

Language, Epistemology, and Cultural Identity: "*Hopiqatsit Aw Unangvakiwyungwa*" ("They Have Their Heart in the Hopi Way of Life")
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Nettle and Romaine (2000) describe the disappearance of the world's languages as a "trickle of extinction . . . now turning into a flood" (p. 2). Present day U.S. statistics confirm the rapid loss of most of the aboriginal languages spoken at the time of Columbus' 1492 arrival—only about 175 of an estimated 300 continue to be spoken (Nettle and Romaine, 2000). Against this backdrop, this paper presents the resiliency of the Hopi language and culture. A historically oral communal people numbering close to 13,000, the Hopi continue to reside on their aboriginal homeland in the southwestern U.S. They have not evaded the impact of modernity alarmingly evident in the declining use and functions of the Hopi language in contemporary Hopi life, in the unabating shift toward English monolingualism among younger Hopi, and a perceived connection between Hopi linguistic proficiency and displays of behaviors that violate Hopi principles. Nonetheless, the Hopi case reveals the persistence of a distinct Hopi identity maintained through unwavering adherence to cultural traditions cultivated through active participation in the Hopi way of life, and *language as cultural practice*. The collective life histories of three generations of Hopi—the three youth at the heart of the study, their parents, and members of the grandparent generation—bring to light the process of disruption in the Hopi cultural plan and the mechanisms: (1) Hopi oral tradition, and (2) the Hopi identity formation process expressed in the Hopi words, "*Hopiqatsit ang nùutum hintsakme, Hopisinoniwtingwu*," "Participating along with others in the Hopi way of life, one becomes a Hopi," as enduring and salient aspects of Hopi culture and language which foster a resilient Hopi identity, fervent allegiance to the Hopi way of life, and offers the means for "recouping or reinvigorating the use of the native tongue" (King, 2001, p. 12).

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