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## **Indian Boarding Schools: A Case Study of Assimilation, Resistance, and Resilience**

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### **Introduction**

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*The mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation.* –William McKinley

*Beginning in 1879, tens of thousands of Native Americans left or were taken from their tribal homes to attend Indian boarding schools, often long distances away. Some struggled bitterly. Some suffered in silence. Some succumbed to tuberculosis or influenza and lost their lives. Others flourished and built a new sense of self within a wider world, while preserving Indianness in their hearts.* –Dedication from *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences*

Assimilation is a term that we use to describe our country as a “melting pot”, in that individuals begin to take on the cultural characteristics of the combined one that would describe Americans. Over time, we began to better describe this term as a “salad bowl” representing the distinct “flavors” of the different people combined to create an insatiable product. When I have thought about the term, I have connected it to my grandparent’s experiences of keeping their cultural traditions of Scotland while, at the same time, fitting in to their new land and beginning to call it their own. I was not critical of the term until later after I became an English Language Learners (ELL) teacher. During my tenure, I heard many outrageously offensive comments about my students such as how they should not be speaking their home language now that they were in America. McKinley’s words seem to better reflect my grandparent’s experience more so than my ELLs. To my knowledge, they never seemed at odds with the system. However, as I became better educated on the sociological terms, I understood that they were voluntary minorities. After reading so much information about the Indian boarding schools, I have come to view assimilation from a different viewpoint. Combining our school issues over the mascot with the students’ lack of information regarding Native Americans, I believe students might be able to compare these two beginning quotes to better determine how our country views assimilation from a sociological viewpoint.

## Rationale

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Fortunately, through my involvement with Yale National Initiative (YNI)/Delaware Teachers Institute (DTI), I have produced seven units to date to use with my dual-enrollment Sociology course. From the seminar readings, research, and my participation in this seminar, **Contemporary American Indian History**, I will have an eighth unit. This one, in particular, serves two purposes: one (obviously) – enhance my content knowledge as well as that of my students, and two – provide a much needed context for the reason behind our recent mascot (Redskins) retirement. Beginning with a small group who initiated the change, a battle began and has continued over the past two years. What has ensued is a division amongst the peoples of our school community. Students were never given information about the initial reason behind the change – requests from local and national Native Americans asking us not to use the term that they considered offensive. I want my students to better understand the sociological concept of assimilation and its varieties, how it pertains to Native American history, and how that is actually connected to the use and retirement of our mascot.

Like many districts, our students are ignorant to American Indian contemporary history. As I wrote in a letter to our school board members, in our social studies curriculum, which is very similar to other states', there is very little reference to Contemporary Native American History. In fact, most of our students are left with the images of the "First Peoples" – as those who were encountered and conquered, Manifest Destiny as it pertains to the westward movement, and the Trail of Tears. Most recently, I spoke with a US History teacher on staff stated that the Allotment Act as it pertains to the westward movement is briefly addressed. All are unaware that 2% of our country's current population is Native American. In using this unit, my hope is that they will be more knowledgeable of Native Americans as subjects not objects and empathetic to the Native Americans as a whole and more specifically to their request and our change of the mascot.

The curriculum unit will be divided into three parts: (1) assimilation – the purpose and procedures for the Indian Boarding Schools (2) resilience – the manner in which students and families coped with the experience; and, (3) resistance – the reports and laws – the changes to these over time. As much as possible, I want to use a variety of primary sources to include personal accounts so that students see the *human* component of these concepts. For that reason, I will use primary source sets for each part of the curriculum unit.

## Objectives

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As this is a dual-enrollment course, I follow the higher institution's guidelines by using the Delaware Technical Community College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objectives to plan my units of instruction. In this unit I will be using the CCC *Analyze social stratification and the causes and consequences of classifying people by race, ethnicity, and gender*. In doing so students will: (1) define the concept of stratification and its application to human differences, (2) illustrate the connection between social stratification and life chances, and (3) list two major kinds of criteria societies use to categorize people. Because of our current mascot situation, the lack of information that our students have regarding Native Americans, and the specific example of attempts to assimilate Native Americans in our Sociology textbook's Race Chapter, I thought that there was no better theme than Indian Boarding Schools to connect something students are familiar with (education/schooling) to the sociological concept of assimilation. Certainly students know about being in

school. Those, who are seniors, are looking forward to going away to school/living far from their families. Being empathetic to another view/type of schooling will be good for them. Additionally, highlighting the resilience and resistance of the Native Americans to the assimilation process will enable my students to see these people not only as victims or savages but people who are just like you and I.

The **Enduring Understandings** are taken from the Core Concepts of our textbook's chapter on Race. After the unit, students will understand that *assimilation occurs through a variety of means - voluntary and/or forced* and that *social and cultural differences between racial and ethnic groups "disappear" when one group is absorbed into another group's culture and social networks or when two groups merge to form a new, blended culture.*<sup>1</sup> **Guiding Questions** to focus the unit include: What is assimilation and its variety of terms and how are these sociological concepts related to Native American people? How was assimilation used as a discrimination tool against Native American people? How have Native American people resisted these assimilation attempts? and How have Native American people demonstrated their resilience to these assimilation policies over time?

Indian boarding schools constitute a perfect case study to demonstrate the assimilation process. Students will be able to compare and contrast it to that the historical knowledge they have of European immigrants as well as the enslaved Africans. I began my journey to better understand the Indian Boarding Schools and their connection to the sociological concept of assimilation by reading a variety of books, journal articles, teaching resources, and government reports. Additionally, I viewed many photographs. Reflecting on my own education, I did not recollect any time allotment to this subject matter in my own schooling. As I completed these readings, my focus was on the historical content of the primary sources, determining which ones could be most beneficial for my students to be exposed to and use in their understanding of assimilation. Using primary source sets will not only help to meet the Sociology Standards, they also address two **History/Social Studies Common Core Standards for Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**: (one) **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7** *Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem* and (two) **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9** *Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.* Students will be able to synthesize the multiple texts within the primary source text sets to better understand the process of assimilation and its' effects on the Native American people then and now. I envision students creating and recording dramatic readings for each section - assimilation, resilience, and resistance - to help our entire school community in their understanding of the information.

## Demographics

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Conrad Schools of Science (CSS) is a science/biotechnology magnet school serving almost 1300 students in grades 6 - 12. It is considered an urban school, situated on the outskirts of the most populated city in the state of Delaware, Wilmington that is well known for its violence rates. CSS students come from all over our state's largest county, New Castle. The school's increasing popularity is obvious as many families complete the *Choice* application process seeking admission to our school. At the high school level, students can choose to focus on a variety of learning "*strands*" such as biotechnology, physical therapy/athletic healthcare, biomedical science, animal science, and computer science. Our high school is the only one in the state that is not a vocational-technology school to offer a Delaware Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program.

Additionally, a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered as well as multiple courses that are in conjunction with our local community college and university. I am the teacher of one of these courses, *Sociology*. This dual-enrollment course in which students (mostly seniors) are enrolled at the local community college and receive credit from that institution upon successful completion of the course with me on the high school campus. Moreover, it is a *distance-learning course* in that some of my students are at my school while others are at two sister schools in our district. The course happens real-time – at the three different locations – same teacher (me!), curriculum, activities, etc. This will be my sixth year teaching in this manner. I am continuing to try to master this type of teaching/learning environment as well as the content that I had not interacted with in many, many years. This year we are switching learning management systems so that will be something to get used to for both my students and myself.

## Content: Concept of Assimilation - Sociologically Speaking

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In light of our history and current events, I spend quite a bit of time on the Sociological theme of Race in our Sociology course to include: the social construction of race, United States immigration policies, and affirmative action – all units created through my affiliation with YNI/DTI. This unit will be second in the line-up and will focus on the sociological concept of assimilation. Our textbook defines assimilation as “ A process by which ethnic or racial distinctions between groups disappear because one group is absorbed into another group’s culture or because two cultures blend to form a new cultural system.”<sup>2</sup>

It is important to dissect the term to explain how the process happens as well as its’ effects on groups. The sociologist, Milton M. Gordon, identified seven stages in the usually lengthy process of assimilation. Each of these can occur to varying degrees or may not occur at all. The first stage termed *cultural/behavioral assimilation*, involves changed cultural patterns. A common example revolves around religious practices. For the purpose of this unit, we can look to the desire to bring Christianity to the Native Americans, which was at the heart of the beginning of the formal educational reform efforts by French and Spanish Priests. Reformers looked at the “native religious practices as primitive and barbaric remnants of a pre-civilized existence”.<sup>3</sup> They believed that civilization was dependent upon a strong Christian foundation. That indeed, there was a moral obligation towards incorporating all peoples in these efforts. Gordon considered the second step of the process, *structural assimilation*, as the essential component to full assimilation. In this stage, one enters “fully into the societal network of groups and institutions, or societal structure.”<sup>4</sup> If this second step is achieved, all other stages could follow although they may not. Just because the minority group could abandon or give up their cultural patterns, it still does not ensure that the other stages will happen. These include: intermarried/interbred (*marital assimilation*), a development of a mainstream sense of “peoplehood or ethnicity” (*identificational assimilation*), no discriminatory behavior or prejudiced attitudes (*attitude receptional* and *behavior receptional assimilation*). Lastly, the final step to be completely assimilated is that there is no concern regarding the mainstream “issues involving value and power conflicts with original” (*civic assimilation*).<sup>5</sup>

The distinctions between the minority and dominant groups have nothing to do with their size (in numbers). A minority group is “a group of people who may be subject to differential and unequal treatment because of their physical, cultural, or other characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or skin color.”<sup>6</sup> These groups may in fact be larger than the dominant group but have less power, privilege, and/or

social status. The dominant group is defined as “any physically or culturally distinctive group that has the most economic and political power, the greatest privileges, and the highest social status.”<sup>7</sup> Interactions of these two groups can be looked at on a continuum. In another sociology textbook, Benokraitis explains that these interactions range from genocide, the systematic efforts to kill all members. Internal colonialism unequal treatment and subordinate status of groups within a country, segregation the physical and social separation of dominant and minority groups and assimilation conforming to the culture of the dominant group to pluralism retain culture but have equal status in a society.<sup>8</sup>

Within the minority groups, there is an important distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities come to a country to improve their lives, living conditions, future. This is by their choice. For example, my grandparents immigrated to the United States from Scotland. They made this decision for themselves. No one else decided this or forced this decision upon them. On the other hand, involuntary minorities are the “ethnic/racial groups that did not choose to be a part of a country. They are forced by slavery, conquest, or colonization.”<sup>9</sup> Referring back to the text’s definition, involuntary minorities are “absorbed into another group’s culture”<sup>10</sup> – in fact, losing their own cultural traditions, ways, and practices. Our focus will be on those in the involuntary group, more specifically Native Americans. When reviewing Milton’s work, he describes a variety of definitions of assimilation, “the process by which different cultures, or individuals or groups representing different cultures are merged into a homogeneous unit”, “the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture”, and “social process through which two or more persons or groups accept and perform one another’s patterns of behavior”.<sup>11</sup> All of these definitions focus on a relationship of reciprocity in which cultural aspects will be shared. This is not the intent for the students attending Indian boarding schools. In fact, “Cultural interaction and conflict are always subtle and complex processes but they are not always as devastatingly one-sided as in the case of Indians and whites.”<sup>12</sup>

## **The Indian: Assimilation and Americanization**

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### **Land: Segregation or Integration**

To better understand how schools became a popular source of assimilating Indians into the country’s population, one must go back in the history just a bit further to know that the reservations where Indians were located were actually a source of segregation (another sociological term). According to reformers, reservations led to Indians continued “attachment to the tribal outlook and tribal institutions”.<sup>13</sup> The government’s initial answer to this issue and that of the Indians’ continued dependency on rations was to pass the General Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act, after the sponsor, Senator Henry Dawes from Massachusetts. Communal tribal lands were surveyed and divided up into allotments with individual members receiving anywhere from 40 acres (child) to 160 acres (head of household). In doing so, Indians were intended to become landowners (contrary to their philosophy/relationship with the land) and be able to farm leading to self-sustainment. For protection sake, the government held the allotment deeds for twenty-five years during which time the land could not be sold. Indians could become citizens if they adopted the “civilized ways” of living and abided by the laws of the state or territory in which their land was located. Lastly, it allowed for the leftover lands to be sold to white settlers. This type of alienation provided a means for dividing up the Indians in the hope that this would help to civilize them, readying them to be citizens.

# Indian Education

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## Tribal Education

Indian children were educated for thousands of years prior to Europeans. Through oral tradition and instruction, tribal leaders and family members worked with their children so that they were able to learn about subjects such as medicine, mathematics, geology, art, astronomy, agriculture, music, dance, marine biology, amongst other traditions such as proper behavior and respect for history, laws, and rules.<sup>14</sup> The idea of schooling the Indians began with the Spanish and French priests of the colonial era who were interested in Christianizing those they encountered.<sup>15</sup>

## Schooling

Reformers determined that older generations were unable to be taught/civilized – education was wasted on them. It was better to work with the young. Education would also “quicken the process of cultural evolution”.<sup>16</sup> White civilization had taken hundreds of years to get to this point, if Indian students entered and attended school, they would have the same advantages as white children in school – enabling their race to skip the ‘in between’ that the white civilization had endured. Economically, educating Indians made sense. Indians would become self-sufficient and able to provide for themselves.<sup>17</sup> For these reasons, educating the Indian began and so did the assimilation process.

There were three school models used in the assimilation process of young Indians. At first, reservation day schools were used. These were located on the outskirts of the reservation lands. While they were in existence, these schools primary focus was on the English language instruction. These schools were fairly inexpensive to run and had the least opposition from parents since students returned home on a daily basis. At first, reformers believed that when the children returned to their homes they would teach their families about what they had learned. However, this was not the case – it was not enough to change the ways of the older peoples in the indigenous communities. “It must be manifest to all practical minds,” one agent observed in 1878 ‘that to place these wild children under a teacher’s care but four or five hours a day, and permit them to spend the other nineteen in the filth and degradation of the village, makes the attempt to educate and civilize them a mere farce.’<sup>18</sup>

In the late 1870s, reservation boarding schools began to show some progress with assimilating students. These schools, usually located near agency headquarters, allowed for students to remain in the care of the teachers and administration for eight to nine months out of the year. With the extended time, there was more control over the students. The curriculum included a half-day of English instruction and a half-day of gendered industrial training. Additionally, the teaching of civilized ways such as personal hygiene and manners were included. There were still obstacles the school administrations faced such as families visiting often included even moving their living quarters closer to the school! They would visit their children to speak in the native language and drop off food.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, there were noticeable “relapses” when returning home – the tribal influences were too strong.

“In 1889 the U.S. commissioner of the Indian Affairs declared, ‘We must either fight Indians, feed them, or else educate them. To fight them is cruel, to feed them is wasteful, while to educate them is humane, economic and Christian.’”<sup>20</sup> He suggested off-reservation boarding based on the model that Richard Pratt developed

with prisoners.

## Boarding Schools History - Pratt - Philosophy

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As an esteemed military officer, Richard Henry Pratt had extensive experience with Indians. He was appointed to take a group of 72 Indian prisoners to Fort Marion at St. Augustine, Florida. While there during the years of 1875 - 1878, he began a transformation of these prisoners through the use of explanation and persuasion, according to Pratt. This would later be the model used for all Indian Boarding Schools, in particular, the one that he established in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Resistance dissipated. Haircuts, uniforms, and English language instruction was at the core of the model. Local women who were former teachers, volunteered to instruct the English language to the prisoners.

While there, the prisoners began working by finding and polishing sea beans (shells) that tourists enjoyed. At first, they sold these shells to dealers but later began their own sales to the public. Additionally, they began to govern themselves, to keep order. After time, Pratt engaged the local community by having the Indians go out and work. He stated, "Although the race has never been numerous within our limits, it has throughout all our intercourse, been treated as an inimical and alien to our interests and it has never been admitted to the opportunities to become the useful fellow citizens we extend to the immigrating races."<sup>21</sup> The Indian prisoners picked and packed oranges, handled baggage at the train station, lumber at the sawmill, and provided manual labor to build wells.

In a 1872 speech Pratt delivered, he stated, "A great general has said the only good Indian is a dead one," "In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."<sup>22</sup> His belief was evident in this work with the Indian prisoners. Over time, as a result of Pratt's efforts and others' reports to the government and public, the Indians were released as prisoners to be educated at schools, which interested benefactors supported through funding. General Samuel Chapman Armstrong at the Hampton Agricultural School for Negroes agreed to them attending his institution mainly due to funding that would accompany them. Both Armstrong and Pratt had similar beliefs in regard to providing opportunities for minorities (African Americans and Indians) to become skilled in a trade to be self-supportive.

Pratt encouraged off-campus work to integrate the Indians into American society. In conversations with Hampton, Pratt spoke of his "dissatisfaction with systems to educate the Negro and Indian in exclusively race schools and especially - need to include them in the community. He stated, "Armstrong and I talked much about the future of these young men and the need for them to become Americanized. As our Indian system contemplated that all Indians should become farmers, I urged that during vacation they have privileges among our farmers to gain practical knowledge for managing their own farms."<sup>23</sup>

## The Purpose of Indian Boarding Schools

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It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like all the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surroundings of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the infant white to the savage surroundings; he will grow to possess a savage language, superstition, and habit. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit. These results have been established over and over again beyond all question; and it is also well established that those advanced in life, even to maturity, of either class, lose already acquired qualities belonging to the side of their birth, and gradually take on those of the side to which they have been transferred.<sup>24</sup>

In 1879, Pratt used the model that he believed to have worked well with the prisoners in St. Augustine and began another experiment – this time he applied the model to Indian youngsters. At first, students were recruited. Pratt told Indian leaders at the Rosebud Agency that the government was changing policies regarding them. The government now understood that Indians needed to be educated to become equal to the white youth. This could only happen if they were no longer separated on reservations. The government was interested in helping the Indian children by placing them in schools to learn the English language and a trade by going out into the communities. By doing so, Indian children would be “just as competent as the white children.”<sup>25</sup>

The children were given to Pratt and left their families to be educated Carlisle, Pennsylvania at what is now known as the first government (not missionary) Indian boarding school.



# The Boarding School Assimilation Process

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## Clothing

The assimilation process began when students entered the school. Cultural aspects such as hair, clothing, language, meals, Religion, and clothing were all changed. When arriving, Personal belongings such as medicine pouches and beadwork were taken from the children. Each student received government regulation clothing of uniform-style. Brown and gray were common colors. The boys were likely to wear a suit with hats and the girls a sleeveless jumper, blouse and stockings. Heavy shoes/boots were given to all students.<sup>26</sup>

## Haircuts

First, children were “fine-combed for lice with kerosene.”<sup>27</sup> Then, hair was cut. For Indians, “the physical cutting of hair is a manifestation of the loss of a loved one, a loss of a relationship, and a loss of a part of self.”<sup>28</sup> Hair had cultural and spiritual significance. Lone Wolf of the Blackfoot tribe, a student at Carlisle, stated “[Long hair] was the pride of all Indians. The boys, one by one, would break down and cry when they saw their braids thrown on the floor.”<sup>29</sup>

## Names

Students’ names were changed when they came to boarding schools – another step to becoming civilized. Luther Standing Bear, a Carlisle student, reflects on the experience:

Although we were yet wearing our Indian clothes...one day when we came to school there was a lot of writing on one of the blackboards. We did not know what it meant, but our interpreter came into the room and said .Do you see all these marks on the blackboards? Well, each word is a white man's name. They are going to give each one of you one of these names by which you will hereafter be known." None of the names were read or explained to us, so of course we did not know the sound or meaning of any of them. Each child in turn walked to the blackboard with a pointer and selected his future Anglo name.<sup>30</sup>

Indian students were told that their names were “unpronounceable, pagan, and sometimes even embarrassing.”<sup>31</sup> At times, students even ridiculed each other after teachers did the same.

A tenth-grade girl at Flandreau asked to be known by the very

American sounding 'Alice Carley,' rather than her actual name, 'Lydia Blowsnake.' When the Indian agent back on her reservation sent checks to her at school using the name 'Lydia Blowsnake,' the girl was filled with shame and embarrassment. As Lydia explained to the agent, 'I just hate to get [the check] cause they make fun of my name, and I don't want them to know that's my name.'<sup>32</sup>

The assimilation process also made students feel badly about themselves, their identities. This continued with forbidding the students to speak in their home languages.

### **Language**

An important part of the assimilation process is developing knowledge of the dominant language. Indian students came from various backgrounds and all needed to give up their language upon entering school. They were forbidden to use their indigenous languages and were punished when caught doing so. For many who remained for long periods at the school, they forgot how to speak their home language with fluidity and were disconnected from their native communities causing quite a bit of difficulty when returning home.<sup>33</sup> Wright, a Pattwin Indian who was sent to boarding school at six years old, remembers and recollects a conversation he had with his grandmother,

' "I remember coming home and my grandma asked me to talk Indian to her and I said, 'Grandma, I don't understand you,' ". "She said, "then who are you?"" Wright says he told her his name was Billy. " " Your name's not Billy. Your name's TAH-rruhm,' ' She told him. "and I went, 'That's not what they told me.'"<sup>34</sup>

John Rogers, of the Ojibwe tribe had a similar experience to that of Wright.

He entered [Flandreau school ] as an Ojibwe speaker and approached the foreign language tentatively. As he recalled, with a short while, 'I learned to speak and understand a little of the white man's language.' By the time Rogers left Flandreau, he and his siblings 'had forgotten much of the Indian language during our six years

away from home.’ When Rogers and his sisters were finally joyously reunited with their mother in northern Minnesota, Rogers found ‘we couldn’t understand very well what she said’ but personally vowed ‘to learn once more the Chippewa language’ in order to please her.”<sup>35</sup>

## **Outing Program**

Parents and students alike were very interested in the vocational component of boarding schools. Formal training to be used to obtain employment was their goal for school attendance. Usually one half of the school day was geared toward vocational training - manual labor techniques such as farming, carpentry, blacksmithing for boys and - domestic studies for girls to include housekeeping, sewing, and cooking. Practice happened at the school. In many instances, the students’ work kept the school running.

The Outing Program was an extension of this on-campus work and very similar to Pratt’s program with the prisoners. Through living with families and working for them, they would become better integrated into society. The “sharing” of their vocational skills was considered a contribution to the dominant society. As a “work-study” program, it really benefited local employers with a cheap and readily available labor source. Boys were sent out to work on ranches while girls were sent to cook, clean, and babysit. Wages were paid to the school and kept for students. Afterwards, some students had difficulty getting their earnings.<sup>36</sup> Students were sent out without protection or supervision, sometimes even farmed out from their assigned position to another employer.

Pupils at Haskell, where the program was quite evolved, signed an outing contract agreeing to be industrious, helpful, and to ‘bathe once a week.’ Girls promised not to go out unchaperoned, and boys were to refrain from tobacco or alcohol use. Patrons also were expected to follow certain rules, which mostly involved keeping a watchful eye over students.<sup>37</sup>

Experiences varied especially for young women. Girls were usually overburdened with work demands and, at times treated unkindly. One student, Betty, explained her situation in that “‘she tried but could not handle both baby and small boy as well as to house in employer’s absence.’” Other times, students were treated kindly, much like family. For example, some were taken on family trips.<sup>38</sup>

## Resistance

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Yes, the tragedy of what happened cannot be denied. Families were separated and according to the sociological term, assimilation, improving the Indian through the process of making them more like the dominant culture – more, NOT Indian meant – at the very least – the loss of culture, language, and a way of life. However, there were many examples of how the Indians resisted. No matter the scale, Indians demonstrated their will as a people to preserve their family bonds and heritage.

One of the ways Indians resisted was that parents refused to give their children to government officials, instead having them hide by playing a “hide and seek” game so they would not be taken away to the schools by the Indian agents. Other times, families would leave their homes for a period of time until the rounding up of children had subsided. Sometimes, an entire village or tribal group would refuse to hand over their children. In these cases, police intervention was often used. In 1895, Hopi Indians in Arizona refused to give up their children and 19 men were imprisoned on Alcatraz.<sup>39</sup>

Another way in which families resisted the acculturation process was during vacation times. The elders and family members spent time “enculturating youth in the curriculum of traditional culture.”<sup>40</sup> The youngsters were taught the importance of their tribal stories and ways of life. Many boarding school personnel complained when students returned from vacations in that all they had seen accomplished had been lost.

At school, students showed their resistant nature through a variety of activities. One, running away from school seemed to be commonplace. Students – more boys than girls - who did so were referred to as AWOL, a military term meaning Absent Without Official Leave. If caught, the youngsters faced consequences upon return such as “palms switched, spending the next day sitting alone in the school chapel, working in the girls’ laundry”.<sup>41</sup> However, for many the promise of attending a tribal ceremony at home or getting away from the strict military-like routine even for a short while was worth the risk. At Carlisle in 1901, 114 boys were discharged 45 of them were dropped as runaways.<sup>42</sup>

Another demonstration of resistance was to set the school on fire. Although data is limited, it was a primary worry of Commissioner Francis E. Leupp.<sup>43</sup> “In 1897, two Carlisle girls conspired for two weeks on how to burn down the girls’ dormitory and nearly succeeded in doing so. Elizabeth Flanders, a Menomoni, and Fannie Eaglehorn, a Sioux, carried out their scheme on a Sunday evening. At the sound of the multiple times on one evening after the investigation, they were sentenced to eighteen months in the penitentiary and a \$2,000 fine.<sup>44</sup>

In regard to the Outing Program, refusal to participate was the first line of defense. At the Sherman Institute in California, Lorenzia Nicholas refused to return to a family she had previously worked for due to poor treatment. The school sent word to the family stating that she refused to return to their service.<sup>45</sup> While on the job, students sometimes resisted by pretending they were unable to understand instructions so that they were unable to do the work. For boys, it was easier to resist by running away as they were not confined to inside/around the home.<sup>46</sup> At school, too, children pretended to be unable to understand, they completed tasks inappropriately on purpose, ask them multiple times to do so Students also demonstrated passive resistance. For example, students determined the pace within the classroom with work slowdowns and non-responsiveness. Additionally, “Lakota girls at Pine Ridge wished to protest some aspect of school policy, they sometimes plucked their eyebrows and braided their hair in the traditional Lakota manner, both expressly

forbidden by the school rules.”<sup>47</sup>

Students also aimed to preserve their Indian culture. “Sometimes children hid away from the school in order to build fires, smoke tobacco, cook foods, and share their cultural traditions, thereby preserving their identities as Indian people.”<sup>48</sup> At Chilocco, “on weekends, holidays, or as part of a late night escape plan, groups of Creek, Choctaw, and Cherokee boys spread out over the school’s 8,000 acres, seeking nearby ravines or wooded areas where they gathered in makeshift campsites. Safely away from the school they hunted squirrels and rabbits with bows and arrows, parched stolen corn on dormitory dust pans, and performed variations of the stomp dance around evening campfires.”<sup>49</sup>

Although only English was to be spoken, many students found ways to secretly speak, repeat stories, and folktales told by the elders. Many students became bilingual, using English to their advantage while maintaining their home language. “The survival of the Kiowa language meant that an important barrier to assimilation remained in place. The full meaning of this became clear in the decades that followed when the generations of young people who went through the school became a galvanizing force in the continuation of Kiowa culture and took a central role in transmitting crucial knowledge and traditions.”<sup>50</sup>

“But the schools also fostered a sense of shared Indian identity that transcended tribal boundaries.”<sup>51</sup> Over time, students were able to participate in Indian Clubs. Instead of eradicating the culture, it was celebrated. Indians learned that they could publically display their “Indianness while promoting citizenship.” It was acceptable. They used public and patriotic holidays such as Memorial Day and Fourth of July to schedule their feast days and ceremonies.<sup>52</sup> In the 1960s, the demand for culturally appropriate Native issues and concerns. What they learned and practiced they later used in their communities. The “debaters, orators, student council leaders, and princesses often became political leaders of their tribes and pueblos; choir and club members became instructors, sometimes in the same Indian schools where they had been students.”<sup>53</sup>

## Resilience

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Resilience of the assimilation process was seen in a variety of ways.

### **Merriam Report**

The Merriam Report, published in 1928 spoke to the affairs of the American Indian. It addressed issues such as health and education, amongst others. For the purpose of this unit, students will focus mainly on the Education sub-section. The first line of the report reads, “The most fundamental need in Indian education is a change in point of view.”<sup>54</sup> It follows up with comments about how the boarding schools program was severely underfunded with not enough resources to support the needs of the children in the schools. The report also criticized the Outing Program stating that it provided cheap labor for communities but did not provide true vocational training for the students.

The Society of American Indians (SAI), established in 1911, was comprised of a group of intellectual Indian members who met regularly until 1923. As a group, the members advocated for Indian rights and provided legal services to Indians and tribes. Their work helped to make was the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 possible.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978 is a federal law that serves to protect Indian children and their families. It originated due to the extremely high rates of the removal of Indian children from their families by both public and private agencies. This law helps to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families."<sup>55</sup>

These acts of resistance and resilience are acknowledged by the government when in September of 2000 at the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Kevin Gover, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs department of the Interior, stated

This agency forbade the speaking of Indian languages, prohibited the conduct of traditional religious activities, outlawed traditional government and made Indian people ashamed of who they were. Worst of all, the Bureau of Indian Affairs committed these acts against the children entrusted to its boarding schools, brutalizing them emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually. Even in this era of self-determination, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs is at long last serving as an advocate for Indian people in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the legacy of these misdeeds haunts us. The trauma of shame, fear and anger has passed from one generation to the next, and manifests itself in the rampant alcoholism, drug abuse, and domestic violence that plague Indian country."<sup>56</sup>

In summary, Indian boarding schools affected many students and their families during and after their time at school as well as the American Indian community still today. As an assimilation program, one could debate whether the goal of students attending the schools achieved its goal. If we return to Gordon's theory, we can argue that some of the stages (at some level) have occurred because of students' participation in the boarding schools. However, it is much more of a complicated answer - one that I look forward to having my students analyze and answer for themselves.

## Strategies

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### Close Reading

The Common Core Standards ask students to close read texts. This includes having students read and re-read texts for deeper meaning. Number the paragraphs so that it is easy to acknowledge which paragraph is being referred to when citing evidence, chunk the text so that it does not appear to be too overwhelming. Have students draw lines at various points – e.g. paragraphs 1-4; 5-8; 9-12. This should happen at areas that have a natural division. The author states that this responsibility can be relinquished to students throughout the course of a school year. Underline and circle with a purpose. One might be quick to remember when he began to highlight texts and the overuse that occurred. Directing students to what is important is vital in their success of understanding the text. Students will circle symptoms of the diseases in the text while underlining examples. Use the left margin to summarize the chunks of text and the right margin to ask questions.<sup>57</sup>

### Discussion

Another technological feature used in this unit is the blog known as a Discussion on Edline (the on-line system that our district chooses to use). A blog is an interactive site in which posts occur usually on a daily basis. Using a question or statement, I can preview what will be discussed and/or looked at that day or review or clarify something from the previous day's lesson. For an instructor and the students, this is an invaluable tool. For the instructor, it enables you to see what students understand and may have misconceived in addition to what they think. I like to have them write about the why of what they think, helping me to better understand their viewpoints. This also enables them to think before they speak as we use their blog posts as a means of conversation as well. For students, they are able to see their written conversations and leave multiple comments as well as questions for each other. This is a great pre- and post- activity for the day's lesson in which the same question or statement is added to at the end of the day's lesson helping all parties to see individual and group progress in regard to comprehending a point or concept.

This year I am taking it further. Many college courses are now using this feature. Students post on-line outside of class and are scored/graded on the quality of their posts. I am working with the students to establish a rubric that will be used for them to be graded for their posts. With them, I have noticed that they need to cite the evidence within their work as compared to the rubric. They need to identify this evidence so that they can truly "see" it to understand why or why not they receive credit. As much as possible, I want to emulate what they will experience next or the following year at college.

### Socratic Seminar

I have noticed that my students tend to talk before thinking and are more interested in hearing themselves than their fellow classmates. Being able to think critically about a text before discussing it and then listening to others are important skills necessary for academic success and life-long ability to understand better another person's viewpoint. The weight of the conversation is left to the participants – in this case the students. They must critically look at and read the texts before coming to class and be prepared with questions and comments they would like to focus on. This is vital to the conversation's success. I want them to experience what it is to be in college in a small seminar-type atmosphere. Additionally, I believe if they are made responsible for this it will help them to better comprehend the content of the text that they are expected to master.

## Google Docs

Technology is an essential part of classrooms today, especially at the university level. I see part of my role, obviously in this Distance Learning Laboratory with thousands of dollars of technological equipment, to use it with the students so that they become proficient in this new language of technology. Google Docs is one of the ways we have to provide students with a collaborative opportunity to participate in a joint writing process. Students will work with their peers to complete a piece of writing in response to a film, summarizing the key points to a lecture or reading, amongst others. I tell students that this skill they are perfecting in the classroom today will be beneficial to them at the university level in which they can work with their classmates across campus in completing group assignments without even meeting once! As an instructor, you can create and assign a Google Doc to group members. Also, feedback can be easily given even while a student (or students) is working on an assignment. Additionally, it is easily monitored through the Revision History, so that an instructor can keep track of who has completed what. Furthermore, for my teaching situation it helps to build partnerships between the students in three different schools. Students will be grouped together - individuals from all three schools - to collaborate on understanding, summarizing, and synthesizing multiple sources. Educators can consider their purpose and place as to which documents may best suit their students' needs.

## Activities

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The activities are based on two things - text sets and dramatic readings. *Read, Write Think* describes a text set "collections of resources from different genre, media, and levels of reading difficulty that are designed to be supportive of the learning of readers with a range of experiences and interests."<sup>58</sup> A variety of primary source documents will be used for the text sets. These will include personal letters and narratives, photographs, maps, data charts, and government documents. Each text within the text set will reflect the information from one of the three topics: assimilation, resilience, or resistance. This is also very useful for students as it is the format used for various AP exams in which students need to analyze multiple documents and synthesize their meanings.

The second focus of the activities is based on drama. I was very struck by the performance that we watched in seminar, a dramatic reading about the 1978 Violence Against Women Act. I thought this format would be an excellent way for students to synthesize the texts within the text set as well as work collaboratively with each other from the three different schools. Additionally, it provides our students with an even more important avenue for better understanding Native Americans as "*Drama develops empathy and new perspectives* Taking on various roles in character allows students to use all senses and characteristics in order to understand the character, as well as, the scenario or story at hand. Learning how to express oneself in different ways and through different means, helps build a strong character and personality."<sup>59</sup> Students will be randomly assigned to one of the themes - assimilation, resistance, or resilience. After viewing a portion of what we saw in seminar, students will use this model to create a dramatic reading of the facts they have collected.

### Text Set One

What is assimilation and its' variety of terms and how are these sociological concepts related to Native



American people? and How was assimilation used as a discrimination tool against Native American people?

In this activity students will view, read, and analyze them using National Archives document analysis guides. This will help students to closely read/listen to each document, follow along, and answer the questions to help with their analysis. The following documents about the sociological term assimilation: (1) Richard Henry Pratt Speech "Kill the Indian, and Save the Man": Capt. Richard H. Pratt on the Education of Native Americans (2) The West Television Series video clip/Hair Cutting scene found on YouTube, (3) Photographs of students (before/after entering boarding school), (4) Our seminar text, *Blood Struggle*, the section on Language which will accompany (5) The Ways video on Language Apprentice, (6) and (7) two sections in Pratt's book, *Battlefield to Classroom* pages 162 - 164 letter to the editor 4/1/1876 from Bishop Whipple and pages 181 - 183 entry in the National Teachers' Monthly, August 1877 by Mrs. J. Dorman Steele , (8) and the photographs on Modern American Poetry's website of the American Indian boarding schools and schools. This activity will happen after the introduction to the sociological component of assimilation.

### **Text Set Two**

How have Native American people resisted to these assimilation attempts?

Much like in the first activity, students will read a variety of excerpts from the Bibliography list. These will include first-person accounts of ways in which Native American people resisted the boarding school experience. They range from individual youngsters stories of running away or secretly meeting to tell tribal stories to the 19 Hopi men who were imprisoned on Alcatraz in 1895 for refusing to send their children to boarding school. Again, these documents will be analyzed using the National Archives document analysis guides.

### **Text Set Three**

How have Native American people demonstrated their resilience to these assimilation policies over time? Students will read through the 1928 Meriam Report and the 1978 Child Welfare Act as well as information regarding the Society of the American Indian. Using a Classroom Blog, they will write a description of what they have learned so far - their understandings - in regard to assimilation and resistance. Next, they will present what they have written and compare and contrast each other's responses having them pay attention to their prior knowledge - of what do they think and where do their textual evidence comes from. Afterwards, they will be divided into small groups and read either the Meriam Report or the Child Welfare Act. In these small groups using Google Docs, students will collaboratively take notes about their assigned legal document. Afterwards, they will present their court case to the whole group - teaching everyone what they now know from their readings. Lastly, with this new information, students will return to their Blog entry and add details/update what they now know about Assimilation (resilience).

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## Appendix

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Delaware Technical Community College Wide Core Course (CCC) Performance Objectives to plan my units of instruction. In this unit I will be using the CCC *Analyze social stratification and the causes and consequences of classifying people by race, ethnicity, and gender*. In doing so students will: (1) define the concept of stratification and its application to human differences, (2) illustrate the connection between social stratification and life chances, and (3) list two major kinds of criteria societies use to categorize people. Because of our current mascot situation, the lack of information that our students have regarding Native Americans, and the specific example of attempts to assimilate Native Americans in our Sociology textbook's Race Chapter, I thought that there was no better theme than Indian Boarding Schools to connect something students are familiar with (education/schooling) to the sociological concept of assimilation.

Using primary source sets will not only help to meet the Sociology Standards, they also address two **History/Social Studies Common Core Standards for Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**: (one)

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem and (two) **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Students will be able to synthesize the multiple texts within the primary source text sets to better understand the process of assimilation and its' effects on the Native American people then and now. I envision students creating and recording dramatic readings for each section – assimilation, resilience, and resistance – to help our entire school community in their understanding of the information.

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