American tribe or nation rather than state governments. Residents of reservations are considered members of their tribal nations, as well as citizens of the United States and residents of their states (Washington & van Hover, 2011). The Navajo Nation reservation is an example of one such reservation. It is the largest in the United States, stretching across Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico. Approximately 300,000 people live on this reservation.

Life on the Navajo Reservation is strongly influenced by the fact that the U.S. government, in trying to assimilate indigenous people into the White culture throughout the 1800's and early 1900's, either discouraged or limited cultural practices, native language, and autonomy. In the 1970's, a greater effort was made to recognize Native people's right to autonomy. Since then, Native Americans have been left with the difficult task of determining how to structure their society to best practice and teach their culture while still preparing their people for the challenges of the 21st century. Efforts have been made to integrate beliefs and values into several pillars of society, such as government, healthcare, and education.



A map showing the Navajo Nation Reservation

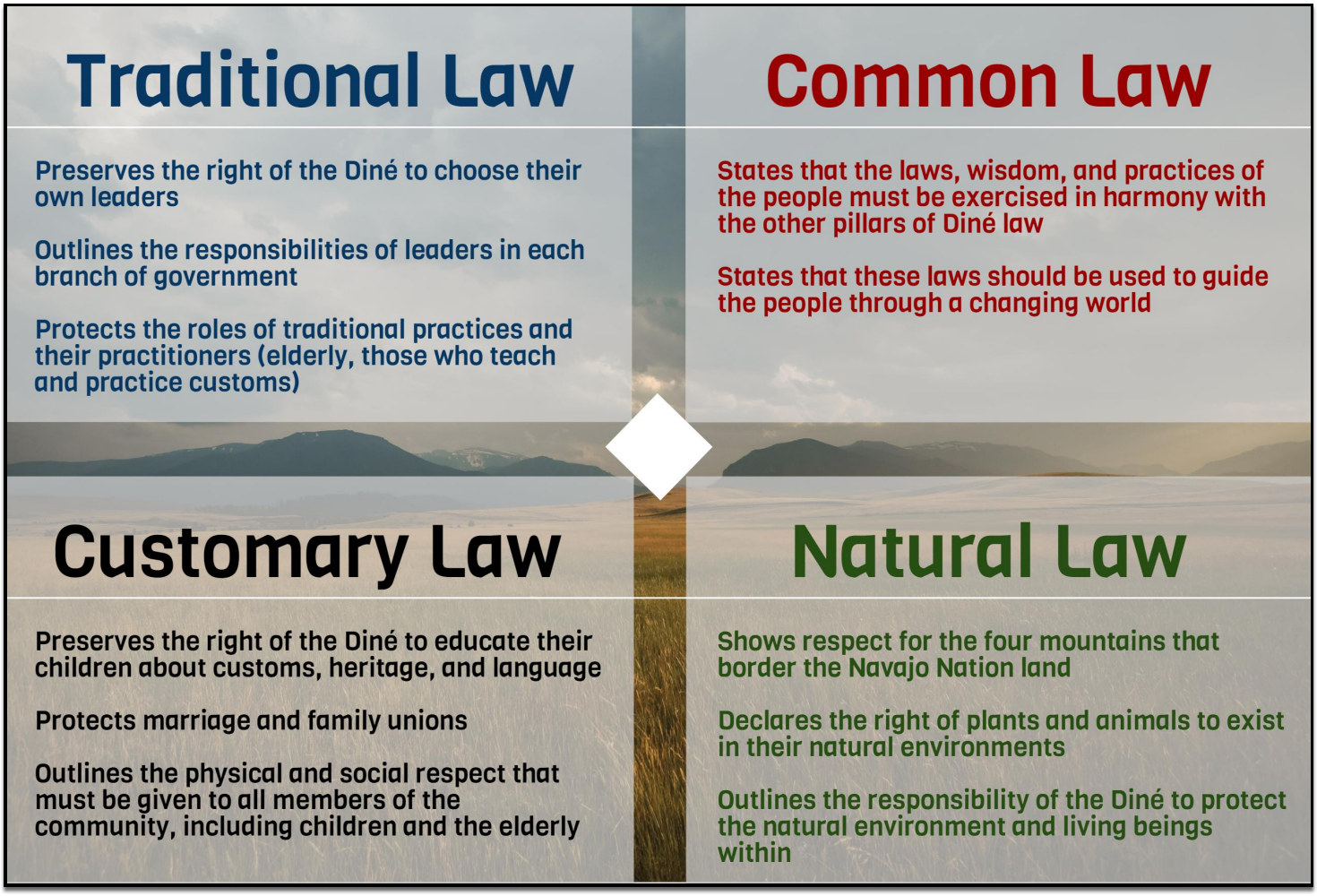
Originally, the Navajo reservation, like many others, was governed by a federal appointee who followed policies that were established by the U.S. government. Since the late 1800's, the passage of many laws has sought to grant sovereignty and self-determination to the Navajo people. Today, reservations are, with limitations, considered to be independent from local and state governments. The Navajo abide by their own government structure and legal system, which differs from, but resembles, the US government.

For example, the Navajo Nation does not have a written constitution; however, it does have three branches of government: the president, a court system, and a representative body of delegates. The body of delegates, known as the Navajo Nation Tribal Council, includes 88 delegates representing the various Navajo chapters. Meetings are conducted in their native language (Washington & van Hover, 2011).

Since the late 1950's, greater efforts have been made to incorporate customary Navajo culture into the legal system. "Fundamental Laws of the Diné," (Diné being the native word for Navajo) encompassing traditional customs and laws, have been established as a guide for Navajo judges (Washington & van Hover, 2011). The Laws of the Diné specify that Navajo beliefs and values be taken into account when making judgments (Navajo Nation Council, 2002).

Additionally, the Nation has a legally sanctioned Peacemakers Court, which utilizes customary means of conflict resolution, based on the belief that "talking things over is the way to straighten out troubles" (Zion, 1998). This court can be traced back to

days before formal or written law existed, in which disputes were settled by a few people coming together to discuss a problem and forge a solution. In Navajo culture, words are powerful: naming a "monster" can help a person address it. This system of conflict resolution is tied to the belief that understanding a person's motivations or explanations for their behavior is necessary to help them solve the issue, and for this reason the court encourages a person to give his or her excuse. The person presiding over these issues does not have power by virtue of his or her position, but he or she is given this position because of the community's respect (Zion, 1998).




Healthcare is another area in which efforts have been made to give the Navajo more freedom to re-integrate traditional medicinal practices. In the 1970's, the US government passed laws intended to provide better healthcare to the Navajo. While these laws do not prevent the use of traditional healing practices, including the use of herbs, ceremonies, and songs, they also do not provide a clear role for these customs (Kuschell-Haworth, 1999). Many healthcare providers associated with the reservations have been skeptical of the traditional practices, but the Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 protects the rights of Natives Americans who have religious or spiritual beliefs that they feel will influence their health. Thus, efforts have been made to use these practices when patients want them. In order to comply with this policy, some health care facilities have spaces or entire buildings dedicated to traditional healing practices (Rhoades, 2009).

Ceremonial performances — which are often used in an effort to respond to ailments, both mental and physical — are experienced by members of the community and sometimes last as long as nine days. During these ceremonies, traditional sand paintings may be drawn that show characters and events from Navajo myths. Historically, Navajo spiritual leaders (who can be men or women) have led their tribes, and they have been believed to provide a connection between the people and the gods. Thus, Navajo healers do not only provide medical services for their communities but spiritual and cultural guidance as well.

In education, too, the Navajo have only reclaimed autonomy in the past 30 years. In the 1800's, the U.S. government built boarding schools to promote cultural assimilation of Native American children into the United States culture. These schools taught history from a biased, European perspective, forced conversion to Christianity, and used harsh disciplinary measures. The Native American parents that tried to resist sending their children to these boarding schools were met with forceful tactics by U.S. government officials. It was not until 1978 Native Americans gained the right to prevent their children from attending these boarding schools and be educated at home ("Boarding Schools," n.d.). Since that time, education on the reservation has changed significantly.

In 1894, leaders of the Navajo Nation mandated that the Navajo language and culture be taught in schools. While many Navajo agreed that some form of cultural education should be incorporated into the curriculum, surveys revealed differing opinions as to exactly how and to what extent cultural education should be the responsibility of the school system. One survey of a small but diverse group of respondents revealed that some Navajo had emotional memories of being punished for speaking Navajo at the boarding schools, and wished to spare their children that pain. Many Navajo believed that religion and ceremony should not be incorporated into the curriculum (Batchelder & Markel, 1997). Since that time, several immersion K-12 schools have opened on the Navajo Nation reservation that teaches Native American history and specifically the history of the Navajo tribe (Navajo Nation, 2011). However, most students still attend public schools (Klein, 2014).

Despite the hardships that the Navajo have faced, the people continue to move forward. They infuse their cultural practices, language, and traditions into daily life, and seek new ways to pass this culture on to future generations.

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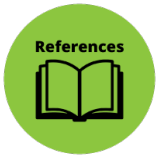


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## Choosing a Social Science Issue

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## 2-3 Connecting Principles With Issues

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## Exercise: Principles and Issues

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## Connecting Your Social Science Issue With Social Science Principles

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## Discussion: Asking Questions

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## 2-4 What's Next

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## Research Investigation Progress Check 1

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## Module Two Short Responses

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## Theme 1 Wrap Up

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