

Native American Attempts at Assimilation, Revitalization, and Resistance

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Historically, there are varying forms of acculturation applied by colonialists to reduce the cultural identities of native communities, to civilize them to the white's way of life through assimilation. Some of the communities that were victims of acculturation include the Native Americans, Inuit, the Aboriginals, and the Maori.¹ The assimilation process, however, has failed among the Natives as more than half of the Native Americans live in the reservation or are isolated from the rest of the country. Before the enactment of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924, the Native Americans did not have similar rights with whites or educational and economic opportunities with those of the Whites. However, the status has presently changed as they are currently part of the U.S. citizens under the Federal government and they enjoy self-government through their tribal sovereign.

Before Christopher Columbus entered what is currently known as America, Native Americans inhabited the land. During the 16th and 17th centuries, more colonial governments desired to colonize the Native's land and this resulted in a mixed response from cooperation to indignation to revolt.² The history and the turmoil of the Natives start after they supported the French during the French and Indian war and worsened during the forceful removal from their land following the Indian Removal Act during Andrew Jackson's presidency. By the end of the 19th century, the Native Americans greatly reduced in size and territory.

The United States has formulated several policies for the Native Americans for half of the 19th century. What is majorly known from these policies is the impact they had on Geronimo, Custer's Last Stand, and Plains Indian Wars. The paramount of discussion of the policies on classes, textbooks, and history is because of the opening of the great will-power and strength of

¹ J. E Luebering, *Native American History* New York: Britannica Educational Pub. in association with Rosen Education Services, 2011.

² J. E Luebering, *Native American History* New York

the U.S. However, the questionable policies are left out as they fail to portray the will-power of the United States. Some of the questionable policies are on assimilation and boarding schools, general hatred of Americans towards Natives, reservations, and revitalization.

The United States government not only inhibited the uprising of the Native Americans but introduced assimilation policies to deter the transmission of cultural traits to their offspring. The young Natives were assimilated through enrollment to boarding schools and converted to Christianity. In boarding schools, the school administration went to lengths to eliminate all traces of their cultural heritage. Worse, while at school, the Native youngsters worked manually for their school without compensation for their services, and received American education and dressed like Americans.

Several textbooks and scholarly works cover the Native American Reservations in Oklahoma and Trail of Tears, but no scholarly works explore the Native Americans policies in Mid- and the North-West United States. A group of the Natives was transported to the reservation in regions not traveled by many Americans. The reservation was a strategy by the U.S. government to keep the Native Americans in secluded regions to be forgotten. Worse, while in reservations, the Natives lived on rations, a strategy employed to Americans during disasters like war.

In 1890, after the end of the Indian War, the Native Americans had limited resources to defend their interests. Although the group was confined in the reservation, 2/3 of the group was scattered in the country where they were defined using different linguistic and cultural characteristics. The problem was heightened by their political illiteracies. The Native Americans suffered under the U.S. government, as most were not citizens in the country and the community

had a weak cultural basis to understand the aspects of representative democracy practiced in the U.S.

Economically, the Native Americans were the weakest in terms of economic status. The Natives were subjected to suffering by the whites, as the White ranchers and farmers grabbed their hunting grounds chased away animals, which were their food source, and the reservation land was of poor quality. The Native Americans were economically weak to even satisfy their basic needs. The majority started relying on the U.S. government for their food, shelter, and other needs.³ The situation could not improve as the reservations were far from sites of modernization and industrialization.

In addition to the inaccessibility to these regions, the Natives lacked skills to attain competitively positions in the growing towns. Aside from the reservation issues, the Natives were limited by strong intolerance of whites towards them and racial prejudice. The U.S. policies governing the natives in the reservations limited their economic growth and encouraged them to Americanize. The future of Native Americans was at risk where they were ill-treated during the war with the Americans and whites.

From the government's eye, the natives were a 'nuisance' that was recognized by editorial cartoonists. The group was despised where even after the 4th amendment; "excluding Indians not taxed" prevented Native American men from receiving the right to vote when African-American men gained suffrage in 1868." The approach of the U.S. towards the group was like a 'house of cards' where although the Natives were a problem, the U.S. government did

³ Michael A. Elliott and Jace Weaver, "That The People Might Live: Native American Literatures And Native American Community", *American Literature* 70, no. 4 (1998): 900, doi:10.2307/2902396.

not have a strategy to best deal with them. Some historians defined the Native Americans as snakes that although the government had the power to appease, they could not control them.⁴

The current research will explore different primary and secondary sources to identify some of the gaps in the policies towards Native Americans in the mid- and North-West United States. This will be attained by discussing the aspects of Assimilation, Revitalization, and Resistance. The research will explore the process of acculturation and assimilation of the Native Americans into European-American society as a way to destroy the Native's traditional cultural identities. This was driven by a paternalistic attitude that failure to adopt European-American society would result in the extinction of the Native's culture. To attain this objective, a historiographic analysis and theoretical overview of the attempt by the U.S. government in the 19th century to Native Americans on assimilation, resistance and revitalization will be explored.

The research will explore policies that are majorly missing in most textbooks, class, and history. This will bring into light some of the happenings of the Native Americans at the hands of the U.S. government. It will illustrate some of the horrendous human rights violations towards the Native Americans in the 19th century. The U.S. applied perpetrated legislation and policies, which will be related to the cultural and political identity, an aspect that is absent from other marginalized groups.

Other assimilation protocols can be applied in this research intermarriage, the bio-logic of blood, the awarding of citizenship in 1924, and forced migration. The main policy to explore is the Indian Residential Schools in the 19th century to the influence of assimilation. We recognize that there lacks a single assimilation policy that is more superior to another in influencing the current ways of life of the Native Americans. The presence of Residential Schools portrays the use of racial thinking in motivating and justifying policymakers to enforce schooling. Different

⁴ Michael A. Elliott and Jace Weaver, "That The People Might Live

historians and scholars have explored the historical realities of these schools and there are continuing studies by psychologists and sociologists where they explore the long-term repercussion of the assimilation process.

Politically, the educational institutions were not focused on academic achievements but rather on training the Whites' way of life. Another notable aspect is that the majority did not understand the contexts of the happenings of the time until later in years in the 20th century. This calls for a need to explore deeply the assimilation of Native Americans and their resistance to the U.S. government. The research issue will be explored by first understanding the terms used – Native Americans, assimilation, resistance, and revitalization. This will be followed by a historiographic analysis of the theoretical issues of the racial prejudice of Native Americans in the hands of the Whites. The study will then explore the impact of the policies introduced and providing some of the strategies that the contemporary Native Americans are employing to deal with the impact. The conclusion provides recommendations on the way forward.

Terminologies

Several terms are applied to mean to refer to the indigenous people of the United States. Some of the commonly used terms include Native Americans and American Indians while Natives, Aboriginal Americans, Indigenous Americans, and Amerindians are less common. Scholarly, the term that is commonly used is the Native Americans while in reservations they are referred to as Indians. Columbus was the first to use the term Indian or Indos after entering the American land and he assumed that he was in the Indies. Irrespective of its origin, this term has been greatly used by the Indians for the last seven centuries. Previously, it is argued that the community was known as Hindustan.

Other terms used interchangeably is acculturation, and assimilation where although not synonyms, they will be used in the study to mean the socio-cultural and psychological impact of change generated due to culture clashes. Psychologically, acculturation is a cultural change of which marginalization, assimilation, separation, and integration strategies. 7

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methods

The study will follow a content analysis of primary and secondary sources that relate to the Native American attempts at assimilation, revitalization, and resistance. The analysis will include any materials that explore the Natives at the hands of the U.S. government during the 19th century. To accomplish the purpose of this research, the author applied a content analysis research methodology. A content analysis methodology is an objective and systematic analysis of a subject. This is attained by thoroughly exploring a literature piece either from the primary or secondary origin. A content analysis follows an obstructive attitude to formulate the conclusions that are generalizable in other instances. Applying a qualitative study through content analysis follows critical theory, social sciences, and literary theory.

Qualitative content analysis is classified into five classifications: conversation analysis, ethnographic content analysis, rhetorical analysis, social constructivist analysis, and discourse analysis. For this study, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be applied to pinpoint any key themes on the scholarly resources as it opens room for self-reflection, as well as an exploration of how effective Native American populations attempts at assimilation, revitalization, and resistance. The benefit of CDA is that it allows a researcher to locate specific political, cultural, and social contexts.

Theoretical Arguments

Modernization is a process by which nations move from traditional to modern society. The traditional model of modernization dates back to the 18th and 19th century where it relates to evolution theory. The traditional evolution follows the assumption that some societies are on the upscale while others on a low scale, which results to equate one race to another. The nation or society at the upscale views others from their realm. The traditional modernization definition is the basis for the modernization theory by borrowing the concepts of Social Darwinism, biological diversity, and divine right following the post-World War II evolvement to neo-racism.

Among the politicians who drove the civilization mission, many argued it was a necessity while others believed it was out of guilt. For example, the U.S. Secretary of War, Henry Knox explained this by saying, “painful to consider, that all the Indian tribes, once existing in those States now the best cultivated and most populous, have become extinct...in a short period.”⁵ The majority of people, however, believe there was progress. President Andrew Jackson asked, “What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements, which art can devise or industry execute?”⁶ A similar argument was made 200 years earlier by John Locke where he exclaimed that America was vacant land and the savages living in the land had not listened to God’s voice to till the land and give dominion to others.

The missionaries were guilty, as they knew the change was necessary, but they believed that civilization would solve the Indian problem. This was founded on the belief that educating the Indians would change their way of life. The failure of their programs was a lack of

⁵ H. Knox, "American State Papers", *Indian Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1789): 55.

⁶ J.D. Richardson, *A Compilation Of The Messages And Papers Of The Presidents, 1789-1897: A Supplement [1897]-1902*, 1st ed. Washington DC: Authority of Bureau of National Literature and Art, 2019.

understanding of the cultural heritage of the American Indians who had successfully lived on their land before the missionaries. It is argued that rather than freeing them, the Christian teachings lowered the status of the Indians. The American Anglo Saxons viewed themselves as people who were called to spread Christianity, commercialism, and good governance to the communities.

Although this view was acceptable among the whites, presently, this is viewed as arrogance. According to critics, how could the American Anglo Saxon race preach God's will by forcing the individuals to leave their way of life through traumatic experiences? Nonetheless, their racial and cultural perspectives dictated their religious beliefs and faith viewpoints. This was a common practice to view others as minors in terms of race.

Applying the modernization theory and neo-racism by Emile Durkheim (1893), the division of labor is likely to cause individualistic and heterogeneous societies an aspect termed as organic solidarity. The opposite of this is that homogeneous and communist social groupings are primitive, a concept known as mechanical solidarity. For civilization, there is a need to assimilate and utilize the primitives. However, Durkheim argues that the union is short-lasting by using the term antagonism. However, the experiences of North America and the Europeans laid a way for others to follow.⁷

Paternalism

Paternalism is an action that limits the liberty of an individual or groups for their good. Some governments express paternalistic policies, which restrict the choices of their citizens without their consent. The paternalist causes controversies, as the injustices are argued to be to the benefit of the citizens. Although paternalism is majorly contentious, the aspect is also ubiquitous. This means that what matters most is not the justifiable enactment of action, but

⁷ E. Durkheim, "The Division Of Labour In Society, Translated By George Simpson", *New York: Free Press*, 1893.

rather the justifications of the conditions. For this assignment, paternalism as a theory will argue that the appropriateness of any actions is justifiable while making high risky decisions, and if the individual makes a decision, they cannot reverse it. Sociologists also argue that paternalism investigations justify an individual's preferences and values, which make a stronger argument as it respects autonomy.

The philosophy of paternalism can explore the aspect of Native America's assimilation, resistance, and revitalization. The U.S. policy towards the Native Americans kept changing, as it was formulated to react to the constant struggle of solutions to the Native's problem. After formulating a policy, issues erupted indicating the failure of the policy and formation of a new policy. Historians have argued the policies to be paternalistic.⁸ For example, Francis Prucha's view was that constantly, the U.S. federal government searched for ways to provide the natives with needs as a father does through a concept called 'abiding paternalism'.⁹

The majority of Americans believed the actions followed were a paternalistic way to assist the Indians with their struggle. For example, Ulysses S. Grant believed that he was a benevolent guardian by selecting policies that protected Indians while Andrew Jackson called himself a friend of the Natives. Ostler, on the other hand, believed the formulation of the 'peace policy' campaigned by Grant was American Imperialism to protect the Natives through reservations.¹⁰ This brings controversies of whether the issue of Native Americans was paternalistic or imperialist.

It is argued that paternalism means that the Whites were looking for the good of the Native Americans originates from contemporary thinkers and politicians. Francis Pruha argues

⁸ F.P. Prucha, *The Churches And The Indian Schools, 1888-1912*, 2nd ed. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

⁹ George E Tinker, *Missionary Conquest* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

¹⁰ J. E Luebering, *Native American History* New York

that paternalism was the Christian reaction towards the plight of the Natives and the response of politicians to Native's outcry towards 'aggressive frontiersmen'. However, historical facts present that the Whites viewed the Indians, as an inferior race towards the whites. The natives according to the white lacked the skills to take care of themselves and there were little chances to civilize them due to their rich culture.

Similar to the majority of theories or racial superiority, the science of the 19th century was manufactured and manipulated to support paternalism. A different measure was used to measure the Native Americans' life from that measuring American standards. The Americans believed that Indians lived a savage life, which allowed them to see the looting and even killing of thousands of Native Americans. This led to the long-used phrase by politicians of the time that "I have never seen a good Indian (and I have seen thousands) except when I have seen a dead Indian". These arguments are what led to the long-used belief that Americans' response to Native America was a form of paternalism. These issues are the contributing application of the paternalistic policies, as a way of protecting the Native Americans from the White American's aggression.

The Americans used different enforcements of the Indian policy; in particular, each policy was greatly influenced by the president of the time. For example, James Monroe greatly resisted the debate to relocate the Indians in the 1820s irrespective of the directing policy. Monroe thought that any relocation of Native Americans was to be voluntary rather than forceful. He maintained his argument irrespective of the concerns from both Gradualists and Revivalists. After succeeding Monroe, John Quincy Adams argued against the removal not on morality but rather on the argument that the removal was against prior treaties. The removal was

pushed after Andrew Jackson took office, which was promoted by the paternalist's argument that he was the father of the "children of the forest" and their removal was to their best interest.¹¹

CHAPTER THREE

Residential Schools

While in the hands of Americans, the Native Americans experienced unintentional and deliberate forms of genocide starting from the entry of Europeans in the Native's land. This exposed the Native Americans to the reservation (concentration camp) starvation, slavery, mass murder by military and militia, and exposure to diseases. In 1890, the Native American population greatly reduced from 20 million to 500,000.¹² By the end of the 19th century, it was clear that the Natives' issues would not be solved through genocide, which led to the formulation of assimilation policy. The U.S. followed Alexander H.H Stuart the Secretary of Interior in 1851 where he explained that the Indians were encompassed by an unbroken chain of civilization and the only alternatives left are, to civilize or exterminate them."¹³ The U.S. government adopted the policy of assimilation and civilization through education, religion, and instilling private property. However, none of these attained the proposed assimilation goal but had a great impact on the Native Americans.

Using the assimilation theory, the one reason for founding the residential schools and their outcome at the time and incoming generations can be interpreted. This section will at least explore three of the interpretations following the assimilation theory. The first interpretation is that residential schools and Indian education were part of the Christians missionaries' mission.

¹¹ Edward Dozier, "The Integration Of Americans Of Indian Descent", *Annals Of The American Academy Of Political And Social Science* 311 (1957): 158–165.

¹² S.A. Colmant, "U.S. And Canadian Boarding Schools: A Review, Past And Present", *Native Americas Journal* 17, no. 4 (2000): 24–30.

¹³ "The United States, Annual Report Of The Commissioner Of Indian Affairs For" Washington DC: Government Printing Office, accessed 17 July 2019.

The core mission for establishing schools by the missionaries was to educate and enable the children to enjoy modern America life through the introduction of the equality concept.

The second interpretation is that schools were established, as a way to attain cheap labor and acquire a place for Indians in society, not as an equal but as a peripheral member. The third interpretation is that residential schools were a way to eradicate and acculturate the Indians from their native culture to eliminate their identity through cultural genocidal practices. The theoretical perspectives introduced in the previous chapters will be used to explore the varying interpretations. This section will majorly explore the assimilation perception in the 19th century.

After the Indian war ended in 1890, following the elimination of major tribes, many Indians died and the remaining was 5% of the total Indian population before colonization. The remaining population was to be eradicated using reservations and education. From the 17th century, the missionaries had started providing education but the federal law did not permit this until 1877. The federal government through Thomas Jefferson Morgan, the Commissioner in charge of the Office of Indian Affairs formed the Indian School, Service in 1889 – 1893. At the same time, the Americans conducted the re-appropriation of native lands. Schools were constructed in the reservation where the number of pupils in the schools increased from 3,598 to 21,568 while the number of schools increased from 150 to 307.¹⁴

I. Christian Mission

Historically, the schooling system in the residential was a Christianity mission out of the guilt of the missionaries, as they desired to replace the disrupted native culture with the Americans way of life. During the introduction of Christian missionary school, they argued that rigorously educating the Indian children would equip them with the required education to

¹⁴ Daniel F Littlefield and James W Parins, *Native American Writing In The Southeast* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995.

competitively and equally live and work with Anglo-Saxon counterparts. One of the proponents of the initial schooling system, Lord Monboddo argued that the Indians were savages and with high potential through education.¹⁵

However, this system was critically condemned and there were campaigns to change it by the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Nonetheless, initially, the Christian missionaries viewed that the Indian problem would be solved through homogenization or Americanization. Following the end of the Indian war, a group of white reformers going by the name, “friends of the Indians” sympathized with the education process as well as the plight of the Native Americans. This called for a strong urge to eliminate the Indians through civilization. They argued that educating children would change their lives, as well as the lives of their extended families in the reserves.

Scholars like Francis Prucha, however, argued that such a strategy is a way of ethnocentrism and paternalism of the highest degree.¹⁶ However, other scholars argue that the move was a strategy to reformation where, for example, the reformers advocated reformation policies. For example, Henry Benjamin Whipple who was a Bishop in Minnesota from Episcopalian believed that no philanthropy was possible without Christ. However, while converting the Indians to Christianity, Whipple is condemned for engineering the government's theft of Black hills and destroying the Sioux culture. Nevertheless, Whipple and other reformers believed their action was the best for the natives at the time.

The schools can be viewed from a paternalistic point where historical ideas were driven by the Eighteenth century based on Social Darwinism, Manifest Destiny, and Scottish School.¹⁷ These three argued from the basis of developmental superiority, scientific or God-given. The

¹⁵ Scott B Vickers, *Native American Identities* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

¹⁶ F.P. Prucha, *The Churches And The Indian Schools*,

¹⁷ Scott B Vickers, *Native American Identities* Albuquerque:

view towards the Native Americans was described from what is believed as a norm.¹⁸ This is by using the white standard as the ground for normative. Another argument is based on the ‘peace policy’ where the government terminated the Indian war and embraced education as the assimilation process. This is based on the argument that “cheaper to feed every adult Indian now living.....than it would be to carry on a general Indian war for a single year”. Based on this, it is clear that the federal government was not into long-term help to Native Americans, but rather used education as expediency. This can better be explained based on John Stuart Mackenzie words;

“When people are conquered and subject to another, it ceases to be a society, except in so far as it retains a spiritual life of its own apart from that of its conquerors. Yet it does not become an integral part of the victorious people’s life until it is able to appropriate to itself the spirit of that life... [Until this] They are slaves: they are instruments of a civilization of which they do not partake...such subjection cannot be regarded as a form of social growth. It is only one of those catastrophes by which a society may be destroyed” (P 172¹⁹).

The above quote explains that for the Indians to be part of the total society, they needed to self-actualize and identify their place in society. The quote is an indication of the moral confusion that the government had as discussed in the previous section. In particular, imagine realizing that their subjugation to the Indians and their responsibility they had towards the community was contradictory to their earlier belief.

However, in 1894, Superintendent William Heilmann campaigned for Indian employment where the Indians were prepared to be part of the competitive capitalist market. This was based on the argument that the system was only positively influencing it after enrolling

¹⁸ F.A. Mckenzie, "The Assimilation Of The American Indian", *American Journal Of Sociology*19, no. 6 (1914): 761-772.

¹⁹ J.S. Mackenzie, "An Introduction To Social Philosophy. Glasgow", *James Maclehose And Sons*, 1895.

the students in schools they attained education. This led the Indian School Service to be a major employer. Heilmann argued that offering employment could create community contact and the students would in future be role models and teachers to their youngsters and families. However, by the 20th century, Heilmann's argument was viewed by many as naïve and idealistic. For example, in 1865, George Hyde argued that "these humanitarians and idealists [are] quite unconscious of the fact that a great crisis had come in the Plains region."²⁰ This indicates the division of opinion at the time on what was best for Indians and the whites. Previously, whether expedience or genuine altruism, assimilation instead of extermination was viewed as the moral objective.

II. The Labor Force

In the Indian School Service, there was the presence of racism towards Native American staff and pupils. At the time, the independent thinking Indian teachers who were highly influential to the Indian communities threatened the white teachers through language and kin obligation. The whites also misappropriated resources that led to starvation and malnourishment in schools. The students were fed on meat gravy and baked bread while the money set for the children was used to buy "marmalade, sardines, lemons, oranges, shelled walnuts, icing sugar, lunch tongue, canned salmon."²¹ The threat was worsened when the Indian teachers went to the heads to report the disproportion of finances.

However, after Estelle Reel succeeded Hailman as the superintendent in 1898, these processes were banished. Estelle operated with the argument that the previous policies were extravagant where the theoretical learning was replaced with practical labor. Her argument was based on the philosophy that "contact with civilization civilizes" and those children should live

²⁰ G.E. Hyde, "Red Cloud's Folk", *Norman: University Of Oklahoma*, 1937.

²¹ G.E. Hyde, "Red Cloud's Folk"

in schools rather than with the families, as they would follow their native cultural practices. This transformed schools from being a learning institution to industrial laboring of students where they worked as slaves.

The reformers of the time applied the same strategies they used on criminals to the children who were viewed as worse than the convicts. The construction of the Carlisle School was laid on a military structure, as the founder Lieutenant Richard H. Pratt was military in charge of a prison. The fencing of the school was similar to that of the jail where students stayed on truant while the teachers on the bandstand, which symbolized the control of the whites. Rather than joining their families during the summer holidays, the children were enrolled in labor with minimum if any wages. The reformers, however, argued that retaining the children during summer was to give a command of the English language, a knowledge of family life, of business methods, of farming, machinery, and stock. They also argued that it gave them the consciousness of ability to make a living in any civilized community; of not being dependent, but a valued member of society, and a factor in the labor market.”²² However, in the real sense, this was against the freedom of the students.

The use of Indian children as laborers was contributed by the high demand for cheap labor from white families. This led the schools to teach the children to follow the road of menial laborers rather than strive to attain equal status with the whites. During summer, small boys even ten years were required to manufacture leather, wood, and metal at agricultural work and industrial schools while girls were doing kitchen works, laundry, or making garments. Regardless of the works the students did, they did not reap the benefit of their sweat, as the wages were their upkeep in school.

²² J.D. Richardson, *A Compilation Of The Messages And Papers Of The Presidents, 1789-1897: A Supplement [1897]-1902*, 1st ed. Washington DC: Authority of Bureau of National Literature and Art, 2019.

III. The Genocide Perspective

The foundation of the presidential schools according to Ward Churchill, was a form of conscious colonial genocidal approach to remove the remaining Indian cultures. Although Churchill has faced several allegations on the subject of Indian assimilation, I believe her arguments illustrate some of the perspectives of the assimilation policies. According to the definition of genocide by the United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948 is that it can be categorized into five groups: murdering persons of a particular community or causing mental and physical harm to a community. It can also mean inflicting a community their way of life deliberately; introducing measures that prevent giving birth to more children, and transferring their children from one group to another. The Native Americans children experienced all these forms of genocide. The federal government undertook the genocide against Native Americans consciously due to the common belief that the Indians were an inferior race.²³

Assimilation through Religion

John Eliot introduced the use of religion as a tool of assimilation in the 1600s during the American colonies that used the concept of “praying towns”. The U.S. government in the 19th century did not force Native Americans to adopt Christianity but the act greatly affected their health. Although some natives assimilated the mainstream society, the majority continued to follow their traditional religious practice or combined their native practice with those of Christianity, as a way of acculturation. However, the Spanish Mission introduced forced assimilation in the U.S., from 1769 to 1833, when the U.S. was formulating policies to relocate and remove the Native Americans. The army helped the Catholic missionaries to put the Native Americans into labor camps forcefully where they were converted and depended on Spanish

²³ George E Tinker, *Missionary Conquest* Minneapolis

settlers for their basic needs. However, this led the Native Americans to resist the missionary colonization through revolts, poisonings, military assaults, and escapes.

The forced assimilation of the Native Americans dates back to the end of the 1800s through the prohibition of giveaways, a ban of all sweats, and suppression of native dance. The institution of limitations and restrictions was due to the belief that taking away their religion would result in the assimilation to the mainstream society of Christianity. With time, the Natives adopted new ways to bypass the policies by integrating them in their 'Christian' religions where they altered them to fit the Christianity practices or used them as a folk behavior. This illustrates their resistance and resilience to Orthodox Christianity practices.

Assimilation through Education

The introduction of Indian boarding schools is forced assimilation through education. Previously, education in boarding schools was regulated by Christian denominations on reservation lands. However, in 1879, Richard Pratt founded Carlisle, the first boarding school in the reservation.²⁴ This was promoted by taking away children from their homes at an early age and only left school after becoming young adults. The core reason was not to educate them but to completely isolate them from their culture and instill the mainstream society way of life through strict assimilation guidelines in the boarding schools.

Richard Pratt followed his policy of "kill the Indian to save the man", which he succeeded by killing his statement as he modeled the boarding school in the prison that was for the Natives. Worse was that the Native Americans received a lower quality of education in comparison to what was received by white children. The core objective of the boarding schools was to control every aspect of the Natives' lives by eliminating all the aspects of their native

²⁴ Brenda Child, "Boarding School Season", *University Of Nebraska Press, Lincoln And London*, 2000.

ways of life. The assimilation guidelines were enforced through the mental and physical deterioration of the native child.²⁵

The process of assimilation, however, was resisted by the majority of the Native American children through overt and covert retention of traditional native practices, physical retaliation, running away, and formation of new strong ties with other tribes. At school, the Native American children were forced to do manual labor, which was an indication that even after assimilation they would never be fully accepted in the white world. Besides, boarding schools were used as a genocidal background where approximately 100,000 children who went to these schools lost their lives due to poor living conditions, starvation, and diseases.²⁶

By 1920s, the federal government understood that the assimilation process through boarding schools was not effective, which led the government to deal with the 'Indian problem' by starting the concept of private property into the communal traditional way of living of the Native Americans. The Dawe's Act was enacted in 1887 to allot the reservation land. The paternalism aspect of this policy was that the Natives would own a piece of land, start farming practices, and in time adopt the white way of lives with their neighbors the whites.²⁷ However, the core reason for private ownership was not to the benefit of the natives but rather, to expand the country's land.

The construction of non-reservation boarding schools was ongoing where for example, Fr. Andrew White of Society of Jesus in 1634 formed the Maryland mission to extend civilization and instruction to his ignorant race, and show them the way to heaven" (p352).²⁸ In the 1640s, many Indians sent their children to St Mary's to receive an education with the White.

²⁵ George E Tinker, *Missionary Conquest* Minneapolis

²⁶ Brenda Child, "Boarding School Season"

²⁷ Bruce E Johansen, *The Encyclopedia Of Native American Legal Tradition* Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1998.

²⁸ Henry Foley, *Records Of The English Province Of The Society Of Jesus* London: Burns and Oates, 1875.

This illustrates the negative attitudes of the whites towards the Native Americans due to their color and heritage. After arriving at the boarding schools, the management transformed their lives drastically.²⁹

At the new schools, the children were randomly given new names, were given new uniforms of European-American style clothes, and new haircuts. They were required to attend Christian churches and learn English and prohibited to use their native language even among themselves. They spent their days at school through strict supervision from teachers, stiff punishments and grueling chores. Any new diseases turned into outbreaks among the populations as they lacked adequate information on disease causation and prevention strategies, low immune systems, overcrowded conditions, insufficient funds for meals, and poor sanitation.³⁰

One of the major schools started in the 19th century is the Indian boarding school where Native Americans were taught the American's way of life. Although the missionary headed the schools, there were traumatic experiences among the children. Some of the children were forcefully taken away from their homes at a tender age. Some of the learning objectives identified Christianity rather than their traditional religious practices and prohibited to use native language but used English. Besides, they were required to adopt the American way of life by abandoning their Indian identity³¹.

Dawe's Act

The introduction of the Dawe's Act was to break the reservation lands into smaller checkerboard plots. After sharing the land, the remaining was sold to white settlers, railroads, and mining companies. The allotment land process generated the fractionalized heirship system

²⁹ Bruce E Johansen, *The Encyclopedia Of Native American Legal Tradition* Westport, Conn

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Daniel F Littlefield and James W Parins, *Native American Writing In The Southeast* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995.

to break the tradition of the native by breaking extended family ties. However, the Natives greatly resisted the Dawe's Act when they refused to adopt the farming practices and carried on with their traditional way of life. They also lived as extended families by combining the plots to traditional communal land.

Lewis Merriam formulated the Merriam Report in 1927, which explained in detail the state of the Indians. According to the report, the reservation land had the worst social conditions and highest poverty in the U.S. The conclusion of the report was the failure of the assimilation process and called for a new way to restructure and reorganize how the country tackled the Indian problem. This led to the formulation of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934, which brought to an end the Allotment Act. Nonetheless, the damages of the fractionalized heirship system persisted among the Natives. As a way to end the Allotment Act processes, there was an agreement that tribal governments were separate entities and were required to formulate constitutions that followed the Europeans way of governance.³²

The native communities were given voting right in one year and failure to vote was termed as a way of resolution.³³ However, there was more resistance among the natives as they feared it was another strategy to give up their sovereignty to the U.S. way of life but in its favor, the government viewed the non-votes as acceptances, which led to the passing the resolution. To date, the Native Americans argue this was an unfair formulation of policy without seeking consent from the majority of the Indians.³⁴

Although the assimilation process towards the Natives was ineffective, it is clear that the Native Americans were greatly affected. Presently, Native Americans experience emotional,

³² Bruce E Johansen, *The Encyclopedia Of Native American Legal Tradition* Westport, Conn

³³ F.P. Prucha, *The Churches And The Indian Schools*,

³⁴ Bruce E Johansen

physical, and sexual violence in the hands of the whites. Other issues experienced presently by the natives include increased child abuse; loss of religious and cultural beliefs; increased substance abuse; increased suicidal rates; and unemployment and underemployment. However, the Native Americans have withstood and triumphed over the inhumane crimes that they experienced by resisting to follow the mainstream philosophies. Although the concept of 'force' is from a different perspective, it is clear that the Native Americans have the perseverance ability and they can self-heal from any forms of assimilation from the Whites. Although the U.S. is diverse and accepts people from different facets, the Natives and other minority groups continue to suffer due to racial prejudice and racism, as well as white privilege.

Reservation Life

The core objective of starting the reservation was to suck the power out of Native Americans and supervise their day-to-day way of life. The process of acculturation was boosted by the enforcement of the paternalistic way of life. The reservation was headed by a U.S. agency and was referred to as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).³⁵ The agency controlled all the aspects of the Native Americans in the reservation including schools, the criminal justice system, and budgeting processes. Although not part of the Native, the agency determined the tribal members. The agency ignored the political institutions, as well as the traditional leadership structures and excluded the Natives from decision-making processes.

The other philosophy is the coercive acculturation through the boarding schools and the Dawe's Act. This can be hypothetically explained through Blauner's argument that by subjecting the Natives to forced Americanization or coercive acculturation, it led to the circumventing and undermining of their institutions, forbidding their languages and religions, and attacking their culture. The Dawe's Allotment Act in 1887 is termed as the centerpiece for the U.S. policy

³⁵ John Shurts, *Indian Reserved Water Rights* Norman, Okla: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000.

toward the American Natives. The coercive acculturation was promoted by forcing the Natives to adapt to the Whites' ways of land ownership by subdividing the communal land to plots for farming. Taking the land and agreeing to live away from the family attracted the reward of U.S. citizenship to the individual. The paternalism of this act wanted to give the Natives a new way to feed their families and survive but the hidden benefit (coercive acculturation) was to assimilate the Native Americans to the profound way of living.³⁶

Generally, the policy seemed benevolent but due to the illiteracy among the Natives and failure to understand the culture and the needs of the natives, the process failed. The Natives joined their lands and lived again on communal land without tilling their lands. The objective of the government was to break the external kinship ties and forcing the use of Western systems that promoted profits and individualism. Basing the aspect of assimilation from Durkheim's argument of modernization, the Native Americans have a particular way of living in the 21st century, for example, the introduction of the Red Power Movement.³⁷ Such a Movement was to give birth to identity where the Native Americans resisted the assimilation practices through activism. Some of the resisting movements include the conflict at Wounded Knee, the Trail of Broken Treaties, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and Alcatraz. Such movements followed the American Civil Rights movement, which has led to the creation of the American Civil Rights movement in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁸

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

³⁶ F.P. Prucha, *The Churches And The Indian Schools*,

³⁷ E. Durkheim, "The Division Of Labour In Society, Translated By George Simpson", *New York: Free Press, 1893*.

³⁸ E. Durkheim, "The Division Of Labour In Society, Translated By George Simpson"

Through the histographic analysis, it is clear that assimilation in the form of religion and residential schools was largely unsuccessful among the Natives, as they did not change their rich cultural heritage. The plans and policies for assimilation were met with resistance among the Natives. For example, although the children were taken at an early age from their families, they would sneak out and use their native language among themselves. Another illustration of resistance towards the assimilation process is the allotment of land where after the destruction of communal land ownership, the natives joined their plots, left the newly introduced agricultural practices and retrieved to their old ways of life. Assimilation was not successful in eliminating the Indian problem but rather it resulted in more issues, more deaths, and more racial injustices. The Indian problem intensified through the racial thinking of the policymakers like the application of the Residential School System. The current research has explored the negative impact of assimilation towards the Native Americans, their response through resistance, and the revitalization process. There are still gaps in the research on the impact of Indians in contemporary life from the 19th century inhumane acts. This study forms a basis for future research on the Native Indians. For example, I believe in the need to move from the past atrocities to future opportunities of the Native Americans and other cultural minority groups. Although there are arguments that the US is a diverse country, there is a persistence of racism and discrimination due to color and white prejudice, which locks such communities from economic equality.

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